The “Invention of Tradition” in Java under the Japanese Occupation: The Tonarigumi System and Gotong Royong

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Mission of the Afrasian Centre for Peace and Development Studies

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The “Invention of Tradition”
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The *Tonarigumi* System and *Gotong Royong*

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Kazuo Kobayashi*

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the process involved in the institutionalization of “invented traditions”¹ (hereafter referred to as “tradition” or “traditions”) explained by Hobsbawm et al. [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983] by focusing on the introduction of the Tonarigumi system in Java under Japanese occupation.²

As is well known, Hobsbawm et al. proposed “tradition” as an approach to understanding modern history. According to Hobsbawm, any historical continuity in the concept of the modern has, in the concept itself, a constructed or “invented” part, i.e., a “tradition” [Hobsbawm 1983, 26]. This suggests that the examination of “tradition” may be very important as a premise for the analysis of the modern “nation,” national phenomena, or historical continuity in modern history.

What kind of face does “tradition” show us? Hobsbawm explained “traditions” by citing three overlapping types, and he defined one as “those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities” [Hobsbawm 1983, 9]. Calling this the “communitarian tradition” and characterizing it as a basic type, Hobsbawm suggested its examination for future research [Hobsbawm 1983, 9]. This paper maintains that the “communitarian tradition” can become a basic type of “tradition” through the tactful institutionalization of “those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities” [Hobsbawm 1983, 9] by the writer of the “traditions” and their reproduction based on the understanding and acceptance by the receivers of the “traditions.” Let us call this complementary dyad that is involved in institutionalization by, one, the writers of the “traditions,” and, two, through their reproduction, by the receivers the “structure of the institutionalization of tradition.”

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¹ Hobsbawm defined the “invention of tradition” that “It includes both tradition actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity” [Hobsbawm 1983, 1]. In this paper we use the term “tradition” in the latter sense.

² The author has also analyzed the beginning of the “invention of tradition” and the form of institutionalization prior to the introduction of the Tonarigumi system in Java [Kobayashi 2006a]. In discussing the Tonarigumi system of Java, the relationship with Java Hokokai (People’s Royalty Association), which was the higher level organization, should be examined. I would like to deal with the relationship between the two in a separate paper.
This paper focuses, in particular, on the process of tactful institutionalization by the writer of the “traditions” in the above mentioned dual aspect of the “structure of the institutionalization of tradition:” institutionalization and reproduction. This paper examines, as an example of the “institutionalization of tradition,” the process of institutionalization of the “tradition” of gotong royong in Indonesia through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system by the military administration in Java under Japanese occupation.

Now let us look at studies that have acted as precursors for this paper.

As is well known, in Indonesia gotong royong has frequently been referred to as a tradition of the “Indonesian people.” However, no one has asked what gotong royong really means [Koentjaraningrat 1961, 2; Ishikawa 1970, 172]. In other words, the “tradition” of gotong royong has been discussed without its significance ever being closely examined. Perhaps because of this, not much work squarely discusses the conceptualization and discourse of gotong royong, although there are countless partial references to it. Also, many works consider gotong royong a practice that forms part of the basis of Indonesian society [Grader 1952, 3-4 and 8; Mintz 1965; Karamoy et al. 1983, 2].

Studies on gotong royong have placed importance on the exploration of the process of its arbitrary co-option by the state and on de-constructing its ideological nature [Koentjaraningrat 1961; Weatherbee 1966; Bowen 1986]. Hideo Gumisawa carried out an extensive examination of the process of the birth and transformation of gotong royong from the end of the Dutch colonial period to the new order regime of Suharto [Gumisawa 2004]. However, as far as the author can tell, there is almost no research that discusses in detail various aspects of the “tradition” of gotong royong in the context of the introduction of the Tonarigumi system during the Japanese occupation.

On the other hand, there are many works on the Tonarigumi system in Java under Japanese occupation. One can sum up their findings under two headings. First is the view that the Tonarigumi system played the role, at the grassroots level, of mobilizing and controlling the local people in order to promote cooperation with the Japanese military [Nishijima and Kishi 1959, 186-187; Anderson 1961, 45; 1972, 29; Reid 1974, 16; Kanahele 1967=1977, 221; Friend 1988, 101; Frederick 1989, 114-115]. Second, and related to the first, is the view that the introduction of the Tonarigumi system

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3 Sekimoto defines gotong royong in modern Indonesia as the “provision of all money and other articles and labor voluntarily given with the anticipation of long-term mutual aid” [Sekimoto 1990, 173].
4 Cribb and Kahin point out the historical fact that the Japanese military administration introduced gotong royong during the Japanese occupation [Cribb and Kahin 2004, 162-163] but there are no detailed references given.
prompted the transformation of Javanese society [Benda 1958, 154-155; Anderson 1966, 42; Cribb 1991, 40-41; Kurasawa 1992, 242-253; Sato 1994, 72; 74-75; Kozano 1997a, 15-20; 1997b, 44-46; 2001, 74-77; Hering 2002, 332-334]. However, there are no detailed references as to what kind of idea lay behind the military’s introduction of the Tonarigumi and Aza Jokai system nor is there much on how the Tonarigumi and Aza Jokai system was introduced. It is true, though, that quite a few works point out that the “tradition” of gotong royong served as the ideological basis for supporting the Tonarigumi system in Java under Japanese occupation.

For example, Sutter writes that “neighborhood associations (Roekoen Tetangga) based on the spirit of tolong-menolong (gotong royong) was introduced on Djawa modeled after the Japanese prototype” [Sutter 1959, 188]. Nishijima and Kishi also point out that the Tonarigumi system was introduced as a form of institutionalization of gotong royong saying that Tonarigumi, consisting of a few households, and Aza Jokai, consisting of a group of Tonarigumi, were organized through the incorporation and institutionalization of the existing spirit of neighborhood mutual assistance in Java (gotong royong) [Nishijima and Kishi 1959, 136]. Dahm also characterizes “Tonari Gumis (Neighborhood Assistance Units) in the countryside was said to realize the spirit of gotong royong (the Indonesian tradition of mutual help)” [Dahm 1966=1969, 264-265]. Further, Kurasawa argues that “mutual aid among the local residents,” which the military determined should be part of the activities of Tonarigumi, appealed to the traditional spirit of gotong royong [Kurasawa 1992, 248]. In addition, Sato points out that the military authorities received a report from Kyukanseido Chosa Iinkai (Committee for the Study of Traditional Customs and State Forms) which stated that gotong royong was a “tradition” which symbolized mutual aid, and this led to the making of movies that emphasized the importance of mutual aid by the propaganda office [Sato 1994, 74]. However, there are no references in these studies as to how the “tradition” was inculcated and institutionalized in a way that led to the final introduction of the Tonarigumi system.

Gumisawa, on the other hand, provides a comprehensive explanation of how gotong royong was perceived by the Japanese military administration during the Japanese occupation [Gumisawa 2004, 6-9]. According to Gumisawa, gotong royong was

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5 Among these studies, Kurasawa is the most comprehensive on the function of Tonarigumi and Aza Jokai in Java [Kurasawa 1992, 162-163]. Although not as comprehensive as Kurasawa, there are a series of works that are also highly suggestive by Yakko Kozano on the relationship between the administration within villages, the heads of the villages and the Tonarigumi organization [Kozano 1997a; 1997b; 2001] and the study by Frederick that points out the relationship between Tonarigumi in Surabaya, a city in eastern Java and the existing youth mutual aid organization, Sinoman [Frederick 1989, 115].

6 Regarding the general situation around the Japanese military’s understanding of gotong royong, this paper has derived suggestions from Gumisawa’s work [Gumisawa 2004, 6-9]. I would like to define this paper as something that has deepened the work by Gumisawa.
propagated and promoted by the military authority as a traditional concept that supported the *Tonarigumi* system in Java [Gumisawa 2004, 9]. However, since Gumisawa’s interest is in presenting the birth and transformation of the concept of *gotong royong* from the end of the Dutch colonial period through to the Soekarno period, there is again no reference as to how *gotong royong* was characterized as a “tradition” by the Japanese military administration and used for the promotion of the *Tonarigumi* system.

As is clear from the above, although it has been pointed out that *gotong royong* was recognized as an ideology or “tradition” that supported the *Tonarigumi* system by the Japanese military authority during the Japanese occupation, the issue over the kind of context in which the “tradition” of *gotong royong* was institutionalized has been neglected in all studies.

