

## **Blog Feedback 2 Semboro, Jatiroto, Ety Family**

Transition time on the tour. I am on a morning train to Madiun. That's the day we have a change of guides and meet up with Agus. We have already said goodbye to Combo and Arif who will be driving back to Situbondo.

### **Semboro & Jatiroto Sugar Plantations**

Rob notes that the history of these big, 'new' mills is well covered here:

G. ROGER KNIGHT

COMMODITIES AND COLONIALISM

The story of Big Sugar in Indonesia, 1880-1942

6 NO ESCAPE - THE HVA AND THE DJATIROTO PROJECT 165

I believe this is available as a pdf online. I now have a copy. Jatiroto (Djatiroto) was working by 1915 and Semboro was built as a smaller, adjacent sister mill and along with other developments was completed by 1928.



Getting the cane from plantation to factory: The railway marshalling yard at Djatiroto, circa 1915 (KITLV 18324)

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This is the loco shed which has now been emptied on steam. The left side has already been demolished. The right hand side is now the diesel depot. The inspection cars are very similar to the one we chartered at Semboro. Note one is marked up with a cross - an ambulance car? Is that a stretcher in the middle at the back? The steam locos have tenders for water (or oil?). If water, where was the bagasse fuel carried? If oil, locos would have need to obtain water while out in the fields. Would wood have been stockpiled along the way in which case it might be water. My guess is fuel oil but I am often wrong. Is this too early for oil fired steam locos?



Here are some selected quotes from 'Commodities and Colonialism':

'Reineke (HVA boss) set about creating a huge factory and plantation complex in what was officially designated as 'waste-land'. Indeed, it was one of his company's proud boasts that they had transformed desolate swamp and jungle – and the habitat of tigers – into one of the most up-to-date and extensive agro-industrial installations anywhere in Asia.'

'An interwar map of the enterprise makes the point quite unambiguously. It shows an industrial complex of factory and plantation that existed in almost complete isolation from the pattern of dense rural settlement that constituted the normal milieu of the Java sugar factory. '

'Everything at the site, ... was on the grandest scale: a factory building 160 metres long and 57 metres wide, with a sister factory projected immediately adjacent; a manufacturing compound covering some 56 hectares; and a servicing rail network extending nearly 270 kilometres, worked by no less than 40 locomotives pulling

around 2,000 cane trucks. '

'Land was available, but labour was not. In seeking to escape the confines of close peasant settlement, the company had also 'escaped' the concomitant ready supply of local labour. Instead, it had to be recruited elsewhere in East and Central Java, and concession rates were granted on the state railways for 'coolies' headed for Djatiroto. However, the Indies government evidently refused to contemplate Geuns' proposal in the *Handelsblad* for some kind of legal sanction against workers who refused to stay.'

(The low cane yield in the early years due to trying to grow cane in a former swamp.)

'Crucially, it was not until 1917-1918, almost a decade after the factory has opened, that the *rendement* at Djatiroto began to stand comparison with the Java average.<sup>52</sup> All this was, of course, bad for both productivity and profits. '

'Men (and soil) had indeed failed the machine – but the machine itself had also failed. Reluctant as they were to admit it, by 1913 the HVA board had finally to concede that the high-tech apparatus, installed with such fanfare at the end of the previous decade, was simply not up to the job. In particular, Djatiroto was badly underpowered: the boiler house turbines did not generate enough energy to run the mills – and there was a catalogue of other deficiencies that likewise needed to be rectified. '

'It looks very much as if the basic problem was with the American- Cuban model of which Reineke had been such a staunch advocate. The 'American' system of manufacture focused on efficiencies in the grinding of cane, through the use of heavy and super-large mills. The Java producers, on the other hand, were greatly influenced by practice in the German beet sugar industry, where the very different requirements of the raw material had led to a concentration on the chemistry and technology by which juice was converted into sugar.<sup>53</sup> In attempting to fuse the American and German systems of manufacture, it appears that Reineke and his German technical advisor, Georg Fr. Hausbrand, had badly miscalculated the motive power requirements of the American- style cane-grinding apparatus which they had installed. In short, things had gone badly wrong at the mechanical heart of the entire operation. It was 'this disappointment, of all the disappointments', as Reineke re- marked to the board, 'that was the most grievous'.

