

Gotong royong as social citizenship in Indonesia, 1940s to 1990s

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This article examines gotong royong as social citizenship in the second half of the twentieth century in Indonesia. Gotong royong was traditionally understood as a collective spirit among neighbours to strengthen economic and social resilience. However, the institutionalisation of the system through massive development programmes since the 1940s has influenced the common people's perception and practice of it. This article argues that the co-option of gotong royong as part of the discourse of nation-state building transformed the popular view of labour and capital mobilisation from an openly critical stance to apparent submission. Gotong royong became a means of social engineering and an ingenious linguistic strategy by which state elites orchestrated control over the making of citizens. Still, Indonesians have remained vigilant of their participation in gotong royong, and about the potential for its misuse by corrupt officials.

Most Indonesians understand the concept of *gotong royong* as a traditional mechanism of mutual help, such as when men help their neighbours after a natural disaster and women work collectively during the harvest. The term also refers to a system of communal service where people contribute their labour for public works, such as the construction of roads, bridges, schools and irrigation canals. The common belief is that *gotong royong* represents a feature of Indonesian identity, and thus part of a cultural heritage to be preserved.¹ This belief itself is a political construction, however, as we shall see.

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1 Subagyo, 'Pengembangan nilai dan tradisi gotong royong dalam bingkai konservasi nilai budaya', *Indonesian Journal of Conservation* 1, 1 (2012): 61–8; Tri Pranadji, 'Penguatan kelembagaan gotong royong dalam perspektif sosio-budaya bangsa: Suatu upaya revitalisasi adat istiadat dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan', *Forum Penelitian Agro Ekonomi Institut Pertanian Bogor* 27, 1 (2009): 61–72; N. Rochmadi, 'Menjadikan nilai budaya gotong royong sebagai common identity dalam kehidupan

The aim of this article is to examine the construction of *gotong royong* as a concept of social citizenship in Indonesia, notably from the 1940s to the 1990s. It explores how *gotong royong* was conceptualised by successive regimes and how it was perceived and practised by the masses. Each regime change prompted new conceptualisations of *gotong royong* by state elites, regardless of its variations in practice. But the intrinsic goal of this use of *gotong royong* by governments was to create a type of social citizenship.

This study traces how successive Indonesian governments have made use of *gotong royong* for state-centric social engineering. The term has been often used to influence Indonesians to cooperate with each other (and the state) in order to achieve a particular government goal. To cite a recent case, President Joko Widodo mentioned *gotong royong* four times in his ten-minute inaugural speech in October 2014,² saying that *gotong royong* was the core of the Indonesian people's identity and the key to the country's development.³ The President proclaimed in 2015, 'Let us work in *gotong royong*, every Indonesian citizen without exception.'⁴ Again, in 2017, he reminded Indonesians that *gotong royong* was the 'key to achieving the goals of Indonesian independence' for which they should all work together.⁵ Thus, *gotong royong* has often been used as a political tool for invoking a sense of collective belonging and obedience among citizens in order to mobilise their participation and contribution towards implementing development goals.

On the other hand, through a series of conflicts stemming from the expression of identity politics since the fall of Soeharto in 1998,⁶ ordinary Indonesians have gradually developed a consciousness of their political rights.⁷ Indonesians have increasingly desired involvement in the political decisions that affect their lives, as demonstrated in the establishment of a working democracy since 1999 despite many obstacles. Regime change has reshaped and strengthened a shared sense of citizenship by which the relationship between the state and the individual citizen has become explicitly inclusive, not exclusive. The state's elites have sought to promote a collective spirit and amplify the success stories of *gotong royong* in mobilising the masses; however, the term *gotong royong* itself has generally lost its 'mobilising power' in society. Democracy in Indonesia today is more about engagement rather than centralisation, and overt attempts at social engineering for labour mobilisation are less likely to be effective. Yet, *gotong royong* as the basic tenet of citizenship remains and is politically bound in the state ideology.

bertetangga negara-negara ASEAN', <http://library.um.ac.id> (accessed 12 Jun 2015); R. Bintarto, *Gotong royong: Suatu karakteristik bangsa Indonesia* (Surabaya: PT Bina Ilmu, 1980).

2 'Ini pidato perdana Jokowi sebagai Presiden ke-7 RP', www.kompas.com (accessed 31 May 2015).

3 'Gotong royong membangun bangsa', *Kabare* 149, 12 Nov. 2014, pp. 22–5.

4 'Dari titik kilometer nol, Jokowi serukan pemimpin beri contoh kerja gotong royong', www.kompas.com (accessed 31 May 2015).

5 'Perkuat gotong royong untuk kesejahteraan', *Kompas*, 17 Dec. 2017, p. 15.

6 Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'Identity politics, citizenship and the soft state in Indonesia: An essay', *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 1 (2008): 1–21; Irine Hiraswari Gayatri, 'Nationalism, democratisation and primordial sentiment in Indonesia: Problems of ethnicity versus Indonesianness (the cases of Aceh, Riau, Papua and Bali)', *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 3 (2010): 189–203.

7 A. Ferry Indratno, ed., *Negara minus nurani: Esai-esai kebijakan publik* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2009).

Generally speaking, the making of Indonesian citizenship has been as much a project of the state as of non-state agencies. The process is rooted in the fusing of several socio-political factors of the old and the new. As Carl Trocki puts it, the modernisation of colonial society in Indonesia did not exchange 'traditional' values for 'modern' Western ones, but 'transformed them through a complex, novel situation'.⁸ With the formation of a modern (colonial) state in Indonesia in the early twentieth century,⁹ 'traditional' values and norms did not reappear as 'neo-traditionalism', but changed into a mixed layer of society and societal institutions that underwent a process of continual adaptation.¹⁰ In the words of Satjipto Rahardjo, the making of the Indonesian state was 'based on the indigenous mode of organization, the *desa* (village), as a model'. The Indonesian founding fathers 'conceived of the *desa* republic as an organic construction that embodies the traditional view of the individual and society'. Its embodiment is characterised, according to Rahardjo, by Javanese cosmological principles such as the 'union between the people and the government (*manunggaling kawula lan gusti*), spirit of togetherness (*gotong royong*), and spirit of familial harmony (*semangat kekeluargaan*)'.¹¹

Because the Indonesian nation-state's organic construction is based on the *desa* model, the state has remained plural in its social organisations regardless of the process of modernisation. Historian Anthony Reid argues that, like other Southeast Asian countries, in Indonesia '[h]ighland and small-island peoples remained unincorporated into states' to form the practices of citizenship that may fall into the category of non-state.¹² More often than not, the state's making of citizenship is systematically more contingent, and less sensitive to diversities, than the non-state practices. As it was in the 1950s when the bureaucratic state and capitalism made 'the demarcation between public service and private interest at best blurred',¹³ the post-New Order government in Indonesia remained too weak to function as a full-fledged governing polity. The state still had to struggle to provide public goods and services.

In the past, *gotong royong* was a social mechanism to substitute the state's legal role in providing public goods and services. *Gotong royong* was a mechanism for the authorities to expand the feeling of solidarity and engagement among the people, who gradually developed yet also contested their collective sense of identity and belonging. The state's mechanism of *gotong royong* intersects with T.H. Marshall's classic definition of social citizenship,¹⁴ which entails the provision of welfare. Given its complexity in practice, *gotong royong* was not a clear-cut, given mechanism of citizenship and

8 Carl Trocki, 'Review, *The making of a bureaucratic elite: The colonial transformation of the Javanese priyaji* by Heather Sutherland', *Journal of Asian Studies* 40, 4 (1981): 855–7.

9 Robert Cribb, ed., *The late colonial state in Indonesia: Political and economic foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880–1942* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994).

10 Trocki, 'Review, *The making of a bureaucratic elite*', pp. 855–6.

11 Satjipto Rahardjo, 'Between two worlds: Modern state and traditional society in Indonesia', *Law and Society Review* 28, 3 (1994): 495–6.

12 Anthony Reid, 'Revolutionary state formation and the Unitary Republic of Indonesia', in *Multination states in Asia: Accommodation and resistance*, ed. Jacques Bertrand and André Laliberté (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 30.

13 Richard Robinson, 'Toward a class analysis of the Indonesian military bureaucratic state', *Indonesia* 25 (1978): 17–39.