As Goto points out, the studies on Indonesia under occupation by Japan are mainly from the viewpoint of a political history that focuses on trends among the national leadership centered on Jakarta. Only a few are concerned with how the Japanese military administration was accepted in the broader society at the local level, which is an issue where there should be more analysis from now on [Goto 1989, 55]. Therefore, clarifying the process of introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system, which reached the greatest penetration in Javanese rural society among all the measures introduced by the Japanese military, is a way to partially fill this gap in previous studies [Kozano 1997a, 16].

After appreciating the issues above, this paper examines the process of the “institutionalization of tradition” in Indonesia by focusing on the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system in Java under Japanese occupation.

The structure of the paper is as follows.

In section I, I attempt a logical explanation of the hypothesis: the “institutionalization of tradition.” Section II describes the background to the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system. Section III shows that the establishment of neighborhood organizations was decided on as one measure for the “wartime readiness intensification” policy that was proposed in the report of the first session of the Central Advisory Council. Section IV examines how the *Tonarigumi* system was uniformly introduced in all of Java through the institutionalization of the “tradition” of *gotong royong* or the “institutionalization of *gotong royong*,” and it explains how *gotong royong* was inculcated by drawing on an analysis of the *Kamishibai* (a picture-story show) titled “*Tonarigumi*.” The conclusion gives a rough summary of the findings of this paper and discusses future tasks.
I. Hypothesis: “The institutionalization of tradition”

1. The power and assent of “tradition”

As Anthony Giddens has stated in developing the thesis of Hobsbawm et al., “‘tradition’ always incorporates power, whatever they are constructed in a deliberate way or not. Kings, emperors, priests and others have long invented traditions to suit themselves and to legitimate their rules” [Giddens 1999, 40]. Thus, “tradition” becomes “effectively a way of setting clashes between different values and ways of life” [Giddens 1994, 104] in order to justify the rule of the state. As stated below, during the Japanese occupation, the military authority intensively propagated *gotong royong* as a Javanese or Indonesian “tradition” in order to justify the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system, which the military authority introduced in order to control the general population.

Also, the “tradition” of *gotong royong*, as later advanced by Soekarno, was frequently used as “a way of setting clashes” [Giddens 1994, 195] or as “a political slogan” [Gumisawa 2003, 147] in order to justify Soekarno’s guided democracy. In this sense, “tradition” is always clad in the cloth of power.

The question here, however, is why it was possible for the people, the recipients, to accept and reproduce this drama called “tradition,” which was invented by the arbitrariness of power. Regardless of how tactfully the main plot of the “tradition” is invented, or supplemented, reduced or revised by the writer, the state and the power that be, it cannot exist without the reproduction involved in its acceptance and retelling. As Toru Kashima says, tradition is something that is formed and survives when individuals accept and choose it as a possibility [Kashima 2003, 18]. Therefore, if it is presupposed that the action of acceptance and selection by the recipient has to come into play, “tradition” cannot exist only in terms of power.

To sum up, the inculcation and circulation of “tradition” have to satisfy the following conditions. The people, the recipients, have to assent the world-view expressed by the “tradition.” Even if “tradition” continues to be constantly invented by power, and if it is draped in power, the theme and plot manifested by the “tradition” are not left to the complete discretion of the writer, that is to say, the powers that be. The power has to take account of the need to gain the assent of the recipients, the people, in order that the theme and the story of the “tradition” can be as well-written ones. Above all, the writer of the “tradition,” the state and the powers that be, know full well that the “tradition” survives through its reproduction by the recipient. In other words, while the “tradition”

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7 Toru Kashima discussed the need to understand tradition in a verb-like sense as handing down action (*Überlieferung*) going back to the etymology of “trado” (to deliver by hand, to entrust) [Kashima 2003, 19].
is supported by the relationship of subordination that the recipient has with the writer, it survives through the complementary interaction between the power that the writer seeks and the assent to which the recipient accepts it.

2. Affinity of “tradition” and community

If “tradition” continues to exist through this interaction between power and assent, it is difficult to see how “tradition” can consist of a theme and story that completely excludes the assent of the recipient.

According to Hobsbawm, “tradition” is essentially a process of formalization and a ritualization, characterized by reference to the past [Hobsbawm 1983, 4]. “Tradition” is not severed from the past, instead it has an affinity with it. Furthermore, the theme and story of “tradition,” while having the power of the writer behind them, should assure the assent of every recipient. To put it simply, the theme and story of “tradition” have to be well-conceived from the recipients’ point of view.

What are the themes and stories of a well-conceived “tradition” which can attain the assent of the recipients? At least one should be a “formulaic notion of truth” [Giddens 1994, 63] or the “kind of truth” [Giddens 1999, 41] to borrow the words of Giddens again. Indeed, the “formulaic notion of truth” or the “kind of truth” produce a power that seeks a universality and totality that goes beyond any difference in positions and factions [Kobayashi 2005a, 45]. In this sense, “tradition” is very moral in nature. In the theme and story of “tradition,” the people, namely the recipients, are sometimes depicted as actors both seeking universality and totality and embodying morality. Therefore, it is assumed that the theme and story that praises a “formulaic notion of truth” or the “kind of truth” can assure the assent of the people.

What kind of “traditions” makes up the themes and stories with a very moral aspect?

As Durkheim put it, morality starts with some attachment to a group, since it exists when a group of bonded individuals is the only subject [Durkheim 1924=1985, 56]. Therefore, the themes and stories of a very moral “tradition” might be something that represents a world where individuals harbor attachment to a group, a “communitarian tradition” as proposed by Hobsbawm [Hobsbawm 1983, 9].

So, according to Durkheim and Hobsbawm, many of the themes and stories made up by “tradition” can have an affinity with a world where individuals have an attachment to a group and a community; the social cohesion and collective identities has been established and symbolized. In other words, “tradition” has an affinitive relationship with the world of social cohesion between individuals and with collective identities in a
3. “Tradition” in Indonesia: Gotong Royong

What “traditions” are there in Indonesia that have such an affinitive relationship with the world of social cohesion between individuals and with collective identities within a community? This section focuses on a “tradition” of Indonesia, gotong royong, which Soetardjo Kartohadjikoesmo calls the “common basis of traditional Indonesian culture” [Kartohadjikoesmo 1953] and Tsuneyuki Suzuki calls the “ethos of customary law” [Suzuki 1977, 60].

As Ishikawa points out, although the term gotong royong has frequently been used in Indonesian newspapers and magazines, the meaning has not been clearly defined. The meaning that common people vaguely associate with gotong royong is cooperation among members of a community [Ishikawa 1970, 172]. The meanings that people generally give to gotong royong may therefore entail both cooperation inside a community in a broad sense and the social relationship of mutual aid. In other words, the “tradition” of gotong royong has been characterized in Indonesia as part of the very ordinary daily social actions of mutual aid in a community. In this sense, the “tradition” of gotong royong is basically the same as what Hobsbawm calls the “communitarian tradition.”

So why did gotong royong come to be articulated as a “tradition”?

Benda proposed the two factors of continuity and change as analytical tools for the study of Indonesia’s modern history [Benda 1965, 1058]. Benda calls the continuity factor of Indonesia “indigenous components” and states that it is possible, by organizing it, to lead a movement with a mass base and to achieve the integration of the population [Benda 1966, 45-55].

Soekarno, who led Indonesia’s independence movement, said in a speech at the 1961 Conference of Non-Aligned Nations that they “learnt that any basic element of national ideology must be an ethnic legacy, a heritage, and a tradition thatformulates the life patterns which unite people in their ethnicity” [Soekarno 1961, 253]. This statement makes Benda’s point seem very persuasive. For Soekarno, who achieved the independence and integration of the nation, understood that by paying attention to the national heritage and tradition of Indonesia, namely the factor of continuity within Indonesian history, and by subsuming it in a national ideology, the Indonesians achieved their independence.

Soekarno cited, as part of Indonesia’s national heritage, “populism” (kerakyatan),
gotong royong, “consultation” (musyawarah), and “consensus unanimity” (mufakat). According to Soekarno, these meant, “people as the foundation,” “collective efforts toward a common goal,” “debate and discussion,” and “consensus,” respectively [Soekarno 1961, 253].

However, among these, the “tradition” of gotong royong, which Soekarno defines as “collective efforts toward a common goal,” has been de-constructed by the studies of Koentjaraningrat [1961], Bowen [1986], and Weatherbee [1966].

Koentjaraningrat was the first to shed empirical light on the nature of the “tradition” of gotong royong. In his 1958 study, conducted in two villages in central Java, Koentjaraningrat collected 111 examples of social actions called gotong royong and listed them into seven types. According to Koentjaraningrat, the social actions called gotong royong consisted of the following seven types:

1) those conducted at the time of deaths or misfortune in the village,
2) those conducted when carrying out public work for the village, such as the construction of irrigation ditches and Islamic temples,
3) those conducted by villagers at the time of banquets for marriages, circumcision, etc.,
4) those conducted during the maintenance of the ancestral cemetery,
5) those conducted when a villager needs labor for work such as digging a well,
6) those conducted for agricultural work, in particular, during the busy season for farmers, and,
7) those conducted during repairs or labor on a drainage ditch that is beneficial for the village, at the initiative of the mayor or village officials [Koentjaraningrat 1961, 29].