'...given the ambitiousness of the entire Djatiroto complex, it might be suspected that the company's directors planned either to bankrupt the rest of the industry, or be themselves bankrupted in the process. As it was, they came near to doing both. '

'It is reasonably clear that the HVA was kept afloat, and Reineke, Colijn and their associates saved from bankruptcy, by its score of conventional sugar factories in Kediri's Brantas valley further to the west – 'conventional' in so far as cane cultivation there remained enmeshed with peasant agri- culture – and its extensive, non-sugar plantation investments elsewhere, both on Java and on Sumatra.<sup>60</sup> The significance of this dismal outcome for the HVA's ambitious – not to say magnificent – schemes was far- reaching for Java sugar as a whole. Only late in the twentieth century, when large sectors of the industry 'migrated' to Sumatra and elsewhere in the Outer Islands of the Indonesian Republic, did the ideas so eagerly embraced by Reineke and his colleagues come into their own: sugar pro- duction divorced from the context of peasant agriculture. '

'...the HVA's massive investment took place at the wrong time and in the wrong place. For in 1931, the bottom fell out of the world sugar market, and nearly took the HVA – and the rest of the Java industry – with it.'

So, modern American methods adopted without the machinery to match, virgin swampland drained with low crop yields at least initially, no local population to provide the labour and the unwillingness of brought in labour to remain, increasing Javanese sugar production dramatically when international demand failed to grow to match. As the author notes; "We assume that big business enterprises are rational and that rationality entails awareness', wrote the American historian David S. Landes, before going on to debunk that notion and to argue that 'much decision-making is guesswork and improvisation. Otherwise, how do these enterprises manage to dig themselves so deep a hole?' "

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Aditya comments on our failed Semboro charter:

No surprise on the charter there. Semboro steam charter was always hard. As I told you, I really really had a hard time negotiating with

Semboro steam charter when Steve came. I really feel sorry for him, as he paid some good money and expected a mallet charter. But all he got was 'only' a no.29 Jung. Well it did work, before eventually the injector got damaged just on our way home on the last rural road level crossing. So it had to be hauled home by the diesel that me and Steve hitched on. Not to mention the loco manager wanted some corruption money, which was absolutely irritating. I'm really sorry for your group there, as I'm sure they also paid some good money. I will also be interested with the group of Japanese. I doubt if the mallet will run.

So it was Aditya and Steve wot broke it! Aditya, you could have let me know so I could chase the injector repair before we visited! It probably wouldn't have done any good, though. Now, who broke the mallet? Was that Bernd in 2016? ;-)

Jatiroto group photo during the railcar charter - lunch at Rojopolo from Nigel.



Rob comments on Jatiroto steam locos and the apparent numbering 50 J and previously 50 U. I've now decided that it was previously D not U and stood for Djatiroto the Dutch spelling of the mill name so forget about U for Uap (steam).

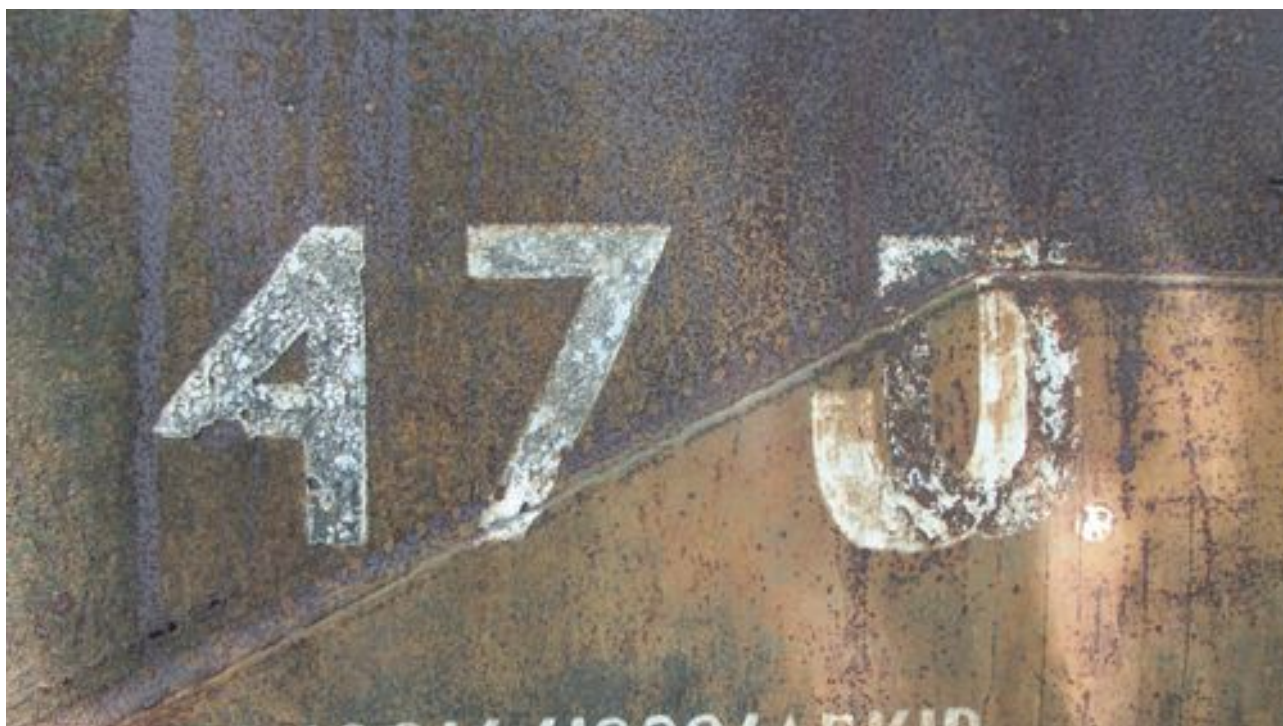
I don't think I ever saw a 'U' on Jatiroto locos. The 'J' would sometimes appear before and sometimes after it on the other as I recall.