14 T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and social class* (London: Pluto, 1950); T.H. Marshall, *Class, citizenship and social development* (New York: Doubleday, 1964).

welfare creation. It always involved negotiation and contestation between state and non-state agencies even if the state elite contributed to the term's 'original constructions and representations'.¹⁵ The practice of *gotong royong* thus by and large reflected the making of a civil society empowered by an external force.¹⁶

This article deals with two levels of exploration: first, it looks at *gotong royong* as a discourse of citizenship that was institutionalised by the state or other polities. The second is on the practice of *gotong royong* which largely constituted a response to the state-driven discourse of citizenship. While the use of *gotong royong* by today's political leaders sounds obsolete considering contemporary understandings of citizenship, the past construction of the discourse deserves a revisit not so much for its politicisation¹⁷ as for the state's envisaging of indigenous values in its organic structure. Past practices are also worth examining as a reflection of the social dynamics of citizenship-making.

This article draws upon newspapers and bulletins that were published between 1900 and 1999. These sources cover a period longer than the period of study in order to provide a historical background to how *gotong royong* as a type of communal service was carried out prior to the term itself coming into common and political usage.¹⁸

This article first presents a review of the previous studies on *gotong royong*. Then, it explores earlier examples of communal labour mobilisation as a prototype of *gotong royong*. It further deals with the transformation of communal service into *gotong royong*, and the institutionalisation of practice to become the key feature of a type of citizenship. The final part discusses the process in which people negotiated this citizenship based on *gotong royong*.

Previous studies

The anthropologist Koentjaraningrat attempted to provide a typology of *gotong royong* based on practices by the inhabitants of the Central Java region of Purworejo in the 1960s.¹⁹ He identified seven different types of communal activities that he categorised as *gotong royong*. However, none of these seven types of communal activities were actually named *gotong royong* in the local vernacular.²⁰ Sullivan is right in saying that 'it was he [Koentjaraningrat] not the participants [of his studies]

15 John Sullivan, 'Inventing and imagining community: Two modern Indonesian ideologies', Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies Working Paper 69 (1991), p. 5.

16 Steven Robins, Andrea Cornwall and Bettina von Lieres, 'Rethinking citizenship in the post-colony', *Third World Quarterly* 29, 6 (2008): 1069–86.

17 Sullivan, 'Inventing and imagining community'; John R. Bowen, 'On the political construction of tradition: *Gotong royong* in Indonesia', *Journal of Asian Studies* 45, 3 (1986): 545–61.

18 Data collection, selection and classification took five months (in 2014–15) of visits to the Leiden University Library, Indonesian National Library (Perpusnas) in Jakarta, and the City Library of Yogyakarta (JogjaLib Centre). Altogether, 217 news articles from 14 different newspapers and bulletins were examined, with the selected newspapers or bulletins proportionately representing the ten decades survey (1900 to 1999).

19 Koentjaraningrat, *Some social anthropological observations on gotong royong practices in two villages in Central Java* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1961); 'Isi konsep desa di Indonesia', in *Masyarakat desa di Indonesia masa ini*, ed. Koentjaraningrat (Jakarta: Yayasan Badan Penerbit FEUI, 1964), pp. 346–70; 'The system and spirit of "gotong royong"', *Prisma* 6 (1977): 20–27.

20 Koentjaraningrat, *Some social anthropological observations*, pp. 29–44.

who applied the general *gotong royong* label to the one hundred and eleven cases of cooperative activity observed by himself and his assistants and it was he who later grouped those activities into the [...] seven types'.²¹

The seven types of communal activities Koentjaraningrat identified were: *tulung layat* (communal activities when a villager dies or some other calamity befalls a family); *beceran* or *rewang* (when a villager holds a feast); *sambat-sinambat* or *guyuban* (to help a villager who needs work done around the house); *grojogan* (during labour-intensive periods of the agricultural cycle); *gugur gunung* (undertaken by the whole village when there is a work project which all feel is a public necessity, for example, repairing a road or bridge); *alur waris* (the care and cleaning of ancestral graves); and *kerigan* or *kuduran* (carried out under the orders/command of a village official, mostly ad hoc and for the personal benefit of the official).²²

Koentjaraningrat further categorised the seven types of communal activities into two groups based on the nature of the aim.²³ The first category, *tolong-menolong* (mutual help) refers to communal activities to help relatives or immediate neighbours in a 'reciprocal' manner: *tulung layat*, *rewang*, *sambat-sinambat* or *guyuban*, and *grojogan*. The second category is *kerja bakti* (communal service) and refers to carrying out a public work whose result or benefit is equally shared by all members of a community: *gugur gunung*, *alur waris* and *kerigan*. While the mutual help and the communal service categories together can be called *gotong royong*, Koentjaraningrat said, it is the latter that may exclusively be termed *gotong royong* because the target recipient is the general public and the activities bear a structured or regulated nature. Mutual help should be called *tolong-menolong* because it is charitable and philanthropic in nature, and generally delivered ad hoc to an individual recipient.²⁴

In addition to *tolong-menolong* and *kerja bakti*, Koentjaraningrat argued, there is another category of *gotong royong* that is not manifested in the form of activities, but in the values that underlie the activities. He called this category 'a sociocultural ethos that underlies the value system, mores and folkways of a society'; it is *gotong royong* as a spirit.²⁵ The *gotong royong* spirit is not specifically characteristic of Javanese society and has nothing to do with group identities such as rural versus urban, or Eastern versus Western society. Rather, Koentjaraningrat put it, 'it can be found in every community worldwide just like the so-called individualistic spirit, which is often attributed by common sense to urban communities or Western society, can also be found in rural communities of Eastern society'.²⁶

The concept of *gotong royong* is seen by John Bowen as a national tradition in Indonesia which was based on 'misrecognition of local cultural realities'.²⁷ According to Bowen, *gotong royong* reflects 'genuinely indigenous notions of moral obligations and generalized reciprocity, but it has been reworked by the state to become a cultural-ideological instrument for the mobilization of village labour'. It

21 Sullivan, 'Inventing and imagining community', p. 6.

22 Koentjaraningrat, *Some social anthropological observations*, pp. 29–44.

23 Koentjaraningrat, 'Isi konsep desa', pp. 356–7; Koentjaraningrat, 'The system and spirit', pp. 396–7.

24 Koentjaraningrat, 'Isi konsep desa', p. 357.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 396.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 358–9.

27 Bowen, 'On the political construction of tradition', p. 545.

is a ‘refraction of a cultural category and an element of state ideology’. Both ‘state and local actors’ are involved in transforming the refraction into a tradition through a dialogue ‘consisting of representations and misrepresentations’, but the result of the dialogue is ‘predetermined by the state’.²⁸ Bowen categorises the activities of *gotong royong* into labour exchange, generalised reciprocity, and labour mobilised on the basis of political status.²⁹ Examining the three categories in the cases of the Javanese and the Gayo people in Sumatra, Bowen’s study dealt with the politicisation of *gotong royong* by the state and less with its daily forms as a cultural practice.

John Sullivan, in examining ‘kampong’ as a traditional communal form and as an organ of the modern Indonesian state,³⁰ argues that ‘the *gotong royong* system represents a lower-class tradition originating among a feudal peasantry’. He explains that the ideals of *gotong royong* are much reproduced by the government elites but, ‘as a practical way of life, [*gotong royong*] pertains only to *wong cilik* [ordinary people]’ whereas ‘*wong gede* [the elite or people of higher social class] do not need the kinds of support offered by the kampong, its cells, and related associations’.³¹ According to Sullivan, *gotong royong* as communal service (or *kerja bakti* in Koentjaraningrat’s category) means that all members contribute to their community. However, ‘all cannot and should not contribute equally’ because the community members bear ‘varying degrees of responsibility and privilege attaching’.³² Community leader’s contributions to *gotong royong* are ‘more symbolic than substantial, yet kampong people rate them as the finest examples’ of this tradition.³³

Sullivan says that the Indonesian authorities have ‘deliberately and skilfully fostered *gotong royong* communalism as an integral part of urban administration’.³⁴ He also contends that ‘communality has been utilized by modern institutions to secure patently non-communal ends’. *Gotong royong* can function as ‘an exigent component of the Indonesian society’ because its ‘relevant *gemeinschaftlich* elements are neither traditional nor peripheral to the [Indonesian] political and economic structures’, which have become more and more modern and capitalistic.³⁵ Unlike Bowen who tends to see *gotong royong* largely as a construction of the state, Sullivan sees it as a mechanism of community maintenance originally of a lower-class, rural community that came to be utilised by different levels of urban, state administration.

Although the term *gotong royong* is widely used its etymology is still obscure. One of the early references to the term was by President Soekarno, who said that *gotong royong* was a principle of ‘all for all’ in society’s development; however, this is a jargonised definition that hardly explains anything about the term’s daily use.³⁶

28 Ibid., p. 546.

29 Ibid., pp. 547–9.

30 John Sullivan, ‘Kampung and state: The role of government in the development of urban community in Yogyakarta’, *Indonesia* 41 (1986): 63–88.