Koentjaraningrat concludes that the social actions categorized under these seven types involve the kinds of mutual relationships and intensive labor that exist in rural societies around the world, so they are not unique to Java or Indonesia [Koentjaraningrat 1961, 43]. Also, it is said that as the monetary economy penetrated Indonesia in the 19th century, there were already sporadic cases where this kind of action was paid for and that the mutual aid type of labor service was becoming unpractical for farmers. For example, it has been reported that the survey conducted in Malang in Eastern Java by the research section of the general affairs department of the Japanese military administration during the Japanese occupation found that households headed by women could be exempted from night watch duty, which seemed to be a form of gotong royong, if they paid cash [Terauchi 1995, 49]. As shown by the examples, gotong royong is a mutual social action institutionalized in a community, rather than one born from the full
Koentjaraningrat also points out that the origin of the Javanese term *gotong royong* cannot be found in the old literary works of Java, such as the annals, and that there existed rural areas where it was not used as a daily term. Koentjaraningrat maintains that it was in the 1920s that the term *gotong royong* first appeared in the literature and that the writers were not Javanese but Dutch scholars on customary law and agriculture who were studying, in particular, the rural society of eastern Java [Koentjaraningrat 1974, 56-57]. In the final analysis, the vocabulary of *gotong royong* can first be found in books on customary law and rural society by Dutch researchers [Koentjaraningrat 1961].

Gumisawa also assumes that it was between the beginning of the 1900s and the 1930s that the vocabulary of *gotong royong* was first recorded in various dictionaries and says that the definition of *gotong royong* as “mutual aid” was not clear in these dictionaries [Gumisawa 2004, 6]. Further, when the Indonesian Language Committee (*Komisi Bahasa Indonesia*), set up to propagate the Indonesian language during the Japanese occupation, published a list of new, approved words in February, 1944, *gotong royong* was included on that list [Kan Po No. 37, 31]. So we can infer that *gotong royong* was a relatively new term which came into being after the 1900s.

Bowen, on the other hand, pays attention to how *gotong royong* became part of the ideology of the state, and he describes the three stages it passed through before it came to represent Indonesian politics and Indonesian culture.

According to Bowen, “*gotong royong* (mutual assistance) has become a key element in the Indonesian system of political and cultural power through three continuing process: (1) the motivated misrecognition of local cultural realities; (2) the construction of a national tradition on the basis of those misrecognition; and (3) the inclusion of state cultural representations as part of a strategy of intervention in the rural sector and the mobilization of rural labor” [Bowen 1986, 545].

Therefore, according to these studies, *gotong royong* is not a true tradition with a long history of continuity but is clearly a more recently constructed “tradition.” Also, according to Koentjaraningrat’s categorization and Gumisawa’s comparative analysis of

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8 Someya has reported that *gotong royong* in the modern society of Java exists not on the ground of personal initiatives but on the ground of a mutual aid relationship with the assumption of help from others [Someya 1993, 342; 344].

9 Gumisawa compared a Javanese-Dutch dictionary (1901), a Malaysian-English dictionary (1903), and a Malaysian-English dictionary (1932), Javanese-Dutch dictionary (1938), Javanese dictionary (1939) [Gumisawa 2004, 6].
various dictionaries, *gotong royong* was not in any way a term with a single meaning. It was an ambiguous term used in various contexts.

As will be explained later, *gotong royong* came to be given a single meaning that manifested the social relationship of values that people assent to as being attendant on “mutual aid,” and it was made suitable for social integration during the war in Java under Japanese occupation. The meaning given *gotong royong* by Soekarno changed from its condensed definition in the “Indonesian national tenet and ethos” [Tsuchiya 1971, 579] expressed in the Birth of Pancasila to an element in that ideology which legitimized a guided democracy [Weatherbee 1966]. In other words, one can see how the ambiguity surrounding *gotong royong* was converged into an ideology that legitimized both a political system and a nation state.

As O’Connor points out, in many cases, a new national symbol is based on a unique expression of community as a means of achieving national unity [O’Connor 1983, 86]. This may be the reason why the state and those in power made extensive use of the “communitarian tradition” of *gotong royong* as a term to dress up the ideology that legitimized their own power in modern Indonesian history when there was a need for a new national symbol. However, the “tradition” of *gotong royong* continued to represent the social relationship of mutual aid among people in local communities even though it also internalized the writer’s power both during the Japanese occupation and the era of the Soekarno regime.

From the above, we can confirm that, like in the case of the structure involved in the survival of existing “traditions,” the “tradition” of *gotong royong* in Indonesia has also survived in the interaction between power and assent.

4. Hypothesis: the “institutionalization of tradition”

Based on the above analysis of “tradition,” let us present the hypothesis of this paper, the “institutionalization of tradition.” “Tradition” survives in the interaction between power and assent, as mentioned above. For this reason, the themes and stories told by “tradition” turn out to assure the assent of the recipients (the people) while being accompanied by the power sought by the writer (the state and those in power). Also, “tradition” telling has a special affinity with the world of values that people assent to as social cohesion and as collective identities in a community. A “tradition” of Indonesia, *gotong royong*, depicts a world of values that people assent to as attendant both on social cohesion and on collective identities in a community.

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10 O’Connor cited *gotong royong* as an example of this [O’Connor 1983, 86].
Therefore, “tradition” is continuously reproduced by satisfying the need the state and those in power have for power and through the assent of the people where it represents the values that people assent to through the themes and stories of social cohesion and collective identities in a community.

One hypothesis of this paper will be that the “institutionalization of tradition” involves the mechanism for reproducing a “tradition” that is tinted with these themes and stories that are institutionalized by the state and by those in power. The paper focuses, as an example of the “institutionalization of tradition” in Indonesia, on the history of how the “tradition” of gotong royong was institutionalized in Java under Japanese occupation through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, and we will call this the “institutionalization of gotong royong.”

Now let us look at this “institutionalization of gotong royong” during the Japanese occupation in the next three sections.

II. Background of the Tonarigumi system

1. The beginning of the Japanese military administration in Java

With the beginning of the Pacific War, Japan advanced from one region of South East Asia to another. The occupation of various regions of South East Asia, regional control, and various types of administration vis-à-vis local residents during the Pacific War were called Nampo Gunsei (the military administration in Southeast Asia) [Iwatake 1989, 3]. The emphasis of the policies of the military administration in Southeast Asia was on the recovery of public order, the acquisition of defense resources, and the self-sufficiency of operational units, which contributed to the achievement of the war’s aims [Military History Department of National Institute for Defense Studies 1985, 17].

The landing operations for Java, Indonesia, were conducted on March 1, 1942. The Japanese forces reached Jakarta, which was called Batavia during the Dutch colonial period, on March 5, four days after landing, and issued Fukoku Dai 1 Go (Decree of Supreme Commander No. 1): “Concerning the enforcement of the military administration.” This decree declared that the Japanese commander would exercise the authority of governor-general in Java. On March 9, two days after the decree, the Dutch surrendered unconditionally, and the Japanese military administration in Java started. Hitoshi Imamura assumed the position of the first 16th Army Supreme Commander,11

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11 The leadership of Nampo Gunsei (the military administration in Southeast Asia) consisted of the military commanders of each force, Gunsei Bucho or Gunseikan (the head of the military administration department), and Gunseibun Somu Bucho or Gunseikanbu Somubucho (the chief of the general affairs department of the military administration). The military commander bore the highest responsibility, and
which was to control Java.

Article 3 of Decree of Supreme Commander No. 1 stipulated, “The existing administrative agencies, their scope of work and authority, and the provisions of various laws and ordinances shall continue to be effective for the time being, except in cases where they turn out to be obstacles for the execution of the military administration” [Osamu Kan Po Dai 1 Go: 1 (Kan Po No. 1, 1)]. Thus, the administrative system of the Dutch East Indies was temporarily inherited. Shunkichihiro Miyoshi, who was working at the military administration at the time, recalled, “Although it was expected to take at least three months to achieve the total control of Java, this was completed as quickly as nine days. Thus the reinforcement units for the military administration had not arrived. The consequent lack of personnel led to a situation where it was impossible for the military administration to carry out its functions” [Miyoshi 1965, 68]. Therefore, the military authorities temporarily followed the administrative system of the Dutch era, because there was an absolute lack of personnel and preparation time since the occupation had ended unexpectedly quickly. As a result, the full-scale re-organization of the administrative agencies had to wait until August, 1942, five months after the beginning of the military administration, as we will explain later.

