

## Gisting as a Colonial Agrarian Frontier: Indo-European Settlement and Social Engineering, 1926–1942

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### Abstract

Indo-Europeans, as a marginalised group, fought for their rights to education and fair wages through the moderate IEV organisation, which supported Dutch colonial government policies. This study examines Indo-European agricultural colonisation in Gisting as an instrument of the colonial government for social and agrarian control. The method used is historical, with four stages: heuristic process, verification, interpretation, and historiography. The results of the study show that (1) The success of Gisting's agricultural colonization as a tool to strengthen colonial domination over the region and agrarian resources and to form an independent community loyal to colonial power (2) The colonization of Gisting tested Indo-European solidarity not only in terms of social experimentation but also in terms of the stake of Indo-European dignity amid the ambitions of the colonial government. (3) The transformation of the Gisting landscape not only turned forests into coffee plantations but also led to economic competition and the emergence of Javanese coolies, which made the Indo-Europeans in Gisting small landlords. For the colonial government, the colonisation of Java was a strategic way to manage Indo-European conflicts in Java while opening up economic opportunities with shared financial burdens. Still, the physical risks and dignity were entirely borne by the Indo-Europeans, so that the colonisation of Gisting can be described as an unequal mutualistic symbiosis.

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## Introduction

Gisting emerged from the socio-economic marginalisation of Indo-Europeans in early 20th-century Java. After the collapse of the VOC at the end of the 18th century, the Dutch government took over the colonial territory (Widodo, 2006; Ratih, 2021; Tungkup et al., 2024). A new administration was formed, initially centred on the island of Java, which later expanded to southern Sumatra. The Dutch government continued to make efforts to maintain its dominance in various ways. One of these was the development of a highly stratified, racialised colonial social structure (Raben, 2020). The implications are evident in job positions determined based on race, which made Indo-Europeans the most vulnerable group in terms of identity and economy. The manifestation of this stratifying policy was marked by the issuance of the Reegering Reglement (RR), which was later updated to become the Indische Staatsregeling (IS) in the 1850s to regulate the division of legislative and executive powers, the role of the Volksraad, the authority of the Governor-General, and the system of government and administration, all of which were under the authority of the Dutch government with little local participation (Protschky, 2011; Hoogervorst & Nordholt, 2017; Asrul et al., 2024). The most noticeable impact was the emergence of social classes, with society divided into three groups: Europeans, including Indo-Europeans as their descendants; foreigners from the East, including Chinese, Indians, and Arabs; and the indigenous people, who occupied the lowest social class (Luttikhuis, 2013; Susilo & Sarkowi, 2020). Indo-Europeans, as descendants of Europeans, are often difficult to accept in European circles and are reluctant to mix with the indigenous people because they feel they are superior (Mahardika & Efendi, 2022). Indo-Europeans also often have difficulty accessing education (Riawanti, 2020; Lasido, 2022). Low levels of education and limited employment opportunities left many Indo-Europeans in Java in poverty. A 1902 investigation by colonial policy critic Van Kol found that 17,000 of the 51,379 Indo-Europeans in Java and Madura were living in poverty. As a result, many Indo-Europeans fell into a cycle of crime, becoming opium smugglers, thieves, gamblers, and even prostitutes (Nisa et al., 2021). This reality then led to the emergence of ideas to advance the welfare, education, and social position of Indo-Europeans, one of which was through the colonisation of Gisting.