31 Ibid., p. 63.

32 Ibid., p. 78.

33 Ibid., p. 80.

34 Ibid., p. 84.

35 John Sullivan, *Local government and community in Java* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 216–17.

36 Soekarno, *Lahirnya pantja-sila: Pidato Bung Karno di depan dokuritsu zyumbi tyoosakai tanggal 1 Juni 1945* (Surabaya: Penerbit Bina Pustaka Tama, n.d.), p. 45.

Various scholars have attempted to address this gap in our knowledge about the origins of the term.

Koentjaraningrat wrote that he consulted a lexicographer of Javanese, P.J. Zoetmulder, as to whether *gotong royong* was found in any classical Javanese literary texts. According to Koentjaraningrat, Zoetmulder had never come across the expression *gotong royong* in any of the Javanese texts he had studied.³⁷ Indonesian researchers after Koentjaraningrat generally break down the term *gotong royong* to associate it with the Javanese word *gotong*, meaning 'to carry', and *royong*, defined as *bersama-sama* or 'together'.³⁸ Bowen argues that the term *gotong royong* has come from 'the Javanese verb *ngotong* (cognate with the Sundanese *ngagotong*), meaning several persons carrying something together, plus the pleasantly rhyming *royong*'. Admitting that he was 'unable to find any Javanese who recognized the word *royong* by itself', Bowen says that some newer Javanese dictionaries he checked do 'include *royong* as a separate lexical item with the same meaning as *gotong*'.³⁹ He adds 'the choice of *royong* may have been motivated by positive associations with the Javanese and Sundanese *royom* (shade tree, cool)'.⁴⁰ Sullivan meanwhile believes that the publication of Koentjaraningrat's and other Indonesian scholars' work in the late 1950s 'has helped establish' the identification of the term *gotong royong*,⁴¹ without explaining its etymology.

Following on from these attempts, I was prompted to look up the term in the two principal dictionaries available so far of Old Javanese, namely Zoetmulder's and Stuart Robson's *Old Javanese-English*⁴² and *Old Javanese-Indonesian*⁴³ dictionaries. In the *Old Javanese-English* dictionary, '*gotonj*' is defined as 'to carry' (done by several persons).⁴⁴ The word '*rojonj*' means 'to accompany', 'side with', 'take the part of', 'agree with'.⁴⁵ The coining of '*gotonj*' and '*rojonj*' thus implies 'two or more people carry (or do) something together at which moment someone else is present to accompany, to side with them or to agree with their activity without necessarily taking an actual part in it'. The term *gotong royong* is not a conjoining derivative, nor does it appear as a single entry in these dictionaries. They are two different words which have been conjoined.⁴⁶

37 Koentjaraningrat, 'The system and spirit', p. 21.

38 For example, Rochmadi, 'Menjadikan nilai', p. 4; Subagyo, 'Pengembangan nilai', p. 62; Tri Pranadji, 'Penguatan kelembagaan', p. 62.

39 For example, S. Prawiroatmodjo, *Bausastra Jawa-Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1981).

40 Bowen, 'On the political construction', p. 546.

41 Sullivan, 'Inventing and imagining community', p. 6.

42 P.J. Zoetmulder with S.O. Robson, *Old Javanese-English dictionary Part I: A-O* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982); *Old Javanese-English dictionary Part II: P-Y* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982).

43 P.J. Zoetmulder with S.O. Robson, *Kamus Jawa Kuno-Indonesia bagian 1: A-O*, tr. Darusuprta and Sumarti Suprayitna (Jakarta: Perwakilan KITLV and Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1982); *Kamus Jawa Kuno-Indonesia bagian 2: P-Y*, tr. Darusuprta and Sumarti Suprayitna (Jakarta: KITLV; Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1982).

44 Zoetmulder, *Old Javanese Part I*, p. 540.

45 Zoetmulder, *Old Javanese Part II*, p. 1560.

46 The conjoining derivative of '*gotong*' and '*royong*' is respectively '*gotong-ginotong*', and '*royong-rinoyong*'. See Zoetmulder, *Old Javanese Part I*, p. 540; *Part II*, p. 1560.

Because the origin of *gotong royong* as a lexical expression is not known by any of the references and studies accessible, who did fuse the two words ‘*gotong*’ and ‘*royong*’? When did *gotong royong* appear to be most commonly used? Koentjaraningrat wrote that ‘[t]he term *gotong royong* first appeared in articles [...] written by Dutch agricultural experts who graduated from Wageningen’.⁴⁷ Unfortunately he provided no further references. Bowen writes that ‘*gotong royong* was probably used more widely outside of Java than within Java before independence’ despite its Javanese origin. He says the Javanese labour system had contained words for obligatory service.⁴⁸ He further refers to historian A.J. Piekaar, who included in his book about the Japanese in Aceh a vignette concerning the term *gotong royong*.⁴⁹ Bowen also cites his personal conversation with Koentjaraningrat who claimed some farmers in southern Java only heard of the term sometime in 1955.⁵⁰ This information by Bowen, although based on secondary sources, is a stepping stone towards tracing the early use of *gotong royong*.

Mobilised communal services

The historian Sartono Kartodirjo contends that labour mobilisation of the *sudra* (servant) and *kawula* (slave) classes during the Hindu kingdom of Mataram in eighth-century Java was among the earliest forms of *gotong royong*.⁵¹ Although archaeological evidence for this assertion is still lacking, Kartodirjo offers an insight that it was in ancient Java when the practice of *gotong royong* found its basic forms. According to Kartodirjo, the aim of labour mobilisation in ancient Java was to build temples, palaces and other buildings for religious and royal purposes. In the twelfth century, during the Majapahit Kingdom, labour mobilisation was expanded to include the construction of public infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and markets. Labour mobilisation also included services needed by the king when he was travelling. At those times, communal services created a type of interdependency between the lower and higher classes. It also appears to have become *corvée* (forced labour) by the *sudra* and the *kawula* as an obligation to their lords, or in lieu of taxes and punishment for crimes.⁵²

Labour mobilisation during the Hindu period of Java was similar to the *jajmani* system in India.⁵³ The *jajmani* system was payment through obligatory service. It also represented occupational and ceremonial duties given by a lower-class family to a higher-class one.⁵⁴ The former includes landless, impoverished, politically weak workers and suppliers of services (*kamin* or *purjan*) whereas the latter are mostly

47 Koentjaraningrat, ‘The system and spirit’, p. 21.

48 Bowen, ‘On the political construction’, p. 548.

49 A.J. Piekaar, *Aceh en de oorlog met Japan* (The Hague: Van Hoeve, 1949), pp. 295–8.

50 Bowen, ‘On the political construction’, p. 548.

51 Sartono Kartodirjo, ‘Kedudukan dan peranan sistim gotong royong di dalam perkembangan masyarakat Indonesia’, Simposium Pembinaan Gotong Royong dalam Rangka Pembangunan Desa, Jakarta, 18–19 Jan. 1978, p. 6.

52 Ibid., pp. 9–11.

53 I thank Prof. Jos Gommans for introducing me to India’s *jajmani* system.

54 Kathleen Gough, ‘The Hindu *jajmani* system: A comparative analysis of the *jajmani* system by Thomas O. Beidelman’, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 9, 1 (1960): 83–91.

landowning, wealth- and power-controlling patrons (the *jajman*).⁵⁵ The relationship between the *kamin/purjan* and the *jajman* formed a pattern of non-market economy labour exchange.⁵⁶

Like the Indian *jajmani* system, communal service in Java first developed in the pre-modern feudalistic agrarian society and was based on caste and landownership. It was prescribed and hereditary in nature and was part of the existing political system. However, in Java the spread of Islam since the thirteenth century gradually eroded the caste system although landownership was retained as a determinant of social stratification. Islamic law 'strictly forbade any claim of one individual's service by any other individual'.⁵⁷ At the village level in seventeenth-century Java, landless households maintained a patron–client relationship with a particular local or supra-local lord in order to gain protection from 'a variety of claims from more than one lord' and from the village headman. Sociologist Jan Breman says that in the so-called *ngawula* system in West Java, the landless and lower-level peasant households performed for the patron various agricultural and domestic services. The patrons, mostly aristocrats and well-to-do peasants, controlled their clients independently of the village headman. The latter held the authority to mobilise lord-less (and landless) households for their own farming and housework, and for village public works.⁵⁸

The Dutch East Indies Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC) in the seventeenth century introduced the so-called 'quota and supply' system which obliged local district heads in Java and Madura to deliver a proportion of their agricultural produce. Consequently, the district heads imposed on their subjects a higher level of taxation,⁵⁹ in the form of pecuniary and labour taxation. Rice and pelf (*duit*) were common pecuniary forms of tax. Labour tax included the provision of household services to respective lords, and the construction and maintenance of public facilities such as forts, bridges, roads, and irrigation canals.⁶⁰ Under signed contracts with local rulers, the VOC made use of the indigenous tax system for its own purposes and benefits but 'held the principle of no interference to the existing condition'.⁶¹ This notwithstanding, patron–client relations in Java remained focused on the authoritative position of local village headmen.