2. Full scale re-organization of the military administration and its complement at the lower levels of the administration

In April, 1942, a little before the full-scale re-organization of the military administration, at the designation of the Minister of the Army, Hideo Kodama, a former Minister of Interior Affairs, Kyujiro Hayashi, a former Ambassador to Brazil, and Kenjiro Kitajima, a former Vice-Minister of Takumu Sho (Colonial Department) arrived in Java as political advisors to give advice on the military administration of Java [Imamura 1971, 381].

In August, 1942, following Decree of Supreme Commander No. 27, “Concerning the revision of the local administrative system,” and Decree of Supreme Commander No. 28, “Ordinance of Residency Government,” “Special Ordinance of Residency Government,” a full-scale re-organization of the military’s administration was carried

he was supported by the chief of the general affairs department. Although in terms of rank, the head of the military administration department was the highest aide to the military commander, the practical business of all aspects of the military administration was undertaken by the chief of the general affairs department. He understood the issues at stake and dealt with operations and logistics [Iwatake 1989, 250].

12 He graduated from the Malay language division of the Tokyo Gaikokugo Gakko (Tokyo School of Foreign Languages) in 1920. After that, he worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1946. During that period, except for four years and six months when he was stationed in the Netherlands, he worked most of the time in Indonesia (as Surabaya Consul and Batavia Consul General). In 1942, he was stationed at the consulate at Gunseibu (to be renamed Gunseikanbu later). In 1946, after repatriation, he retired as Consul General.
out [Kan Po No. 1, 10-12]. With these provisions, the local administrative system in Java was changed from that of the Dutch era to one with Japanese names for its units: Shuu (residency), Ken (regency), Shi (city), Shiku (city-ward), Gun (district), Son (sub-district), and Ku (ward). The title of each unit head was also named after the Japanese system, such as Shuu chookan, Kenchoo, Shichoo, Shikuchoo, Gunchoo, Sonchoo, and Kuchoo. In addition, they made Jakarta, where the headquarters of the military administration was located, a Tokubetsu Shi (Special City)\textsuperscript{13} and upgraded Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Solo) into Kotji (principality), which has the same status as Shuu [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 53-6].

One feature of the administrative organization of the military administration in Java after the full-scale re-organization was the fact that although Japanese nationals took the office of state governor\textsuperscript{14} and mayor in Java’s special cities,\textsuperscript{15} for the other administrative levels, those of prefecture, county, and village which were re-organized or simply re-named from the established system of the Dutch Indies, Indonesians, not Japanese nationals, were employed [Kurasawa 1992, 83-84].

In Java, policies were executed through this new administrative system, which, however, began to encounter difficulties in dealing with a dramatic increase in its workload [Kozano 2001, 77]. Villages and wards/city-wards, the lowest rungs in the administration, faced the twin tasks of, one, achieving a smooth administration, and, two, of reducing this new burden of work. The Tonarigumi system was introduced at such a time as a practical policy to handle the increasing amount of work at the lowest levels of the administrative system.

3. Systematic development for the increase in food production

From the period before the occupation, Japan had recognized Indonesia as “a very important source of supply of agricultural products at the international level, too” [Mantetsu Toa Keizai Chosa Kyoku 1937, 145]. Java was regarded as particularly

\textsuperscript{13} In Jakarta Tokubetsu Shi (the special city of Jakarta) where the headquarters of Gunseikanbu were located, the Tokubetsu Shicho (mayor of the special city) and a few Zyoyaku (deputy mayors) appointed by the head of the military administration managed the city. The city had Shichokanbo (a mayor’s secretariat in charge of secret matters and documents), which was in charge of managing secret information and the other documents, and five departments: the department of general affairs; the department of the economy; the department of education; the department of welfare; and the department of public affairs. In terms of administrative districts, the city consisted of seven Shiku (City wards). In each Shiku, a Shikuyakusho (City ward office) was located and under the Shiku were Ku (wards). The heads of the Shiku conveyed orders and messages to the heads of the Ku within the Shiku [The 1958, 102]. Besides these administrative units, Keisatsusho (police stations) and Chihokensatsukyoku (local prosecutors offices) were set up [The 1958, 103].

\textsuperscript{14} On November 10, 1943 Indonesians were appointed as the heads of Jakarta state and Bojonegoro state [Asahi Shim bun, November 11, 1943].

\textsuperscript{15} On November 10, 1943, Sutarjo was appointed as the head of Jakarta state [Djawa Baroe, 1943. 12. 1].
important not only as a supply basis for the entire southern region but also as a source of supplies for the many army units deployed in the eastern region [Iwatake 1981, 193].

However, in Java in 1943, one year after the occupation, the amount of unhulled rice available was about half that needed, so the food situation was expected to deteriorate [Java Gunseikanbu 1944, 22]. As if to provide supporting evidence, in 1943, at meetings on April 26, May 5 and May 15 of The Committee for the Study of Traditional Customs and State Forms, an advisory body for the military administration, Indonesian members of the committee, including Soekarno and Hatta, talked about the worsening food situation [Toda 1995b (13th-15th)]. Gandasubrata, who served as the governor of the Banyumas Prefecture of Banyumas State in central Java during the Japanese occupation, recalled that when the food shortage was most serious during the Japanese occupation, it was worse than the famine of 1933-1936 with 32,000 out of a population of 740,000 facing starvation [Gandasubrata 1953, 11].

The military administration decided upon an “emergency food measure outline” and an “emergency food measure enforcement guideline” in November 1943 and embarked on programs for an increase in food shipments including unhulled rice and more control of consumption [Java Gunseikanbu 1944, 22]. Both the outline and the guideline emphasized the need for an organized education campaign at the grass-roots level to increase food production and control consumption in the villages. For example, the “outline” included the following measure to improve food production:

To carry out an organized enlightenment/propaganda campaign in consideration of the fact that the most important thing for achieving an increase in production is to stimulate the will for such an increase and to heighten the spirit of cooperation among farmers [Java Gunseikanbu 1944, 23].

The “guideline” included the following measure on food rationing:

To make the people cooperate in the conservation of food by carrying out an enlightenment/propaganda campaign to strengthen the wartime regime in eating habits by, for example, encouraging the conservation of rice, by the consumption of substitute foods, and by refraining from conducting Selamatan during weddings, funerals, birth ceremonies, etc. [Java Gunseikanbu 1944, 26].

Thus, we can infer that the military authorities, faced with a worsening food situation, needed to carry out an organized propaganda/enlightenment campaign at the grassroots level to enforce measures to increase food production and to control consumption. For this reason, it was essential to have a grassroots organization such as the Tonarigumi system which could make the directions and orders of the military administration work
in communities at the lowest level.

The Japanese occupation lasted three years and five months from March, 1942 through August, 1945, but the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system did not take place at the beginning of the military administration, as we will see later, but in January, 1944. 1944 was the year when the loss of the war by Japan looked almost certain and when various measures were being introduced to maintain public order in the occupied area of Southeast Asia as well as to secure its position as a supply base [Nishijima and Kishi 1959, 186]. Therefore, the period when the *Tonarigumi* system was introduced coincided with the period when the military administration sought full cooperation from the people of Java in preparation for an all-out war.

From the above, we can assume that the *Tonarigumi* system was introduced both to improve the functioning of the lowest level of the administrative system, which was growing rapidly after the administration’s full-scale re-organization, and to serve as an “institutional basis for strengthening Japanese control” [Kurasawa 1992, 242] in order to control and mobilize the lowest levels of the community, who faced an intensification of the war and a tightening food situation.

**III. Process of introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system**

**1. Phased introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system**

The *Tonarigumi* system was uniformly introduced in the entire Java area in January, 1944. However, before this, the *Tonarigumi* system had been introduced in a phased way in various parts of Java.

For example, in Bandung, the biggest city in western Java, a *Tonarigumi* system was formed on March 9, 1943, the earliest date in Java [Asia Raya 1944. 3. 9]. One *Tonarigumi* consisted of 25 households. By March, 1944, one year after this, there were 1,379 *Tonarigumi* and 33 *Tonarigumi* of European-Asian interracial people (*Belanda Indo*) in the entire city. As a superstructure for *Tonarigumi*, 324 *Bunkai* (chapter) and four chapters of *Belanda Indo* were set up, and these controlled the *Tonarigumi* of this area.

