

## GEOGRAPHY

# Netherlands Indies Have Had Uneven Development

## Islands That Loom Largest on Map Least Suitable For Support of Adequate Numbers of Working Natives

THE NETHERLANDS Indies, covetously eyed by Japan, have been quite unevenly developed by their present owners. Although Java is only fourth in area it is far and away first in development, with plantations climbing terraces to the very mountaintops, a huge and hard-working native population, and vast wealth in its highly organized and diversified export trade.

Compared with Java, the other islands in this great archipelago-empire seem backward and neglected, Jack Shepard points out (*Far Eastern Survey*, July 17). This seeming neglect is not real, however, Mr. Shepard adds, and the lower state of development of the other islands has good and sufficient causes.

None of the other islands is as blessed as Java with wide stretches of rich soil, easy access to the sea, and a large population of willing brown workers. The Dutch-held parts of Borneo and New Guinea, for example, consist largely of rugged, jungle-covered interior uplands surrounded by vast swamps that run down to the sea in impenetrable growths of mangrove. The famed Spice Islands, hotly fought over by Dutch and Portuguese in the 16th and 17th centuries, have soils so poor and thin that general farming, to support real working populations, is out of the question. In many of the islands, especially the larger ones, the natives are so primitive, and frequently so shy or even hostile, that they could never be trained to plantation work.

Oil is the key product of the "neglected" Outer Islands, as the Netherlands Indies outside Java are called. There is oil on Sumatra, Borneo, New Guinea, Ceram and possibly other islands. Oil is now the chief export of the Netherlands Indies, and oil is Number One attraction to the oil-starved Japanese Navy.

Rubber ranks second among the islands' sources of wealth. Greatest rubber plantations are on Java, of course, with Sumatra coming second. There is a very considerable development of small, native-owned rubber plantations in the Outer Islands. More than two-thirds of the rub-

ber acreage in these provinces is in the hands of native growers, many of whom are quite modern in their cultivation methods and marketing arrangements.

## BIOLOGY

# Biological Stain Laboratory Moves to Philadelphia

SAFEGUARDING an important sector of the nation's health front, at the same time furthering the cause of biological research, a little known but highly important laboratory has established new headquarters at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science.

It is the laboratory of the Commission on the Standardization of Biological Stains, born of necessity after the first World War and functioning since then in the U. S. Department of Agriculture's great experiment station at Arlington, Va. Mrs. Anis P. Bradshaw, who was in charge of the laboratory at Arlington, has moved along with it to its new location.

The blockade of the first World War worked both ways. It kept supplies from reaching Germany, but it also kept dyestuffs and special chemicals from reaching this country. The hardships suffered then by American textile and other industries are well remembered, and the stimulus thus given to the upbuilding of an American dye industry is well known.

Less frequently noticed by the average citizen are the dyestuffs, relatively small in quantity but of life-and-death importance in medicine, known as the biological stains. A few are used in direct treatment of disease, but most of them find employment in the crucial identification of bacterial and other harmful organisms, and in the examination of pathological tissues. These also, once supplied only from Germany, now come from American sources. It is the busi-

Geographically, Sumatra is the most important of the entire group, for its eastern coast faces the British-dominated Malay peninsula, with its mighty base at Singapore. The peaceful Netherlanders have been content to let Britain control the Malacca strait, which is the shortest sea route from eastern Asia to Europe. A more aggressive holder might be inclined to contest the control of the strait and thus neutralize the power of Singapore, as the Axis powers are now trying to neutralize the power of Gibraltar by indirect control of the African side of the entrance to the Mediterranean.

*Science News Letter, August 10, 1940*

ness of the Commission's laboratory to keep constant check on them, to see that they are true to name and uniform in their chemical makeup and reactions.

The stains standardized in the laboratory are used not only in medical and sanitary work but in "pure" biological research as well. Details of cell structure which are invisible under the microscope in unstained plant and animal material stand out in vivid contrast when put through the proper staining procedure. For this work also, dependable dyestuffs are indispensable.

The laboratory was first set up just after the war, in 1920, under the auspices of the National Research Council, on a grant from the Chemical Foundation. During the past two decades the work of the commission has been greatly expanded. It is under the chairmanship of Dr. H. J. Conn of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, where part of the work on the testing of bacteriological stains is carried out.

*Science News Letter, August 10, 1940*

Reindeer cross-bred with caribou in Alaskan experiments are 50 to 100 pounds heavier than animals of pure reindeer stock.

Reason for not gurgling baby talk at infants: Greatest progress in acquiring good speech, says a Los Angeles speech educator, is made as a rule by a child between six months and the end of the third year.