In the nineteenth century, as the colonial paradigm of administration shifted from 'governing Java' to 'governing the Javanese',⁶² the mobilisation of men's labour by European administrations was established systematically. Breman says, the

55 Harold A. Gould, 'The Hindu *jajmani* system: A case of economic particularism', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 42, 3 (1986): 269–78.

56 Henry Orenstein, 'A comparative analysis of the *jajmani* system: Thomas O. Beidelman', *American Anthropologist* 64, 3 (2009), [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/aa.1962.64.3.02a00220/pdf](https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1962.64.3.02a00220) (accessed 30 Jun. 2015); Simon Commander, 'The *jajmani* system in North India: An examination of its logic and status across two centuries', *Modern Asian Studies* 17, 2 (1983): 283–311.

57 Charles Ferdinand Schoch, 'De heerendiensten op Java and Madoera volgens het regeeringsreglement van 1854' (PhD diss., University of Utrecht, 1891), p. 47.

58 Jan Breman, *The village on Java at the early colonial stage* (Rotterdam: CASP Erasmus University, 1980), pp. 28–9.

59 Schoch, 'De heerendiensten', p. 12.

60 F. Fokkens, *De afschaffing der laatste heerendiensten op Java* (Baarn: Hollandia-Drukkerij, 1914), p. 5.

61 Schoch, 'De heerendiensten', pp. 12–13.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

'inclusion of regional lords in the government apparatus' to enable European indirect rule over the Javanese 'curtailed to a large extent' the feudal *ngawula* system of labour mobilisation, although it did not eliminate it completely.⁶³ Perhaps the most remarkable act of labour mobilisation during the nineteenth century, which was made possible by Dutch cooperation with regional lords and rulers, was the construction of the trans-Java road (*De Grote Postweg*, the Great Post Road) under the auspices of governor Herman Willem Daendels in 1808.⁶⁴ Later, the British administrator of Java during the British interregnum, Thomas Stamford Raffles, set a policy for 'all officials of the Netherlands Indies administration [to] use labour services of the locals without regular wage'.⁶⁵ However, according to Breman, it was not until the introduction of the Cultivation System by Governor Johannes van den Bosch in 1830 that the mobilisation of men's labour became an integral part of colonial policies.⁶⁶

The mobilisation of men's labour in the second half of the nineteenth century was encapsulated in the *heerendienst*, a term generated from seventeenth-century VOC practices. Literally meaning 'men's service', *heerendienst* was a system of unpaid labour which the colonial government obliged its indigenous subjects (*onderdanen*) to perform.⁶⁷ The work was typically done by males. The *heerendienst* was imposed upon those the government categorised as 'mandatory payers of communal works', 'owners of a house on a rented land', and 'guards [*bewakers*], processors [*bewerkers*] and tenants of lands'.⁶⁸ The number of obligatory days of service varied among regions; in Java and Madura it was between 40 and 50 days annually,⁶⁹ in other islands between 9 and 42 days.⁷⁰ There were the categories of general compulsory service (*algemeene dienst*) in which all men had to participate simultaneously, and specific service (*bijzondere dienst*) in which participation was either scheduled for routine works or spontaneous for incidental ones. The service was a *staatsdienst* (state service) if the designated recipient of the labour service was the central government, and *gewoone dienst* (ordinary service) if the labour was paid to local government and village/district heads.⁷¹

The overall types of *heerendienst* in Java changed from time to time across the nineteenth century.⁷² In the early twentieth century, in line with the promulgation of the colonial Ethical Policy, *heerendienst* as a state policy was officially abolished throughout the Netherlands East Indies. However, Java consistently witnessed the practice of labour mobilisation for the construction and maintenance of public facilities.⁷³ By the early twentieth century, while *heerendienst* as a state policy had been

63 Breman, *The village*, pp. 32–3.

64 Fokkens, *De afschaffing*, p. 6.

65 Schoch, 'De heerendiensten', pp. 17–18; Fokkens, *De afschaffing*, p. 6.

66 Breman, *The village*, pp. 32–3.

67 Schoch, 'De heerendiensten', pp. 4–5.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

69 Fokkens, *De afschaffing*, p. 4.

70 Oud-Assistent-Resident, 'Waarheid omtrent heerendiensten', *De Nieuwe Tijd Sociaaldemocratisch Maandschrift* 7, 11 (1902): 661–72.

71 Schoch, 'De Heerendiensten', pp. 6, 61–2.

72 A. Salm, *Financieele beschouwingen in betrekking tot de afschaffing der heerendienstedn en eene daarvoor noodzakelijke herziening van het cultuurstelsel* (Amsterdam: Van der Made, 1865), p. 10.

73 Schoch, 'De Heerendiensten', pp. 21–2; 57–8; 125–6; 132–3.

abolished, it was still practised at the local level in Java. In the East Java regency of Probolinggo in 1900, for example, male villagers still had to provide regular labour service in the constructing, repairing and maintaining of the main postal road (*postweg*), village roads, dams and canals, distributing irrigation water, safeguarding the village, and carrying palanquins for visiting officials and soldiers.⁷⁴ In the Pasuruan residency, the service also included collecting materials for road construction, such as river stones.⁷⁵

Labour mobilisation and obligatory communal service in Java were continuously adjusted by the changing needs of the polities that administered them. In the context of Java under the colonial administrations, the systemisation of labour mobilisation came along with the emergence of state administrations that gradually sided with the previously existing system of communal service. As Breman argues, the colonial rulers through state bureaucracy craved 'to extract surplus at the local level in terms of labour, produce or money' and 'to by-pass all authorities and go-betweens representing the *ancien regime*'.⁷⁶ The spread of bureaucracy at the local level also enabled the colonial administration to benefit from 'the docility of the population towards their superiors', thus promoting an economic motivation in the 'mental make-up of the [Javanese] peasantry'. Furthermore, by introducing the Cultivation System, the colonial administration abolished the 'servitude of the peasants to the aristocracy'.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, Javanese commoners in the early twentieth century began to question this obligation to perform a communal service. In one case concerning *membersihkan kuburan* or *alur waris* (cleaning ancestral graves) in Magetan, East Java in 1921, for example, some villagers questioned why their cleaning of the cemetery should be done under the surveillance of the village headman. The headman responded that, 'now the government has instructed that villagers have to perform their cleaning up of the cemetery under their headman's supervision'. This answer did not satisfy these people who knew that the headman himself had never participated in this communal activity.⁷⁸

Changing perceptions about communal service also emerged in a meeting (*rapat warga*), which discussed a plan to build a school in Ungaran village, Kebumen district, Central Java in the early 1920s. A news report describes how the government of the Netherlands Indies provided Fl. 1,250 for the sub-districts (*kawedanan*) of Kebumen to construct a school building in 1921. As that sum of money was insufficient for the construction, the *wedono* (sub-district head) handed over the problem to his subordinates, the village heads. The Ungaran headman summoned his villagers on 9 June 1921 in order to discuss the issue. He was to decide on a *gugur-gunung* activity, in which all male members of the village had to participate. One of the villagers

74 'Salinan bijblad No. 5359 heeren dienst Probolinggo. Staatsblad 1898 No. 321', *Pewarta Prijaji I*, Aug. 1900, p. 73.

75 'Salinan bijblad No. 5358 heeren dienst Pasoeroehan. Staatsblad 1898 No. 320', *Pewarta Prijaji I*, Aug. 1900, p. 82.

76 Jan Breman, *The shattered image: Construction and deconstruction of the village in colonial Asia* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1988), p. 16.

77 Breman, *The village*, p. 32.

78 *Oetoesan Hindia* (thereafter *OH*), 10 June 1921, KITLV, DP UH/212.

attending the meeting, Mad-Koermen, refused the headman's proposal of *gugur-gunung*. Mad-Koermen argued it was the government's obligation to build a school. The village headman was surprised and angry with Mad-Koermen. He throttled (*mencekik*) and slapped him twice on the cheeks in front of those present. 'Then the village headman dragged Mad-Koermen out of the meeting venue in order to *debar* (*mengusir*) him, but in the yard he throttled and slapped him again twice.'⁷⁹

The *wedono* of Kebumen intervened to settle the dispute. A few days after the incident, he gathered the disputants and said, 'If you do not stop this, both of you will get punished.' The headman would face a fine whereas Mad-Koermen would face imprisonment for three years, warned the *wedono*. Both the village headman and Mad-Koermen finally said they agreed to make peace with each other and '*merasa marem*' (felt satisfied). But Mad-Koermen was not satisfied, and went to report his case to a Mr Atmodiwirjo of the local branch of Sarekat Islam (SI), an organisation of which Mad-Koermen was a member. The SI chairman suggested he write a report to the Assistant Resident.