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16 For example, in Jakarta special city, on December 1, 1943, three city-wards were re-organized into seven city-wards and the introduction of *Tonarigumi* and *Aza Jokai* was planned to coincide with this in order to strengthen the defense capacity and achieve the penetration of the policies of the military administration [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 183].

17 Hatta referred to the *Tonarigumi* of Bandung at the 11th meeting of the Old Customs Research Committee (March 25, 1943) held a little after its formation on March 9, 1943 [Toda, 1995b (11th): 26].
In the formation of Tonarigumi, the military administration intended to infiltrate gotong royong. When Asia Raya published an editorial to commemorate the first anniversary of the formation of the Tonarigumi system in Bandung, it said the following:

After the formation of Tonarigumi, to achieve a goal, gotong royong and the attitude of cooperation began to grow spontaneously among residents in the neighborhoods. People did not just receive the order of the government. Thus the spirit of gotong royong was revived even in a big city like Bandung. Today, the spirit of gotong royong has spread from Desa to Kampung in the city of Bandung. Finally, the attitude of gotong royong has begun to be observed [Asia Raya 1944. 3. 9, emphasis added by the author].

Since Asia Raya was a paper published under the strict control of the Japanese military, the propaganda element of this editorial cannot be discounted. However, from the statement above at least, it seems that after the formation of the Tonarigumi system in Bandung the Japanese military administration was calling attention to and inculcating gotong royong among the region’s residents.18

In Surabaya, the biggest city in the eastern part of Java, due to the need to strengthen the anti-air-raid system, a formation was set up by the end of August, 1943, where 20 households comprised an anti-fire Tonarigumi and five anti-fire Tonarigumi comprised an anti-air-raid Gun (unit), and 60,000 plus households in the entire city of Surabaya were involved in civil anti-fire activities with a 3,072 Tonarigumi/612 units system [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 212].

When introducing the anti-fire Tonarigumi system in Surabaya, the Japanese military administration explained, “the system based on the spirit of neighborhood mutual aid had existed in various places from older times, sometimes in the name of gotong royong” [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 212]. It emphasized that the Tonarigumi system was a spontaneous system in Java. In other words, it maintained that the introduction of the Tonarigumi system by the Japanese military administration was not by any means something that was forced upon Java, but that it conformed to Java’s social customs.

In Pekalongan Residency, on December 1, 1943, “Pekalongan Residency Notification No. 15, Ku-Jokai, the Tonarigumi and Tonarigumi Jokai system development guideline”

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18 We can surmise that human relationships in urban neighborhoods during the Japanese occupation were already heartless from the statements of Hatta [Toda 1995a (4th): 6] and Supomo [Toda 1995a (4th): 16-17] at the 4th meeting of the Old Customs Research Committee. There was an editorial in Pandji Pustaka magazine to the effect that as human relationships in urban neighborhoods were heartless due to the infiltration of individualism, it was only through the introduction of organizations and rules that gotong royong would recover [Pandji Poestaka 1944. 6. 1].
(hereafter referred to as the “Tonarigumi development guideline”) was issued [Kan Po No. 14, 26; Sinar Baroe 1944. 1. 21], and the Tonarigumi system was officially introduced. One of the five aims of this “Tonarigumi development guideline” was “to make it the basic organization for moral training and for the spiritual unity of the residents by stimulating the fine, indigenous custom of neighborhood mutual aid” [Kan Po No. 14, 26].

As mentioned below, in the “Rimpo Soshiki Seibi Yoryo (neighborhood organization development guideline),” which introduced the Tonarigumi system uniformly in Java, a plan to institutionalize the Javanese “tradition” of gotong royong, representing mutual aid, can clearly be seen. However, this plan to “institutionalize gotong royong” was already evident in the “Tonarigumi development guideline” of Pekalongan State in the expression “stimulating the fine, indigenous custom of neighborhood mutual aid.”

As we have seen above, with “neighborhood mutual aid” and “neighborhood cooperative aid” being defined as a Javanese “tradition,” the Tonarigumi system was introduced in a phased way in some communities. In Java, therefore, preparations for the introduction of the Tonarigumi system were put into effect in a methodical manner [Kurasawa 1992, 243].

2. Report of the first session of Chuo Sangiin (Central Advisory Council)

The military administration announced that the Central Advisory Council would be established in order to grant political participation to Indonesians through Order No. 36, the “Central Advisory Council Order” of September 5, 1943 [Kan Po No. 10, 8-9]. With the establishment of the Central Advisory Council, the Committee for the Study of Traditional Customs and State Forms, which was the existing research organization for the military, was to be abolished.

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19 On the same day of the same year that the Tonarigumi system was established in Kedo state [Java Shimbun 1943. 11. 21]. Also, by December 4 of the same year, Malang state had already seen the establishment of the neighborhood organization [Java Shimbun 1943. 12. 5].

20 In Pekalongan state, since the Tonarigumi system had already been introduced in December 1943, there were 5,092 Aza Jokai and 29,919 Tonarigumi in the area by as early as February, 1944 [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 194].

21 In Article 5 “Ruiji Soshiki tono Kankei [the relationship with similar organizations]” of the “Rimpo Soshiki Seibi Yoko (Neighborhood Organization Development Outline),” which uniformly introduced the Tonarigumi system in Java, there is a passage that goes, “Even in a case where a neighborhood organization has already been established, if it is inadequate in terms of the structure of the area, etc. there shall be re-organization in accordance with a set policy.” This shows once more that before the Tonarigumi system was uniformly introduced in Java, as was mentioned above, the Tonarigumi system was set up experimentally, or, in some regions, formally.

22 The number of members of the Central Advisory Council was 43: 23 were appointed by the highest commander;18 were selected from the Houses of Councilors of states and special city; and 2 each were recommended by the Prince of Yogyakarta and the Prince of Solo [Kan Po No. 10, 9].
The establishment of the Central Advisory Council was a measure that was based on the declaration made by Prime Minister Tojo at the 82nd Extraordinary Session of the Imperial Parliament on June 16, 1943, which promised to grant political participation to Indonesians in Indonesia. However, the establishment of the Central Advisory Council was granted, most of all, as the price it was necessary to pay for markedly increasing the cooperation of the residents of Java, which was a strategic area for the southern defense [Kishi and Nishijima 1959, 353].

Nevertheless, the function of the Central Advisory Council was defined as being “subordinate to the highest commander, to report, concerning political affairs, on the request of the highest commander, and to make suggestions to the highest commander” [Kan Po No. 10, 8], and it had the characteristics of being the highest investigative organ for the military administration. Also, while the Central Advisory Council consisted of members of the House and the secretariat, in reality the latter was filled with Japanese public servants who had a large amount of power [Kishi and Nishijima 1959, 357].

As for the first session of the Central Advisory Council, an investiture of members was held on October 15, 1943 [Java Shimbun 1943. 10. 16], and the opening ceremony was held on the 16th [Java Shimbun 1943. 10. 17]. From the 18th, concerning Inquiry No. 1 of the highest commander, “Measures concerning cooperation for the Great East Asia War by local residents,” discussions started in the First Committee (Defense Assistance), the Second Committee (Labor Affairs), the Third Committee (the Strengthening of War-time Life), and the Fourth Committee (Production Increases) [Java Shimbun 1943. 11. 19].

In each committee of the first session of the Central Advisory Council, there were reports on four items: “the establishment of defense assistance strengthening organizations,” “the establishment of labor supply organizations,” “strengthening war-time preparedness,” and “various measures to increase production during war-time” [Kan Po No. 30, 7-10; Java Shimbunsha 1944, 31]. Among these, the report of the Third Committee, “strengthening war-time preparedness,” proposed a measure to establish neighborhood organizations [Kan Po No. 30, 9; Sutter 1959, 187-188] as follows:

To establish anew and to strengthen organizations like Buraku Kyosai kai (rural neighborhood mutual aid associations) without delay and swiftly in order to instigate and strengthen the mutual aid spirit, and thus wipe out the attitude of

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23 “Organizations like Buraku Kyosai kai (rural neighborhood mutual aid associations)” were translated as “perkoempoelan-perkoempoelan seroepa roeoken kampong, roeoken desa dan sebagainja” in Kan Po [Kan Po No. 30, 9].
pursuing one’s own benefits alone in a self-centered way [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 32].

Amidst a deterioration in the war, the military faced the need to extend its authority among the minds of the population. Thus, the neighborhood system was introduced to spread the policies of the military administration to the lowest strata of the local community. In introducing this system, as can be seen above, the military emphasized the fact that the system was based on the “spirit of mutual aid,” which was later to be replaced by the term gotong royong. On the other hand, individualism and liberalism were defined as “pursuing one’s own benefits alone” and “a self-centered way of life,” which were inimical to the spirit of mutual aid and denounced.