The idea to fight for Indo-European rights was then initiated by Karel Zaalberg, an Indo-European descendant, who decided to form an Indo-European association, which later became known as the Indo-Europeesch Verbond (IEV). Initially, this organisation became a forum for Indo-Europeans to fight for their rights to obtain decent work and wages, as well as access to education. However, over time, this organisation also focused on social issues, including identity and nationality (Putri et al., 2025). A public meeting was held at the Batavia Arts Building on July 13, 1919, attended by more than 2,000 participants who declared their loyalty to the establishment of the IEV. The IEV began implementing its strategy by participating in the political arena in the Dutch East Indies through the Volksraad. From 1921 to 1924, there were two IEV members in the Volksraad; from 1924 to 1927, there were four members; from 1927 to 1931, there were six members; from 1931 to 1935, there were eight members; from 1935 to 1939, there were eight members; and from 1939 to 1943, there were eight members (Praheningtyo & Amini, 2024). In achieving its goals, IEV worked cooperatively with the colonial system by supporting various government policies, including ethical politics, which focused on three main areas: irrigation, education, and transmigration. IEV's support for ethical politics policy was evident in a similar program called "De Kolonisatie," which provided agricultural land for Indo-Europeans to cultivate and guided them in obtaining government permission to lease land. "De Kolonisatie" later became known as "De Giesting," or the colonisation of Gisting (Lampung), which was associated with agrarian activities (Bosma, 2025).

In addition to supporting the colonial government's program, externally, colonisation beyond Java also provided an opportunity for Indo-Europeans to promote agricultural colonisation and achieve economic independence (Pratama et al., 2025). The colonisation of Gisting began with periodic surveys of land in the South Sumatra region, namely Lampung, which were reported to the Dutch government. The official 10-year IEV report states that Mr E.F. Hillebrandt, K. Kloer, and Pieters (carpenter) were assigned to conduct these surveys (Hoog, 1929). The area later deemed to meet the criteria was known as Gisting or Gisting, located on the main route from Kota-Agoeng to Telokbetong (Oktaviana, 2021). *Provinciale Drentsche En Asser Courant* (1929) reported that in October 1926, under the command of Mr K. Kloer, the first group of colonists, consisting of Mr K. Kloer and his family, Werleman and Ligtenberg along with their families, and a young man named Rugebregt, departed for the Gisting region.

Currently, Gisting is a frontier agricultural area, a transition zone between densely populated rural areas and protected forests, with potential for agriculture, agroforestry, and agrotourism development (Evizal et al., 2023; T Andarrini et al., 2023). The descendants of Indo-Europeans live alongside the community in Gisting, among them Adolf Kloer, now 90. Agricultural colonisation left behind the toponymy of the village of Landbaw, which was once an agricultural nursery. In addition, the plots of land once occupied by Indo-European families have been converted into residential areas, while retaining the plot numbering system, now known as blocks.

Several studies discuss Indo-European colonisation in the Gisting region, such as those conducted by (1) Ajeng Diah Kinanti (2023) entitled "Indo-Europeesche Verbond (IEV) in Gisting 1926-1942", which describes the birth of the Indo-Europeesche Verbond (IEV) organisation and explains the chronology of the establishment of the Indo-European colony in the Gisting region. This research also highlights the development of the social structure of the colonial community in Gisting as seen from the emergence of various new occupations (2) Syahna Ardani (2023) with the title "Education for Indo People in Gisting from 1926 to 1942," which describes agricultural education for Indo-Europeans to succeed in agricultural colonization in Gisting, including describing the implementation and practices of ELS (Europees Legere School) and Landbouwschool. (3) Elsa Dara Puspita (2024) with the title "Agrarian Control of Gisting in 1926-1942 by the Indo-Europeesche Verbond (IEV)" which reviews the leasing and development of land for agriculture in Gisting, coffee and tea commodities, and the construction of clinics and churches to meet the needs of the colony in Gisting. (4) Aulia Mutiara Putri (2022) titled "The Development of Colonisation in Gisting during the Dutch East Indies Government in 1926-1942", which reviews the background of the establishment of the Indo-Europeesche Verbond (IEV) organisation in Gisting as well as the social and economic motives behind the establishment of the organisation. (5) Research by Fadhila Husna Asri (2022) entitled "The Dutch Colonial Government's Colonisation Patterns in Lampung and Mapili (1905-1942)" reviews the context of the colonisation of Lampung, including Gisting, as a transmigration program. The novelty of this research lies in how the colonisation of Gisting was one of the colonial mechanisms used to control agriculture and address the high poverty rate among Indo-Europeans in Java.