On the way home from Kebumen to Ungaran, Mad-Koermen met his relatives in another village and told them about the incident. After listening to Mad-Koermen's experience, his relatives decided to visit the office of the Ungaran headman. They arrived there at 10 p.m. and were welcomed by a night guard. Mad-Koermen's relatives explained the visit was 'to hear an explanation of the case between Mad-Koermen and the village headman'. As it was already late, Mad-Koermen's relatives then left the office but decided to stay in Ungaran instead of heading back to Kebumen.

Meanwhile, upon the departure of Mad-Koermen's relatives, the guard hurried to the house of the headman in order to tell him of the impromptu visit. The Ungaran village headman became terrified and felt threatened after listening to the guard's report. He immediately left for the house of the village policeman to make a report of the case. Then the village policeman made a call to the *veldpolitie* (field police) for back-up personnel. The same night, a detachment of policemen arrested and interrogated Mad-Koermen's relatives, who had been asleep. The next day, they also arrested these men's wives and children, including Mad-Koermen's family.⁸⁰

These cases showed that communal service was not a clear-cut mechanism for the organisation of public works. In practice, communal service projects often incited resentment, particularly against labour mobilisation. This indicated the people's desire for a more rational relationship with local authorities. While communal service became institutionalised in the latter part of the twentieth century through the state building programmes, the Indonesian people's understanding of citizenship and their political rights had also progressed dynamically.

A social engineering project, c.1942–1945

During the Second World War, administrative control of Java changed from the Dutch to the Japanese government in March 1942. The concept of communal service and labour mobilisation was once again changed in favour of the ruling power. The

79 *OH*, 28 June 1921, KITLV, DP UH/212.

80 *OH*, 28 June 1921, KITLV, DP UH/212.

Japanese administration in Java needed to create a strategy that would both impose mobilisation of labour and capital, and encourage local participation.

After the ‘pacification’ phase, the Japanese military authorities developed a ‘stabilisation’ programme as a further strategy for their occupation of Java.⁸¹ The creation of the Committee for Investigating Old Customs and Institutions (Kyukan Seido Chosa Iinkai) began the Japanese project of cultural engineering as an occupation strategy. Historian Shigeru Sato says that on 7 November 1942, the Japanese administration on Java founded the Committee in order ‘to secure the Indonesians’ cooperation and to relieve the smouldering discontent amongst the nationalists’. The Committee consisted of Japanese staff and Indonesian intellectuals from four fields: politics, religion, education, and law. Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, Purbocaroko, Ki Hajar Dewantara, and Supomo — the last three not only renown in education and law but also experts on Javanese culture — were among the Indonesian members of the Committee.⁸² The Committee aimed to investigate sociocultural conditions before the Japanese administration ‘commenced a systematic mobilisation of labour’.⁸³ This additionally holds true but, according to Sato, the motivation for labour mobilisation also came from the fact that ‘the Indonesian members of the Committee expressed their wish to establish and conduct a cooperative mass movement under their own leadership’.⁸⁴

The Japanese administration in Java, through Kyukan Seido Chosa Iinkai, is most likely responsible for the spread of the term *gotong royong*. This is supported by the fact that many Indonesian thinkers who published their works before the Japanese Occupation, did not use the term to refer to communal cooperation or social unity. For instance, Muhammad Hatta in his writings on cooperative activities did not use the term although his ideas about a collective economic system represented a ‘genuine’ expression of *gotong royong*.⁸⁵ Likewise, the idea of unity and cooperation that the indigenous middle class had widely propagated,⁸⁶ was not equated to *gotong royong*.

Before the Japanese Occupation, the commonly used expression for imposing communal cooperation or unity was *tolong menolong* (mutual help). Between 1904 and 1907, for example, journalist Abdul Rivai frequently referred to *tolong menolong* in order to emphasise social harmony.⁸⁷ In 1914 Siti Sundari, a female activist, also emphasised *tolong menolong* in discussing strategies for survival during ‘the age of motion’.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, in the 1920s H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, then leader of Sarikat

81 Harry J. Benda, ‘The beginnings of the Japanese Occupation of Java’, *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15, 4 (1956): 541–60.

82 Shigeru Sato, *War, nationalism and peasants: Java under the Japanese Occupation 1942–1945* (London: Allen & Unwin with ASAA, 1994), p. 50.

83 Shigeru Sato, ‘Indonesia 1939–1942: Prelude to the Japanese Occupation’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, 2 (2006): 225–48.

84 Sato, *War, nationalism and peasants*, pp. 50–53.

85 Mohammad Hatta, *Kumpulan karangan III* (Jakarta, Amsterdam, Surabaya: Penerbit dan Balai Buku Indonesia, 1954).

86 Agus Suwignyo, ‘The making of politically conscious Indonesian teachers in public schools, 1930–42’, *Southeast Asian Studies* 3, 1 (2014): 119–49.

87 See Abdul Rivai’s articles in *Bintang Hindia* 2–4, no. 1, 2 (1904) up to 4, 18 (1907).

88 Siti Sundari, ‘Madioen’, *Doenia Bergerak* 2 (1914): 7–8.

Islam, preferred the term *solidaritas sosial* (social solidarity) in exploring the connection between Islam and socialism.⁸⁹

In the newspapers and bulletins accessed for this study the term *gotong royong* did not appear until *Sinar Baroe*, a Surabaya-based daily newspaper, used it on 4 May 1943. This finding supports Bowen's statement cited earlier that the term *gotong royong*, as conveyed by Piekaar in a vignette about the Japanese in Aceh, was not used before the 1940s.⁹⁰

In the edition of 4 May 1943, *Sinar Baroe* published an article about the building of an embankment along the Serang River in order to prevent it from flooding the surrounding areas. The Serang River was within the Adikarto area of the Pakualam royal family, today's Kulon Progo regency, in Yogyakarta province. The article reads:

*Hari Sabtu tg. 1 Go-Gatsu '03 SP Pakualaman-Ko dengan diiringkan Pakualaman-Koti Somu Tyokan, berangkat pergi ke Glagah untuk beberapa malam lamanya, perlu memimpin dan mengerjakan pembikinan tanggul serta perluasan jalan air Kali Serang, yang apabila banjir selalu membikin bencana di Adikarto-Ken. Pekerjaan mencegah bencana banjir itu, dikerjakan dengan secara gotong royong. Pakualaman-Ko sendiri selain memimpin ini pekerjaan, juga turut mengangkat pacul.*⁹¹

On Saturday 1 May 1943 Prince Pakualam accompanied by Chief Commander of Pakualaman, Somu Tyokan, left for Glagah for several nights, to lead and work on the construction of an embankment and the widening of the Serang River water course, which when in flood always causes a disaster in Adikarto. This work will prevent flooding, and is being done through *gotong royong*. The Prince himself apart from leading the work also wielded a spade.

The coverage of the embankment works continued on the 14 May 1943 edition of the same newspaper:

*Sesudah tanggul di Prapatan Nagung Bendungan-Son selesai diperbaiki, maka mulai tg. 13 bulan Go-Gatsu ini, pekerjaan besar memperbaiki kali Serang di Adikarto-Ken dimulailah dengan secara gotong royong. Beribu-ribu rakyat Adikarto yang melakukan ini pekerjaan. Tg. 11 Go-Gatsu ini, Pakualaman-Koti Sumo Tyokan berangkat ketempat pekerjaan, dan tg 13 nanti menyusul pula S.P. Pakualaman-Ko bersama-sama t. Saito Pembesar Koti Zinnu Kyoku bagian Keizaibu. Tebing kali Serang yang perlu diperbaiki itu k.l. panjangnya 7 km.*⁹²

After the embankment at Prapatan Nagung was improved, on 13 May a large-scale work began in the Serang River by means of *gotong royong*. Thousands of Adikarto residents worked on the project. On 11 May, Chief Commander Sumo Tyokan departed for the work site and on 13 May was followed by His Highness Pakualam together with

89 H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, *Islam dan socialisme* (Jakarta: Yayasan Islam Studi Club, 1924), pp. 27–8.

90 Bowen, 'On the political construction', p. 548.

91 *Sinar Baroe* (thereafter *SB*), 4 Go-Gatsu 2603 (May 1943); I thank David John Rawson for the English translation of the quoted passages. *Sinar Baroe* had published news about the dam's construction in April 1943, describing how 'the voluntary hard-working spirit of the people' to participate in the project 'had reduced the overall budget' for the Sultanate. Yet, *gotong royong* was not used in this earlier article. See *SB*, 14 Shi-Gatsu 2603 (April).