IV. The neighborhood system and the “institutionalization of gotong royong”

1. Rimpo Soshiki Seibi Yoko (neighborhood organization development outline)

On January 1, 1944, about two and a half months from the report of the first session of the Central Advisory Council, the military administration in Java ordered the introduction of the Tonarigumi system in all of Java with the “Chiseihi Dai 1515 Go (Secret Order No. 1515: Concerning the Development of the Neighborhood Organization [General].” Rimpo Soshiki Seibi Yoko (the Neighborhood Organization Development Outline), which stipulated concrete rules for the Tonarigumi system, was also issued at the same time [Kan Po No. 14, 31].

The Neighborhood Organization Development Outline consisted of nine articles: “purpose,” “organization,” “enterprise,” “expenses,” “relationships with similar organizations,” “supervisory relationships and relationships with upper level organizations,” “scope of enforcement,” “detailed items,” and “treatment in Kotji.” It should be noted that item 3 “purpose,” which stipulated the aim behind the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, included the following:

To aim at the execution of local cooperative tasks, such as mutual aid among residents, based on the spirit of neighborhood mutual aid, which is indigenous to

24 The expression “Sogo Fujo Seishin (mutual aid spirit)” in the report of the Third Committee was translated as “semangat tolong-menolong” in Kan Po [Kan Po No. 30, 9]. That is, in recommending the introduction of the neighborhood system, the Third Committee did not use the term “gotong royong.” On the other hand, the First Committee that recommended the “establishment of defense assistance strengthening organizations” said that the money required for its operation should be collected from funds for Tonarigumi and Desa and from “mutual aid” of all the people, except the poor [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 32]. And for “mutual aid” the term “gotong-rojong” was used [Kan Po No. 30, 8].

25 A summary of all the nine articles of the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline” was given as the “Tonarigumi System Organization Guideline” (emphasis by the author) on page 50 of “Jawa Nenkan (Java Almanac)” [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 50].
ancient Java (GOTTON ROYON [sic]) [Kan Po No. 14, 31].

Here the “spirit of mutual aid” was defined as gotong royong, and it was stated that this was indigenous to ancient Java, namely a “tradition.” This spirit of neighborhood mutual aid was defined as being synonymous with gotong royong, and the military administration declared that they wished to introduce the neighborhood organization using this for its spiritual basis. The “spirit of neighborhood mutual aid” cited here was not only the term used in the explanation at the time of the introduction of the above mentioned anti-fire Tonarigumi in Surabaya, it was also the basis of the “fine custom of neighborhood mutual aid” which is found in the “Tonarigumi development guideline” and of the “spirit of mutual aid” which is found in the report of the Third Committee of the Central Advisory Council. In each, the term representing the “communitarian tradition” was used as the spiritual basis for the introduction of the neighborhood organization.

After the “Rimo Sofu no Seishin (the spirit of neighborhood mutual aid)” was defined as gotong royong in the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline,” simple transliterations of gotong royong (“GOTON ROYON” or “GOTTON ROYON”) started gradually and often to appear instead of purely Japanese terms, such as “Sogo Fujo” and “Rimo Sofu.”

For example, on January 8, seven days after “Secret Order No. 1515” and the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline” were issued, we can find one example in “Gunseikanbu Kokoku (the military administration public notice) concerning neighborhood organization development” 26 (hereafter referred to as Military Administration Public Notice) [Kan Po No. 34, 19], which in effect was an explanation of the aims behind the establishment of the Tonarigumi system. Here it is clearly stated that the introduction of the Tonarigumi system would be carried out on the basis of the “spirit of gotong royong, which the residents of Java have cherished from olden days” [Kan Po No. 34, 19]. Also, the Japanese language paper, Java Shimbun, in an article about the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, described “GOTTON ROYON” as being primitive mutual aid in Indonesia [Java Shimbun 1944. 1. 12].

Later, at the conference of the heads of all the states in Java, held on January 11 of the same year, the introduction of the Tonarigumi system was officially announced [Kurasawa 1992, 243] and the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline” was translated into Indonesian and made public [Kan Po No. 35, 13-14]. 27

26 The Indonesian original is: “Poengoemoeman Gunseikanbu Tentang Hal Menjempoernakan Soesoenan Roekoen Tetangga.”

27 The Indonesian original is: “Azas-azas oeontoek Menjempoernakan Soesoenan Roekoen Tetangga.”
At this time, in addition to the *Java Shimbun* article mentioned above, newspapers and magazines in Java printed the full text of the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline” and reported on the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system in detail [Asia Raya 1944. 1. 12, Tjahaja 1944. 1. 12, Sinar Baroe 1944. 1. 13, Soeara Asia 1944. 1. 13, Djawa Baroe 1944. 2. 1].

In these reports, in accordance with the phrase “based on the spirit of neighborhood mutual aid, which is indigenous to ancient Java (GOTTON ROYON [sic])” from item 3 of the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline,” it was emphasized that the *Tonarigumi* system was introduced on the basis of *gotong royong* in Java. Among these reports is the following passage from *Djawa Baroe*. Here the aim of the military administration to “institutionalize *gotong royong*” can be most clearly seen:

In Java, too, there existed a fine custom called GOTTON ROYON from olden days. The people of *Kampung* helped each other in the construction of houses, weddings, etc. This is precisely the spirit of neighborhood aid. However, this GOTTON ROYON was not given any organizational nature under the oppression of the Dutch government period, and there was nothing of the sort that was helpful for the administration of the government. Also, this spirit has dwindled in the cities. The purpose of the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline” is to create a new and powerful organization for the good old GOTTON ROYON and, in addition to striving to raise the residents’ spirit of cooperation, to make it into an organization that can function well to help inculcate the policies of the military administration, strengthen defense, and stabilize public life, etc. by serving as a subordinate organization of the military administration. [*Djawa Baroe* 1944. 2. 1, emphasis added by the author]

The italicized part, in particular, clearly shows the military’s intention to “institutionalize *gotong royong*.” From the above, the order in which the understanding of the military administration was formed can be observed. 1) There exists in Java a custom called *gotong royong* which represents mutual aid. 2) However *gotong royong* was not organized or institutionalized under Dutch rule. Also, in the cities, the spirit of

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28 The introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system in Java was also reported in Japan at the time. For example, the *Asahi Shimbun* carried an article titled “2nd anniversary of Java subjugation—defense system, robust growth: the military administration has also introduced the *Tonarigumi* system” [*Asahi Shimbun* March 7, 1944].

29 *Djawa Baroe* magazine was a photo magazine published by a *Java Shimbun* which published “Jawa Nenkan (Java Almanac).” According to the bibliographical introduction by Kurasawa, the special features of the magazine were the use of both Japanese and Indonesian, which was unique among magazines published under the Japanese occupation and the wide range and popular appeal of the articles it contained [Kurasawa 1992, 12].

30 Gumisawa presented the same quote as an example of the concept of *gotong royong* being used by the military administration [Gumisawa 2004, 7].
gotong royong was getting weaker. 3) Through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, the two aims “to raise the residents’ spirit of cooperation” and “to inculcate the policies of the military administration, strengthen defense, and stabilize public life” can be achieved.

What is important here is that, the military administration, through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system and the “institutionalization of gotong royong,” were attempting “to raise the residents’ spirit of cooperation” and “to inculcate the policies of the military administration, strengthen defense, and stabilize public life.” Although these two ends may be contradictory, they do correspond to the kind of assent and power that make it possible for a “tradition” to exist and survive. What the military administration actually defined as the functions of the Tonarigumi system were: 1) homeland defense; 2) the conveying of orders; 3) increased production and the control of delivery, rationing and consumption; 4) military support/military service; 5) mutual aid among residents [Kan Po No. 14, 31; Djawa Baroe, 1944. 2. 1; Java Shimunsha 1944, 50]. Among these, 1) through 4) function so as to bear on the issue of the power behind the aim “to inculcate the policies of the military administration, strengthen defense, and stabilize public life” while 5) has the function, concerning assent, of “(raising) the residents’ spirit of cooperation.”