Specifically, this study aims to explain Indo-European agricultural colonisation in Gisting as a colonial mechanism to maintain agrarian control, Indo-European solidarity within the colony, and changes in the Gisting colony's landscape resulting from agrarian activities. Historically, this research makes a specific contribution by shifting the focus of studies on the colonization of Gisting, which previously included administrative studies of the IEV, to a deeper level by looking at the entire series of Indo-European colonization of Gisting as two important things, namely an instrument of agrarian control for the colonial government and an effort to solve the problem of Indo-European poverty in Java. The theoretical benefit provides a new perspective on colonisation as a mechanism of spatial control to strengthen the colonial position, and as a social experiment that not only risked the dignity of Indo-Europeans but also their lives amid the ambitions of the colonial government.

## **Research Methods**

The research uses historical methods, namely the examination and analysis of historical records and relics (Gottschalk, 1950). The process includes heuristic activities, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Hartatik, 2022; Herlina, 2020). In answering research questions regarding colonisation as a colonial mechanism, Indo-European solidarity in the colonies, and changes to the Gisting landscape, this study underwent several stages, as follows:

1. Heuristic, namely the process of collecting both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were obtained through contemporary written documents, including the IEV report (1929), the Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad newspaper (1932), the Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant newspaper (1929), De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden Indisch Nieuws en Advertentieblad (1929), the De Sumatra Post newspaper (1934), the book *Handboek Voor Philanthropisch En Maatschappelijk Werk In Neder-Oost En West-Indie* (1932), and contemporary photo archives from KITLV. Meanwhile, secondary sources came from oral accounts by Mr Adolf Kloer (aged 87), the son of Mr K. Kloer, a local leader who initiated colonisation in Gisting in 1926, and Mr Jaimin (aged 83), the 7th Village Head of Gisting. To avoid memory bias, historical sources were triangulated, for example, using the family/personal records of Mr Adolf and Mr Jaimin related to the topic. The researcher also used

- supporting written documents, such as the latest scientific journal articles relevant to the research theme, as well as other supporting documents.
2. Next, the researcher conducted internal and external source criticism. For internal oral-source criticism, the researcher ensured the oral accounts were reliable by comparing them with contemporary written sources. Externally, the researcher ensured that the informants who provided information were actual historical actors, as evidenced by their age, roles, and relationships with the Gisting colonisation process. Next, regarding internal criticism of contemporary documents, the researcher ensured that the information contained therein was reliable by reviewing the chronological description, year of writing, writing style, and overall concept of the writing. Externally, the researcher ensured that the written documents were authentic through digital forensic analysis of metadata. Visual examination of the authenticity of documents, such as typographical identity, the presence of official seals/stamps, and matching archive index codes in the credible Delpher repository.
  3. At the interpretation stage, researchers interpret verified data sources. First, researchers use agrarian policy analysis to dissect government control mechanisms through land lease regulations. Second, colonial discourse analysis is applied to interpret how narratives of solidarity are constructed within the IEV organisation. Finally, the researcher uses an environmental history perspective to explain how agricultural activities physically transformed the natural landscape of Gisting, shifting it from traditional land to colonial plantations.
  4. The final stage is historiography, which involves researchers writing down the historical facts obtained in the previous steps into a coherent whole, including objective, scientific descriptions based on the topics studied.

## **Result**

### **Findings on Colonial Mechanisms Through Agricultural Colonisation**

The idea of agricultural colonisation by Indo-Europeans stemmed from the belief that small-scale farming could succeed if properly managed and supported by government subsidies (Hoog, 1929). The Indo-Europeans, through the IEV, approached the Dutch government with a determination to take the initiative to establish a colony independently and offered themselves as proof that this approach was worth trying. When this idea was formally proposed, the government responded cautiously. The Dutch government stated that although it was not yet fully convinced of the plan, it was willing to provide support as long as the initiators first invested personal funds to demonstrate their seriousness (*Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 1932).