92 *SB*, 14 Go-Gatsu 2603 (May 1943).

Mr Saito, a High Official of the Department of Public Construction. The Serang River embankment which needs improving is about 7 km long.

Sinar Baroe also carried reports of projects in the towns of Kendal and Brebes in Central Java, in which *gotong royong* again featured.

In the Kendal case, 13 June 1943:

*Pengurus S.T.R. Kendal-gun menyiarkan maklumat, supaya para anggota bersemangat gotong-royong. Sebagai permulaan, nanti tg. 13-6-2603, diminta segenap anggota beramai-ramai melakukan pembersihan tanah-lapang di Kendal.*⁹³

The Kendal chapter of the People's Force Unit has disseminated information so that its members are infused with the *gotong royong* spirit. As a beginning, on 13 June 1943 all members are requested to join in a clean up of the fields at Kendal.

In the Brebes case, 29 June 1945:

*Atas usaha Tuan Sudarno (pemimpin koperasi) dengan bantuannya T. Brebes Sontyoo, telah dapat dibentuk beberapa Kumiai tambak yg. jumlah anggotanya hingga kini ada l.k. 450 orang. Hasil pertama yg. dapat dibanggakan ialah tentang pemeliharaan tambak yg. dilakukan dengan gotong-royong oleh segenap anggota2nya, sehingga dapat mengurangi blanja2 yg. harus dikeluarkan.*⁹⁴

From the efforts of Mr Sudarno, the cooperative leader with assistance from Mr Brebes Sontyoo, several embankment associations have been formed whose membership to date totals about 450 people. The first result which everyone can feel proud about is the maintenance of the embankment which is being carried out through *gotong royong* by all members, consequently reducing its cost.

On 2 March 1945, in the waning days of the war, *Sinar Baroe* had published a rather lengthy article titled 'Dompét Gotong Royong' (*Gotong Royong Purse*). This was a call for donations to support the Japanese war effort in the Pacific. Eight days later, the newspaper announced that Dompét Gotong Royong had collected Fl. 10,000. The newspaper specifically mentioned the Fl. 12.85 contribution it had received via a Mrs R.A. Koesoemadyo from 'a group of female food traders of Welahan Village'. It stated, 'Even the females do not want to get left behind in the effort to win the war'.⁹⁵ In Surabaya, *gotong royong* was also used by the Japanese military when they mobilised local women labourers to sew uniforms.⁹⁶ In June, *Sinar Baroe* called upon the 'Arab community to develop the *gotong royong* spirit' and 'to donate' to the Badan Pembantu Prajurit (BPP, Organisation to Support Soldiers) and Badan Pembantu Prajurit Pekerja (BPPP, Organisation to Assist Work Soldiers).⁹⁷

While *gotong royong* in the Adikarto case shows the solidarity of the people and their leader(s), in Kendal, Brebes, Surabaya and other places, it was used to mobilise labour and a collective spirit in the service of the authorities. Apart from this, *gotong royong* was also used by the Japanese officials to produce a unifying discourse of

93 *SB*, 13 Roku-Gatsu 2603 (June 1943).

94 *SB*, 29 June 2065 (1945).

95 *SB*, 2 and 10 San-Gatsu 2605 (Mar. 1945).

96 *SB*, 6 June 2605 (1945).

97 *SB*, 7 Feb. 2605 (1945).

communal identity. As Officer Hiranuma said during a meeting of the Badan Persaudaraan Penduduk (BPP, Residents' Solidarity Organisation) in Jakarta in June 1945:

The Eastern people in general share the same characteristics and customs. Their cultures and character are gracious and noble. The sacred and genuine cultures of the Eastern people are important capital [*harta yang penting*] for creating a peaceful and harmonious social relations because they are based on unity and *gotong royong*.⁹⁸

The creation of the term *gotong royong* was probably derived by Kyukan Seido Chosa Iinkai from the *yui* system in Japan.⁹⁹ The Japanese *yui* system was originally a labour exchange system in agricultural settings.¹⁰⁰ It expanded in practice to become a mutual help system in non-agricultural settings, such as repairing houses or helping neighbours in the event of a death.¹⁰¹ The paradigm underlining its practice also shifted from the relationship of patron (*ooya*) and client (*bekke, nago*), which was traditionally based on familial ties and landownership, to works for the shared benefit of a community.¹⁰²

The *yui* system reflected the way a community at the lowest organisational level in Japan, the hamlet, was functioning before the Second World War. According to Robert Smith, the hamlet in Japan was a place of psychological investment, and where individuals subordinated themselves to the shared interests of the community.¹⁰³ At this level, the *yui* system became 'an action of tying things [...] or uniting persons into one body'.¹⁰⁴ As Tatsuro Suehara argues, the wider meaning of the *yui* system has survived because of the spirit of solidarity and social cohesion it conveys.¹⁰⁵ Like the *yui* system in Japan, *gotong royong* developed concurrently with the promotion of resource mobilisation programmes. Together, the concept and the programmes transformed the discourse of communal service from agricultural labour exchange to societal identity-making.

State-driven citizenship, 1950s–1990s

By the end of the Japanese Occupation in 1945, *gotong-royong* had become a catchy term for Indonesian leaders. By using the term, these leaders managed to pursue various state goals. Soekarno's address to the Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence on 1 June 1945 constituted the moment *gotong royong* was officially declared the foundation of the state and the cultural identity of the nation.

98 SB, 9 June 2605 (1945).

99 I thank Prof. Shingo Minamizuka for referring me to the Japanese '*yui*' system.

100 Tatsuro Suehara, 'Yui and its new role in the post-industrial Japanese society', The 4th International Conference, Rennes, France, 2005, fr.pekea-fr.org/Rennes/T-Suehara.doc, (accessed 15 June 2015); Robert J. Smith, 'The Japanese rural community: Norms, sanctions, and ostracism', *American Anthropologist* 63, 3 (1961): 522–33.

101 Tatsuro Suehara, 'Labour exchange systems in Japan and DR Congo: Similarities and differences', *African Studies Quarterly* 9, 1–2 (2006): 55–65.

102 Suehara, 'Labour exchange systems', pp. 58–9.

103 Smith, 'The Japanese rural community', p. 523.

104 Suehara, 'Yui and its new role', p. 1.

105 Suehara, 'Labour exchange systems', p. 64.

Soekarno, in elaborating the ideology of the would-be state of Indonesia said, among other things:

If the five principles [Pancasila] are to be condensed (*diringkas*) [...] to become one expression, then it should be 'gotong royong'. *Gotong royong* is our national identity.¹⁰⁶

During his presidency, Soekarno repeatedly invoked the spirit of *gotong royong* in order to unify the masses. For example, in August 1959, in an attempt to prevent a political break-up and military insurgencies, Soekarno again referred to *gotong royong* as the core of Indonesian national identity.¹⁰⁷ Then in 1960, amidst a severe economic crisis and a tense political situation, Soekarno extolled *gotong royong*, saying it was an instrument of unity between the government and the people.¹⁰⁸ Other state leaders responded favourably to Soekarno's concept of *gotong royong*. The Supreme Consultative Assembly (Dewan Pertimbangan Agung, DPA) made Soekarno's 'Political Manifesto' a state guideline with *gotong royong* at its core.¹⁰⁹ Zainal Arifin, speaker of the 'Gotong Royong House of Representatives', said the government had demonstrated a 'beautiful practice of *gotong royong*' in its development programmes.¹¹⁰

Gotong royong became a keyword in the implementation of the government's 'Mass Education' programme. In 1957 *Kotapradja Magazine* published an article that argued: 'People have to provide their own education by developing the *gotong royong* spirit. The government's support should not hinder the people's spirit of self-help.'¹¹¹ In 1964, Information Minister Roeslan Abdulgani called for 'intensive *gotong royong*' which the private sector should contribute to in order to make the government's mass education programme a success.¹¹²

Lower-ranking government officials also spread the ideas and programmes of *gotong royong* extensively. For example, the Karanganyar Regent of Central Java, Sukarto Singolodro, said that 'people should develop *gotong royong* because it is *jiwa kekuatan desa* [the soul of village power]'. He referred to 'the successful development of [a] Gaum Village' in improving the productivity of land by means of *gotong royong*.¹¹³ All this implies that the rhetoric of *gotong royong* amplified the discourse of collectiveness promoted by the bureaucracy from the highest to the lowest levels, while being a tool for resource mobilisation.

106 'Filsafat gotong royong', *Banteng I*, 19/20 (1946), p. 2.