<http://www.internationalsteam.co.uk/sweetdreams/jatiroto.htm>

Ray Gardiner knew much more about this than I did but there was no duplication of numbers between Semboro and Jatiroto, Ngadirejo was another HVA mill and numbered its locos in a common series. I rather suspect that the locos at Semboro were renumbered at some stage.

Ray had been looking at the HVA records in the PTPN XI HQ in Surabaya (the old HVA HQ) and I think he will have found something more about them.

As you will know some locos were transferred to North Sumatra, probably when the sugar market collapsed.



J with U misaligned behind it? Or was it D (for Djatiroto)? The latter, I think.



J on top of U? Or D with J on top? One or both versions had a . following the capital letter.

### **Etty Family Grave site at Wonogiri Mill near Probolinggo**

I've had some interesting feedback on the Etty family but really need good internet access to do some research myself before adding to the story. Some snippets; a steamship named Rangoon sank on its way for an engine refit around the right date for it to have previously sailed through the Red Sea with William Etty. I have a photo of Charles Etty Senior. The family name Rudstone is somehow associated with the Ettys who owned the sugar mill. William Etty was one of the 19th century's most controversial artists! More to follow.

### **Madiun Area Steam Mills Preview**

Wilson has been doing his own thing and previewed our Madiun plans:

Real steam in 2017 ... and what an experience it is especially when this morning seemed to be trainees morning. I doubt there was a departure that didn't either slip, stall or split and on more than one occasion I was treated to all three.

Morning got off to a slow start and it was 09.30 before **Purwodadi** ran the first train but between then and 1100 scored 4 steam trains plus 2 diesel hauled trains of empties. Steamers 15 (with 10's tender) and 16 in use. Sun too high for good shots by 1100 so back to Madiun for lunch. No difficulties accessing public areas and the truck yard.

After lunch bridge shots and then, just on 4, as the light got really good went back into truck yard. One run and was asked to leave.....apparently someone in 'control' rang the main office who got onto security. Actually it did me a favour as went to the gate on the side road and using a bit of zoom to the

other side of the yard got some great golden light runs. Have a look at the spot when you're here. Again lots of slipping with most trains stopping for a breather before crossing the main road.

(next day)

Purwodadi turned on another great morning. Four trains between 08.00 and 09.30, then a break of an hour and another train. Left at 11.00 having enjoyed similar access to yesterday morning.

Sunny afternoon so after a look at **Kanigoro\*** and **Pagottan** stations headed for the mill itself. Turns out all was not well with no smoke coming from the chimney. Fireless didn't move all afternoon and by 4 all lorries were loaded, the mill yard full with the truck yard getting that way so rail operations ground to a halt. An early finish.

\* Kanigoro is reported not working and after 2 years closed that is probably the end there.

**John Raby**  
**Probolinggo - Madiun**  
**Train Ranggajati 101**  
**14 August 2017**