These two major functions, one, “to inculcate the policies of the military administration, strengthen defense, and stabilize public life,” and, two, “to raise the residents’ spirit of cooperation,” which the military intended for the Tonarigumi system, were also judged important after the issuance of the “Tonarigumi System Development Outline.” In support of this view are the evaluation criteria for the commendation of exemplary Tonarigumi and Aza Jokai that were granted as part of the events commemorating Meiji Day on November 3, 1944. These criteria, which were announced as the “Government announcement concerning the commendation of the contribution made by Tonarigumi and Aza Jokai”31 (hereafter referred to as “Government Announcement”) on September 11 of the same year, about two months prior to Meiji Day, are as follows:

1) those that have greatly contributed to homeland defense activities, such as anti-air-raid, ant-fire, and anti-spying activities,
2) those that have greatly contributed to making the intention of the Japanese military administration understood by residents at the time of the announcement of a Decree of Supreme Commander, notification, or order of the military administration,
3) those that have contributed greatly by helping the Japanese military as much as

31 The Indonesian original is: “Berita Pemerintah tentang Menghargai Tonarigumi dan Azazyookai jang Berdusa.”
possible and by promoting an increase in production and in the delivery of agricultural and other products, the distribution and the control of consumption of goods, the supply of labor, etc.,

4) those that have contributed greatly to fulfilling the obligation of military support, etc., as a lowest level organization performing the practical function of social service, and;

5) those that have greatly contributed to instigating the growth among all residents of the feeling of goodwill among residents working actively for the prosperity of society and helping each other [Kan Po No. 52, 28].

Glancing at these criteria, one can observe that 1) through 4) correspond almost completely to the four points whose aim was to help “inculcate the policies of the military administration, strengthen defense, and stabilize public life,” while 5) corresponds to “(raising) the residents’ spirit of cooperation.” Therefore, these points or functions did not just exist on paper on the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, the military continued to push for them after the system started, too.

In fact, the Japanese military quite tactfully tried to introduce the Tonarigumi system not just by giving it the power to mobilize and control the population, such as through the first of the functions mentioned above, they also stirred up the mutual aid aspect of “(raising) the residents’ spirit of cooperation” and thus secured their assent.

The understanding of the military administration concerning the “institutionalization of gotong royong” through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system can be observed in the above description in Djawa Baroe and is clearly confirmed in the memoirs of Moichiro Yamamoto, who was the general affairs section chief of the military administration at that time and later served as the head of the military administration.

One of the shortcomings of the obscurantist policy of the Dutch Indies government was that the intention of the central government reached only to the prefectural level in general and there had been no consideration to having it operate at lower levels. In other words, what the masses were like was not a major concern of the administrators. The shortcomings of this approach did not create serious problems because of the complementary approach of the spirit of GOTTON ROYON (mutual aid) that the ethnic Indonesian society had had from

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32 The writer, Takdir Alisjahbana, described how mutual aid was aroused among citizens by the introduction of the Tonarigumi system in his political novel Kalah dan Menang (Defeat and Victory), Japanese translation “Senso to Ai” (war and love), the setting being the period of the Japanese occupation [Alisjahbana 1978, 213].

33 Beside Yamamoto, Shizuo Saito, the political affairs section chief of the military administration in Java) recalls that the Tonarigumi system was established on the basis of time-honored Javanese mutual aid gotong royong system [Saito 1977, 135].
olden days.

However, because the Japanese military had a policy of carrying out its military policy by directly dealing with the masses, we felt the need to eliminate this shortcoming and to build a new organization to maintain and enlarge the spirit of GOTTON ROYON. We decided to build a Tonarigumi system in order to strengthen the lower level organizations of the local administration as units to carry out homeland defense, control the economy, etc. in the worsening war situation, in particular [Yamamoto 1978, 101].

In both the Djawa Baroe account and Yamamoto’s memoir, there is a common perspective of adopting the spirit of gotong royong, to which the central government of the Dutch colonial period paid little attention as a spiritual basis for organization and institutionalization, then of seizing it as a Javanese “tradition,” and institutionalizing and organizing it to inculcate of the policies of Japan’s military administration. In this way, we can see how the “institutionalization of tradition,” or the “institutionalization of gotong royong” during the Japanese occupation was carried out.

2. The inculcation of gotong royong

After the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, gotong royong came to be disseminated extensively as an Indonesian “tradition” in the propagation and propaganda policy for the system. In this, various media, such as films, picture stories, songs, etc., were used [Kurasawa 1992, 251].

For example, the movie “Tonarigumi,” produced by Nippon Eiga Sha, depicted the significance of Tonarigumi through scenes of Jokai, people's etiquette, such as bowing to the imperial palace, the deepest bow, etc., how to make anti-air-raid shelters, the rationing of coconuts, etc. [Djawa Baroe 1944.5.1].34 “Tonarigumi no Uta” (Song of Tonarigumi), which was sung in Japan, too, was introduced not only in Japanese [Djawa Baroe 1945. 3. 1] but also in Indonesian [Djawa Baroe 1944. 4. 15]. In the free translation into Indonesian, the phrase “opening the lattice window, familiar faces” of the first verse became “our neighborhood is also made up of residents of gotong royong”35 [Djawa Baroe 1944. 4. 15]. A drama depicting the activities of an exemplary Tonarigumi was shown in Malang [Java Shimbunsha 1944, 236]. In this propaganda, just as at the time of the announcement of the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline,” it was stressed that Tonarigumi was based on the Javanese “tradition” of gotong royong.

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34 In addition to this, Nippon Eiga Sha produced a movie titled “Tonari Gumi, Tongan” in 1944 [Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival Jikko linkai 1997, 123].
35 The Indonesian original is: “Tetangga kami djoega warga gotong royong.”
Figure 1: Kamishibai “Tonarigumi”

Source: *Djawa Baroe*, 1944.3.1, p.32.
So how did the Japanese military administration try to convey *Gotong Royon* to the people in concrete terms?

Here let us examine the *Kamishibai* (a picture-story show which uses a series of colored pictures to depict the show’s contents) entitled *Tonarigumi* and produced by the propaganda department of the military administration in Java, which was published in *Djawa Baroe*. The *Kamishibai Tonarigumi*, which was given a new title “Harmony brings forth tranquility”\(^{36}\) in *Djawa Baroe*, depicted the daily life of residents of a fictitious street of *Gang Gotong-Rojong* and included scenes of the neighborhood on ceremonial occasions.

Right at the beginning of the *Kamishibai Tonarigumi*, it is stated that peoples’ lives in Indonesia under Japanese occupation had returned to the original social life that was peculiar to Java and based on the spirit of *gotong royong*. The story’s aim is to give an example of people going back to this social life by practicing *gotong royong* through the *Tonarigumi* life of the residents of *Gang Gotong Rojong*.

The *Kamishibai Tonarigumi* consists of eight pictures as shown in 1) through 8) of Figure 1. 1) explains the life of the residents of *Gang Gotong Rojong* around the time of the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system, and the seven pieces from 2) through 8) each depict *Tonarigumi* activities in a simple way. The most important thing in this *Kamishibai* seems to be at the beginning of 1) when it is stated that due to conflicts among the residents, the old spirit of *gotong royong* has come to be neglected.

However, after 1), which depicts the neighborhood with the spirit of *gotong royong* fading, the story goes on to tell how the residents of *Gang Gotong Rojong* came to learn about a social life based on *gotong royong* through the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system. As a result, they began to practice *gotong royong* consciously. Examples of the practice of *gotong royong* are explained in 2) through 8) as concrete activities of *Tonarigumi*.

This *Kamishibai* shows a neighborhood that is based on the spirit of *gotong royong*, which is portrayed as an old “tradition” of Java that is being restored due to the introduction of the *Tonarigumi* system. Depicting the return to a society based on the original tradition of Java that rises above the conflicts among residents shown in 1) of the *Kamishibai* is narrated by the military to legitimize its administration. The eradication of western individualism and liberalism was described as something to be overcome for this return to the “tradition” to succeed. For example, Hitoshi Shimizu of the propaganda department of the military administration in Java, who was central to

\(^{36}\) The Indonesian original is: “Roekoen Mendjadikan Sentosa.”
the propaganda activities of the military administration, said as follows:  

Under the leadership provided by the spirit of Desa that existed prior to the spread of western theories, namely the spirit of GOTTON ROYON, and by having it develop, we can enable the basis of the Indonesian spirit to be nurtured and the Great East Asia spirit to be grasped [Shimizu 1944, 29].

Moreover, this attack on individualism and liberalism was not necessarily something that only the Japanese military administration practiced. For instance, the well-known nationalist Dewantoro  said at the fifth meeting of The Committee for the Study of Traditional Customs and State Forms in January 1943:

In addition to materialism and intellectualism, the western type of educational system brought forth an outbreak in the disease of individualism and the decline of familialism and mutual aid, which were fine customs of East Indian society and the basis of a modest and peaceful life.

The rise in the trend of individualism has led to the spread of western thoughts about democracy and destroyed the harmony and unity of the people of this territory [Toda 1995a, (5th), 3].

Dewantoro, who was also a leader of the nationalist education movement first attacked the individualism that was fostered by the western education system as being a disease and stated that individualism had led to a decline in the fine customs of Indonesia, namely the principle of the family and the custom of gotong royong, which are the “tradition.” He declared that the infiltration of individualism had led to the spread of thoughts about western-style democracy.