107 Sukarno, 'Penemuan kembali revolusi kita (Manifesto Politik): Amanat Presiden Republik Indonesia pada hari proklamasi 17 Agustus 1959', in *Haluan politik dan pembangunan negara* (Jakarta: Departement Penerangan RI, n.d.), pp. 40–75.

108 'Lampiran keputusan Dewan Pertimbangan Agung tentang perincian *Jalannya Revolusi Kita* yang diucapkan oleh Presiden Sukarno pada 17 Agustus 1960', in *Haluan politik*, pp. 83–94; Sukarno, 'Ambeg paramarta-arta (Berwatak pandai mendahulukan urusan yang penting' (Jakarta: Departemen Penerangan RI, 1963), pp. 7, 27.

109 'Lampiran keputusan Dewan Pertimbangan Agung tentang perincian persoalan-persoalan pokok dan program umum revolusi Indonesia yang diambil dari manifesto politik Republik Indonesia tanggal 17 Agustus 1959', in *Haluan politik*, pp. 29–39.

110 'Betapa indah gotong royong: DPR-GR telah mendemonstrasikan secara konkrit', *Harian Rakjat*, 6 July 1961, p. 1.

111 'Azas kekuatan sendiri', *Madjalah Kotapradja* 6–7, VII (1957), pp. 30–31; 'Pusat latihan pendidikan masyarakat di Ketjamatan Kebondjeruk', *Madjalah Kotapradja* 12–13, VII (1957), p. 21.

112 'Swasta harus aktif & gotong royong bersama pemerintah', *Suluh Indonesia*, 8 Jan. 1964, p. 3.

113 'Gotong royong adalah jiwa kekuatan desa', *Kedaulatan Rakyat* (hereafter *KR*), 25 Jan. 1955, p. 2.

Meanwhile, calls for communal service generally worked well in the immediate post-Indonesian independence period. These calls, which were part of the many development and nation-building programmes, were now under the umbrella label *gotong royong* instead of *kerigan* or *gugur gunung*.¹¹⁴ A Yogyakarta-based daily, *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, regularly published news about schools being built by local villagers. Between January and May 1955, for example, eight schools were reportedly built by means of *gotong royong* in the Central Javanese residencies of Wonosobo (three schools) and Purwokerto (four), and in Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta (one).¹¹⁵ The construction of the schools cost Rp 45,000, Rp 105,000 and Rp 9,000 respectively for Wonosobo, Purwokerto and Gunung Kidul. This expenditure was fully borne by 'the shoulders of the people' (*dipikul rakyat*).¹¹⁶ The government officials only 'monitored and supervised the people' working on the projects.¹¹⁷ In the 1960s, the number of public schools built in this manner increased, as shown by several cases in Magelang and Rembang.¹¹⁸

Suharto's New Order government, while echoing the grand rhetoric of Soekarno's regime, was largely concerned with the implementation of *gotong royong* for economic and political reasons. In January 1978, the Ministry of Internal Affairs organised a symposium that aimed to design *gotong royong* programmes at a national level. These programmes were to be implemented by village administrators and villagers. Minister Amirmachmud said, 'By contributing directly to development programmes, the common people are not an object but an agent of change.'¹¹⁹ The Director General of Village Development, Achmadi, made explicit the sorts of contribution that the government expected from the populace, namely labour, material goods, money, agricultural produce, and skills or expertise.¹²⁰

Under the New Order, *gotong royong* was interpreted as the Indonesian people's contribution to support the government's programmes. Although Amirmachmud claimed that the 'people's contribution is not an illegal tax' (*pungutan liar*),¹²¹ the practice of *gotong royong* during the New Order was clearly a form of labour and capital mobilisation. Achmadi's own report showed that from 1969 to 1974 and from 1974 to 1978, ordinary Indonesians' contributions comprised as much as 54.6 per cent and 55.1 per cent respectively of the budgets for infrastructure (roads, bridges, ditches) and public facilities (schools, health centres).¹²² The 1978 symposium was a moment in which the New Order officially made *gotong royong* a state mechanism to generate revenue in addition to regular taxes. This also led to further large-scale

114 However, the terms *kerigan* and *gugur gunung* remained in popular use, as Koentjaraningrat noted in the 1960s. I also found *gugur gunung* in *Harian Umum*, 29 Sep. 1951, p. 1.

115 'Ramai-ramai bikin gedung sekolah', *KR*, 18 Jan. 1955, p. 2; 'Gotong royong mendirikan rumah sekolah', *KR*, 3 May 1955; 'Gotong royong bangun SR', *KR*, 16 Feb. 1955, p. 2.

116 'Ramai-ramai ...', *KR*, 18 Jan. 1955.

117 'Gotong royong bangun SR', *KR*, 16 Feb. 1955.

118 'SR Gotong Rojong', *Suluh Indonesia*, 12 Sept. 1961, p. 5; 'Rembang giat membangun', *Suara Merdeka* (thereafter *SM*), 18 July 1966, p. 3.

119 Amirmachmud, 'Pidato menteri dalam negeri', *Simposium Pembinaan Gotong Royong*, pp. 1–2, 10 and 12.

120 Achmadi, 'Pidato penjelasan direktur jenderal pembangunan desa', *Simposium Pembinaan Gotong Royong*, pp. 8–9.

121 Amirmachmud, 'Pidato menteri', p. 11.

122 Achmadi, 'Pidato penjelasan', p. 11.

village and sub-district labour mobilisation aimed at infrastructure construction in the 1980s, accompanied by state-sponsored reports about *gotong royong* practices throughout Indonesia, thus spreading this Java-originated concept.¹²³

Gotong royong during the New Order period covered a wide range of activities. In addition to schools, *gotong royong* was also invoked to build village assembly halls (*balai desa*), for example in Karanganyar,¹²⁴ and religious buildings, for example, mosques in Surakarta,¹²⁵ Cilacap,¹²⁶ Sleman,¹²⁷ and Purworejo,¹²⁸ as well as a church in Prambanan.¹²⁹ The inhabitants of Cilacap rebuilt a traditional market after it burned down.¹³⁰ In Tawangmangu and Demak, respectively, locals worked together to rebuild houses which had been destroyed by floods.¹³¹

The newspapers surveyed are also rich in articles about *gotong royong* for the maintenance and pavement of roads and bridges, for example, in East Java's regencies of Magetan and Banyuwangi, Yogyakarta's Sleman and Bantul, and Central Java's Pati, Jepara, and Semarang.¹³² There were also reports of *gotong royong* for the repair of ditches and swamps for agriculture and flood prevention, for example, in Tuban, Wonokromo (East Java), Kulonprogo (Yogyakarta), Klaten, Batang, Purworejo, Demak, Magelang, and Kudus (Central Java).¹³³ These sampled cases show that ordinary people across Java carried out *gotong royong* relatively consistently when the need arose.

123 See, for example, Syamsuddin Hi Chalid, Buchari, and Ali Bangsaw, *Sistim gotong royong dalam masyarakat pedesaan Daerah Sulawesi Tengah* (Palu: Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah Sulawesi Tengah, 1979); Sri Yaningsih, *Sistim gotong royong dalam masyarakat pedesaan Daerah Nusa Tenggara Barat* (Mataram: Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah Nusa Tenggara Barat, 1979). There are also reports of the *gotong royong* writing projects published by the other provincial administrative offices between 1979 and 1988 under the auspices of 'Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Kebudayaan Daerah' of the Department of Education and Culture.

124 'Pembukaan Balai Desa', *SM*, 19 Sept. 1966, p. 2.

125 'Masjid Kadipiro', *Adil* 43, 13 (1974), p. 5.

126 'Kronik', *Adil* 43, 15 (1975), p. 14.

127 'Biaya bangun masjid dari hasil garap sawah', *KR*, 14 July 1978, p. 2.

128 'Rakyat Bruno bangun mesjid', *KR*, 18 July 1978, p. 3.

129 'Umat Katolik bangun gereja, biaya dari gaji', *KR*, 4 Aug. 1978, p. 7.

130 'Kerja bakti', *SM*, 5 Mar. 1996, p. 4.

131 'Gotong royong', *SM*, 27 Mar. 1996; 'Gotong royong', *SM*, 7 Aug. 1999, p. 2.

132 See 'Banyuwangi: Semangat gotong royong besar', *Harian Umum*, 18 June 1951, p. 11; 'Pembangunan desa di Kecamatan Poncol', *Harian Umum*, 21 Sep. 1951, p. 11; 'Jepara: Rakyat bergotong royong membangun jalan sepanjang 20 km', *KR*, 27 Mar. 1956, p. 2; 'Pati: Pembangunan jalan secara gotong royong', *SM*, 7 July 1966, p. 3; 'Gotong royong membuat jalan sepanjang 400 meter', *Suluh Marhaen*, 12 Nov. 1969; 'Bantul', *KR*, 1 Oct. 1981, p. 3; 'Sidokarto', *KR*, 12 Oct. 1981, p. 3.