The Indo-Europeans resubmitted their request to the Dutch government after raising funds and asking the government to fulfil its promise by providing funds equal to the amount of investment they had made. These funds became known as the Tweeton-Fonds. In response, the government sent an official from the Office of Agricultural Affairs to inspect the colony site. At that time, the government focused on the Lampung District and selected an empty area that would later be known as Gisting. A report on field conditions was then submitted to the Dutch government. Although the inspection results were not as expected, the government was willing to assist prospective settlers with an amount of f 53,000. This was certainly proof of the government's seriousness in providing opportunities for Indo-Europeans to build a colony in Gisting independently, as evidenced by official letter No. AI 25/1/7 dated February 16, 1925, sent by the Director of Home Affairs to the IEV Executive Board, the government reserved the Gisting area to be used as an agricultural colony for Indo-Europeans and handed over full authority to the IEV (Indo-Europeesch Verbond) as the official organisation representing Indo-Europeans to regulate land allocation and determine who was entitled to receive the land (Groenen, 1939; Hoog, 1929; *Provinciale Drentsche En Asser Courant*, 1929; *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 1941).

When this colonisation project was designed, it was agreed that settlers would not be granted legal rights to the land immediately. Official rights from the government would only be granted through the IEV if they proved successful in managing the land. Settlers who failed to fulfil their duties had to be removed from the colony through legal or arbitration procedures and were required to pay compensation based on an assessment. In 1926, the process of granting legal rights to successful settlers began, indicating that some settlers had already been deemed eligible. October was considered a suitable time to open and clear the area needed for agricultural experiments. Thus, on October 4, 1926, the first group of settlers finally departed for the agricultural colony. Only a month later, the next group of settlers

followed, bringing with them the first twelve plots of land that had been officially allocated (*De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden Indisch Nieuws En Advertentieblad*, 1929; *De Sumatra Post*, 1934).



Figure 1. Pemukim pertama Gisting  
Source(s): IEV (1929)

This program has attracted considerable attention from various parties. Despite the challenges encountered, this experiment has shown very promising results. It has opened up opportunities for them to establish new fields of work that they can truly master and pursue independently. The planted land has also begun to show results. The planting efforts have yielded their first results—a sign that this initial step is moving in a favourable direction (*Provinciale Drentsche En Asser Courant*, 1929).

Entering a new phase in the implementation of agrarian policy, a more systematic approach was adopted. Initially, the main focus was on supporting small-scale farming carried out by individuals with their own capital. However, as the colony developed, the government took further steps. The government appointed a special agricultural teacher for the colony, Mr. E.W. Wijers from the Department of Agriculture. Mr. E.W. Wijers was known to be an agricultural official who reported directly to the inspector of the Agricultural Extension Service for the Overseas Territories. The main task of this teacher was to provide practical agricultural training (Hoog, 1929). The teaching system and curriculum are tailored to the design of agricultural schools, which apply mixed farming practices to enable students to gain experience with various crops, such as coffee, rubber, and pepper (Ardani, 2023).

The agricultural colonisation of Gisting was carried out in an organised manner and was considered a government response to the social unrest of economically marginalised Indo-Europeans. However, this colonisation project also served as a strategy for the government to manage internal social problems arising from colonialism and to leverage the success of Gisting's agricultural colonisation to strengthen colonial domination over the region and its agricultural resources, as well as to form independent communities loyal to colonial power. The IEV's full authority from the government to regulate land allocation and determine who was entitled to the land was a form of agrarian monopoly that used land as a means of control. There was no local involvement or participation in decision-making or land ownership, so indirectly (Karima et al., 2023).

### **Social Dynamics of Indo-Europeans in the Gisting Colony**

At the 10th IEV Congress held in Batavia to coincide with Easter celebrations on March 30, 1929, A. H. Van Ophuysen, an honorary member of the IEV, delivered a speech on various matters that needed to be evaluated during the organisation's first decade. In his speech, Van Ophuysen emphasised the importance of solidarity among the Indo-European community within the IEV, which was reflected in the motto "one for all and all for one." (Hoog, 1929). He also stated that neither the indigenous people nor the pure-blooded Europeans could be part of the IEV social environment because they lacked the same instinct for attachment and sense of togetherness as the Indo community (Praheningtyo & Amini, 2024). Nevertheless, without looking down on the Indo-European community, the Dutch government

provided considerable assistance in obtaining land leases for the agricultural colonisation of Indo-Europeans in Gisting, as part of efforts to address Indo-European poverty in Java's urban areas.