As Kenji Tsuchiya has pointed out, Dewantoro maintained that the private school of Taman Siswa where he taught was an educational organ that could overcome the shortcomings of western-style education [Tsuchiya 1982, 246-247]. Therefore, the criticism above was rather natural for Dewantoro, who was advocating a system of education that was unique to Indonesia.

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37 Moichiro Yamamoto also stated concerning “tradition” that “the hope as a lost Oriental is to re-discover the tradition of Java and the blood of the Oriental” [Yamamoto 1944, 8-9]. Concerning gotong royong, it can be seen that, alongside Tolong-Menolong, it was defined as an Oriental social custom from the beginning of the military administration [Tobing 1942, n/d].

38 Dewantoro, Soekarno, Hatta and Mansur were called the “four-leaf clover” (quaternion). Dewantoro held a central position among the national leaders who cooperated with the Japanese military administration. This can also be observed from the fact that Dewantoro was appointed as a member of the Old Customs Research Committee, vice-chair of the Central Advisory Council, and Jawa Hokokai Somu (the general affairs chief of the People’s Royalty Association).
The plan behind the propagation of the Tonarigumi system among the general population that was observed in the Kamishibai “Tonarigumi” was to restore the neighborhood based on gotong royong, which was an original “tradition” of Java, for it is the neighborhood based on gotong royong that has an affinity with the social system in an all-out war situation which was to be based on the control and mobilization sought by the Japanese military. Therefore, western individualism and liberalism were denounced as inimical, as something that denied the ideal image of the neighborhood based on gotong royong.

The military administration called Dewantoro the leading figure in educational circles [Djawa Baroe 1943. 2. 15] and recognized him as the best known figure in the field of nationalist education. Therefore, the story in the Kamishibai where, through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system, conflicts among residents were overcome and residents returned to a society based on Java’s original traditions did not by any means occur against a backdrop of arbitrary or one-sided thinking on the part of the military. Needless to say, the context and background of each attack on individualism and liberalism were quite different. However, the spirituality suitable for the social system sought by the Japanese military administration in Java, which had for its main purpose the maintenance of the supply base for the southern war front, and the thought of the most famous leader of the education movement in Java reverberated in their attacks against individualism and liberalism. From this, too, we can see that the “tradition” that the Japanese military inculcated was supported by a fine mechanism of securing not just power as a means of mobilization and control but also assent through the call for mutual aid among people.39

According to Moichiro Yamamoto, the military originally expected that it would take a considerable amount of time for the Tonarigumi system to take root [Yamamoto 1978, 101]. However, due to their use of the technique of “institutionalizing gotong royong,” the number of Tonarigumi reached about 500,000 by the end of April, 1944 [Asia Raya 1944.6.20; Kurasawa 1992, 245]. Calculations based on the total number of households in Java at the time would mean that one Tonarigumi was set up with about 17 to 18 households. Judging from the intention of the “Neighborhood Organization Development Outline” of “dividing all the households within each Ku and of organizing Tonarigumi with some 10 to 20 households” [Kan Po No. 14, 31], this figure would mean that the Tonarigumi system penetrated Javanese society. Also, the number of Aaza

39 Mutual aid (bertolong-tolongan, tolong-menolong) was cited as something that should be taught to students in the manual for teachers on elementary school moral training that was prepared by the education department (Kantor Pangudjaran) of the military administration [Kantor Pengadjaran 1943, 20-23].

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Jokai reached 65,000, meaning, if we base our calculation on the number of Desa (ward), that about three to five Aza Jokai were formed in each ward. Thus, the goal of having one Aza Jokai in each Buraku (rural neighborhood) was basically achieved.

Thus the Tonarigumi system which embodied the “institutionalization of gotong royong” became a system that penetrated deep into Javanese society in little more than one and a half years.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the “institutionalization of tradition” in Java under Japanese occupation, namely the “institutionalization of gotong royong,” by focusing on the introduction of the Tonarigumi system.

The tradition of gotong royong, which represents mutual aid in a community, is an expression of values that people assent to, which people find difficult to resist. gotong royong generates the force to seek the voluntary involvement of a community. As stated in section I, the reason for this is that the theme and the story of the “tradition” of gotong royong secures not only the power that the writer seeks but also the assent of the receiver. Therefore, while the “tradition” of gotong royong firmly seals the power of the state and of those in power, this power is invisible because it is juxtaposed with the moral assent that takes the form of an individual committing himself or herself to the community. This fine mechanism of the “tradition” of gotong royong functioned quite well through the introduction of the Tonarigumi system in Java under Japanese occupation.

Kozano has observed, “Often, Aza, the unit of the Tonarigumi organization, coincided with what remained of the old community in the village. In other words, it granted a legal position to the old community, for which there was no precedence under the Dutch administration” [Kozano 1997a, 15]. This observation is particularly suggestive in analyzing the reason why, of all the Japanese military’s measures, the Tonarigumi system was the most successful in penetrating Javanese society. To put this observation

40 According to Kurasawa, each Desa (ward) usually had three to six dukuh (rural neighborhood) [Kurasawa 1992, 246].
41 It can be seen that Tonarigumi and Aza Jokai were also established in concentration camps for foreigners, among whom were Dutch nationals [Dyk 1996, 16].
42 The introduction of the Tonarigumi system was also considered in places other than Java that were controlled by the 16th Army. For example, in Aceh of Sumatra, which was controlled by the 25th Army, there was a plan to introduce the Tonarigumi system throughout the state from August 1, 1945 (by Aceh State Notification No. 12), close to the defeat of Japan [Atjeh Shimbun 1945. 7. 12]. It seemed that the Tonarigumi system might have been already introduced into a city area of Aceh before Notification No. 12 [Atjeh Shimbun 1945. 7.12]. Also, gotong royong was often propagated in Aceh, too, like in Java [Atjeh Shimbun 1944. 6. 7, 8. 5, 10. 19, 1945. 4. 19].
in the context of this paper, the Japanese military’s introduction of the \textit{Tonarigumi} system was an attempt to grant a legal position to the field of autonomy and communalism for “the old community within a village” and reorganize it by calling on “tradition.” Thus the reorganization of settlement within the village through the introduction of the \textit{Tonarigumi} system was carried out uniformly in Java through the institutionalization of the “tradition” of \textit{gotong royong} within a social situation under the total mobilization of the occupying administration.\footnote{Hisanori Saegusa, who was stationed in Java as an employee of Takashimaya Iida during the Japanese occupation, made a comment in an interview with Aiko Kurasawa that suggests that he identified the \textit{Tonarigumi} system with \textit{gotong royong} [Kurasawa 1980, 125-126]. His statement serves as supporting evidence that the Japanese military administration was propagating \textit{gotong royong} intensively in its introduction and promotion of the \textit{Tonarigumi} system.} In this sense, the \textit{Tonarigumi} system in Java was “the most ambitious Japanese endeavor at presenting to the Indonesian village, and of mobilizing \textit{tani} for the war effort” [Benda 1958, 154].

The historical action of the “institutionalization of \textit{gotong royong}” in Java under the Japanese occupation, which this paper has looked at, was later to be repeated in the development of a resident organization, the RT/RK (Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Kampung) during the Soekarno period [Kobayashi 2004a], and in the introduction, again, of the resident organization, the RT/RW (Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga), in the new order regime of Suharto [Kobayashi 2004b; 2006b]. Therefore, one form of the institutionalization of the “communitarian tradition” of Hobsbawm was carried out in an epoch of modern Indonesian history through the introduction and development of resident organizations. In particular, the introduction of the \textit{Tonarigumi} system in Java under Japanese occupation, which this paper has examined, can be identified as the beginning of the institutionalization of the “communitarian tradition” of \textit{gotong royong} in modern Indonesian history.

One issue to be dealt with from now is how the nationalists interpreted and re-discovered the “tradition” of \textit{gotong royong} that was introduced so intensively during the Japanese occupation. In particular, it would be very important to know how the Japanese military’s conceptualization of \textit{gotong royong} and “the institutionalization of \textit{gotong royong}” affected Soekarno’s conceptualization of \textit{gotong royong} as a condensation of the five principles he listed in his famous speech, the “Birth of Pancasila.”

Tsuchiya discovered the final historical occasion when Soekarno completed the conceptualization of \textit{gotong royong} in the daily contacts Soekarno had with Marhaen (mass) that were organized on a massive scale for the first time by the Japanese military administration to carry out military exercises [Tsuchiya 1971, 579]. In another paper, I
would like to try to approach this issue using this insight of Tsuchiya’s as a clue.
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