133 See 'Gotong royong mengairi 200 ha sawah', *Harian Umum*, 14 June 1951, p. 11; 'Usaha gotong royong yang patut ditiru', *Harian Umum*, 31 July 1951, p. 11; 'Klaten kerjasama mengatasi krisis air', *KR*, 31 Jan. 1955, p. 2; 'Selokan Kalibawang perlu disempurnakan', *KR*, 1 Aug. 1960, p. 2; 'Saluran gotong royong', *Suluh Indonesia*, 19 Sep. 1962, p. 2; 'Klaten gotong royong waduk', *SM*, 11 July 1966, p. 3; 'Purworejo: Tanggul saluran air hasil gotong royong', *Suara Merdeka*, 3 Nov. 1966, p. 2; 'Sekilas berita Jateng', *Suara Karya*, 12 Nov. 1971, p. 2; 'Masalah yang sudah berlangsung 32 tahun akhirnya terpecahkan', *Surabaya Post*, 25 Jan 1978, p. 8; 'Rakyat Panungkulan giat perbaiki tanggul bobol', *KR*, 29 July 1978, p. 2; 'Penduduk Kecamatan Tulis gotong royong perbaiki Sungai Kaliboyo', *SM*, 17 Feb. 1986, p. 4.

Negotiating the citizenship of *gotong royong*

In the newspaper articles examined for this study, the common people's participation in *gotong royong* was depicted as voluntary and spontaneous.¹³⁴ For example, *Kedaulatan Rakyat* reported the participation of 18,354 'self-motivated' people who repaired the Kalibawang irrigation canals of Yogyakarta.¹³⁵ *Harian Umum* published two articles on the topic, 'Usaha Gotong royong yang Patut Ditiru' (*gotong royong* efforts worth copying) and 'Semangat Gotong royong Besar' (the great *gotong royong* spirit), both aiming to flatter readers and to foster their involvement in such projects.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, the government's *gotong royong* projects — whether in the 1950s or the 1990s — conveyed a clear message about the importance of the unity between the common people and state apparatuses, especially the armed forces. This was illustrated, for example, by fine words like '*kemitraan erat*' (close partnership).¹³⁷

Regardless of these lofty expressions, *gotong royong* hid much discontent. One ongoing issue was unhappiness over the unequal share of labour contributed between the doers of *gotong royong* (mostly the ordinary people) and those supervising the *gotong royong* activities (mostly officials and village leaders). Some villagers demanded that the officials contribute to *gotong royong* activities in the actual sense, not simply monitor and observe. Examples of discontent with *gotong royong* were a project to repair a damaged bridge in Kulonprogo and another to rebuild destroyed houses in Sleman in 1981. In both cases, the locals expressed their dissatisfaction because the government had left the work completely to them without providing any labour or material assistance.¹³⁸ Another case of *gotong royong*, for a road pavement project in Magelang in 1978, placed severe burdens on the villagers. Not only had local adult men to contribute their labour, they also had to pay Rp 30 each. A villager in Magelang was quoted by *Kedaulatan Rakyat* as saying: 'It is a very long wait for the government's assistance in this road pavement project. We choose our own way of autonomy and self-help.'¹³⁹

For many, *gotong royong* also seemed to be an unfair system which did not apportion benefits and burdens fairly in a community. This was shown by a canal maintenance project in the sub-district of Jetis, Yogyakarta, in 1955. The owners of rice paddies benefited from the *gotong royong* more than the landless because a well-maintained canal resulted in better irrigation, which in turn improved the harvest. The inhabitants of Jetis came to a consensus obliging landowners to annually contribute to the village Rp 40 per hectare of land they owned. The money accumulated was used to hire 'professional' workers, who would take over the maintenance of the irrigation canals. This way, the people of Jetis were able to give up *gotong royong* in this particular case.¹⁴⁰

134 'Penduduk ...', *SM*, 17 Feb. 1986, p. 4.

135 'Selokan Kalibawang ...', *KR*, 1 Aug. 1960, p. 2.

136 'Usaha ...', *Harian Umum*, 31 July 1951, p. 11; 'Banyuwangi ...', *Harian Umum*, 18 June 1951, p. 11.

137 'Kemitraan antara polisi dan warga hasilkan bangunan Mapolsek', *SM*, 20 Mar. 1996; also *Harian Umum*, 22–23 Oct. 1951.

138 'Pemugaran 40 rumah di Tempel kurang lancar karena kurang tenaga', *KR*, 6 Oct. 1981, p. 3; 'Akibat hujan beruntun, jembatan Clereng ambles lalu lintas ke Wates putus', *KR*, 4 Dec. 1981, p. 3.

139 'Gotong royong Rp 30an hasilkan pengerasan jalan 400m!', *KR*, 5 July 1978, p. 3.

140 'Tenaga gotong royong diganti dengan uang', *KR*, 14 Jan. 1955, p. 2.

Last but not least, *gotong royong* projects sometimes turned out to be a mode of corruption. In Bondowoso, East Java in 1977, for example, village and sub-district officials issued a bylaw under the label 'village development *gotong royong* programmes'. They listed 37 types of taxable activities. Villagers had to pay taxes to local authorities when they arranged or carried out any of those 37 activities, in addition to the taxes imposed by the central government. For example, to get married one had to pay Rp 1,500 local tax; to organise a wedding Rp 2,250; to own loudspeaker equipment Rp 1,000 per year; to use a loudspeaker Rp 1,000 per use; and to slaughter a cow Rp 1,750, in addition to an official tax of Rp 350. Although the village administrative elites said these local taxes were meant 'to support village development programmes', the villagers of Bondowoso noted that the collected tax money was shared between the village head, the sub-district officials, the local police officers and military commanders.¹⁴¹

Another case of corruption was from Kulonprogo, Yogyakarta. In 1982, the central government aimed to build fully equipped school compounds in this area. Jakarta allocated a total of Rp 668,920,000 for fully furnished classrooms, teachers' offices, and a teachers' residence with clean water and sanitary facilities. Yet, the allocated budget was misappropriated. Out of the Rp 13,378,040 'general post' allocation, as much as Rp 11,040,000 alone was spent to pay the construction committee (*panitia pembangunan*). The shortfall for the actual construction work was covered by *gotong royong* in which local authorities mobilised the people for labour and building materials.¹⁴²

Conclusion

In early twentieth century Indonesia, especially in Java, official calls for *gotong royong* through its various local labels (*kerigan*, *kuduran*, *gugur gunung*) sometimes incited open resistance. In the second half of the twentieth century, from approximately the 1940s to the 1990s, the extensive promulgation of *gotong royong* by successive governments coincided with large-scale economic development plans and targets. The term *gotong royong* was promoted by the government as a signifier of collective identity. In the post-Independence era it spread as a discourse of nation-building to create a shared element of unity among Indonesian citizens. By being made part of the state's identity discourse, *gotong royong* became politically binding for all Indonesian citizens, despite its Javanese origins.

The people of Central and East Java had traditionally practised *gotong royong* as a mutual help system in their neighbourhoods to strengthen economic and social resilience. However, its institutionalisation by the state influenced common perceptions of *gotong royong*. In response to government propaganda and programmes, Indonesians gradually embraced *gotong royong* as a symbol of their national identity. They practised *gotong royong* to make up for shortfalls in or to complement the state's role in public welfare creation. Their view of labour and capital mobilisation, which was openly critical in the early twentieth century, generally changed to submission.

Gotong royong hence became a form of social engineering and an ingenious linguistic strategy by which elites orchestrated control over citizenship-making. The

141 'Pungutan2 desa', *Surabaya Post*, 30 Jan. 1978, p. 2.

142 'Penggunaan bantuan SD di Kulonprogo ditertibkan', *KR*, 3 Oct. 1982, p. 3.

power it conveyed was manifested in the structure of upward obligations imposed upon citizens. For the political elites, *gotong royong* constituted an instrument to gain the loyalty of citizens and to extract taxes from them, a way to mobilise labour and capital.

However, those who performed *gotong royong* remained critical about the unfair division of labour in imposed *gotong royong* projects, although they now expressed their criticism covertly. The newspapers surveyed from the 1950s to the 1990s also showed that the glorious depictions of *gotong royong* hid public disapproval of official corruption in some projects.

The people's 'internalisation' of *gotong royong* as a part of their collective identity reflected a process of citizenship-making. Ordinary Indonesians not only actively participated in but also negotiated *gotong royong* to gain a more equal position vis-à-vis the state and local authorities. Whilst *gotong royong* as a citizenship project was initiated by the state and continued to be state-driven, the people's consciousness of the relationship between themselves and the state has developed to become more and more rational.