Of course, there was a period of adaptation that was not easy for the Indo-European colonists, even though they received credit funds from the colonial government (Tweeton-Fonds). Not only financially, but mentally, the Indo-European colonists, who were accustomed to living in cities, had to quickly get used to heavy and rough work, namely farming, so the early colonies had to show their fighting spirit. One month after the first colonisation in Gisting, a total of 12 plots of land had been opened. Various visits to Gisting were made by government representatives, members of the IEV parliament in the Volksraad, consuls from foreign countries, members of the IEV, and, last but not least, the press from both the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands. Despite criticism and constant dynamics, the Gisting agricultural colonisation also received various forms of appreciation. In 1929, according to the official 10-year report of the IEV, there were 24 families as settlers and 8 volunteers (Ardani, 2023). Based on a personal interview with Mr Adolf Kloer, during his time managing the land in Gisting, his family also brought relatives from Solo to help work on the plantation.



Figure 2. Panoramic view of the agricultural land of Kloer, Werleman, and Mittelmeyer  
Source(s): IEV (1929)

The requirements for settlers in Gisting are as follows: (1) Settlers with full capital (minimum of f 6000) must deposit f 3000 of that amount in the IEV for specific purposes, such as building houses, agricultural needs, or as collateral for loan repayments, if any. Settlers with a capital of 3,000 can also use it to purchase agricultural tools and seeds, as well as meet their daily needs. Settlers are charged an entrance fee of f 3000. (2) Settlers with limited capital (below f 6000) are required to pay monthly fees, but the buildings, facilities, and amenities available to settlers with limited capital are generally simpler and smaller than those available to settlers with full capital. (3) Settlers without capital, settlers who have no capital at all, may participate in the Gisting colonisation on the condition that they are in good physical health, have basic knowledge of agriculture, and are willing to work directly and actively on the land they will manage (Kosters, 1932). The differences in the requirements for becoming a settler in Gisting illustrate that there was also social class stratification within the Indo-European community. However, the spirit of mutual support strengthened Indo-European solidarity, so that the requirements for becoming a settler were no longer a matter of capital but of determination.

The increasingly dense population of the Gisting region led to the expansion of the colony to Campang Kanan. New settlers received capital assistance and housing while waiting for the harvest from the cultivated land. This density often caused chaos, including undisciplined new settlers and disputes between new and old settlers over land and capital. At one point, the IEV sent 50 unemployed Indo-Europeans from Batavia to the Campang Kanan area. Still, because they had no agricultural skills, the colony failed (Personal interview with Mr Adolf Kloer, December 6, 2022). In 1940, 211 settlers, comprising 55 families, 44 women, and 112 children, were reported to be in the Gisting colony. The livestock sector developed rapidly, with 16 livestock farmers, mainly poultry farmers, recorded (Hoog, 1929). This illustrates the ebb and flow of the Indo-European colony in Gisting.

### **Land and Landscape Changes in the Gisting Colony**

In the early days of colonisation by members of the I.E.V., Gisting was described as a wild region untouched by modern agriculture. The landscape was dominated by dense tropical vegetation, with tall trees and thick canopies, and access and transportation routes were very limited, possibly consisting only of dirt roads or paths made by residents or early colonists. Biodiversity was very high,

with a variety of plant, insect, and wildlife species still in their natural state. Colonisation was directed towards land that had not been cleared or intensively utilised. These lands may be swamps, small hills, or grasslands that are difficult to cultivate. Topographical and drainage challenges pose major obstacles to agricultural development. There are almost no permanent buildings other than simple posts or barracks, while access to clean water, sanitation, and agricultural tools is still very limited. Early colonists, such as members of the IEV, lived alongside the local population and often brought families from Java (Solo) as additional labour to cultivate the land. (*Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 1941; Personal interview with Mr Adolf Kloer, December 6, 2022).



Figure 2. Women on Gisting land  
Source(s): KITLV

The process of establishing a colony in Gisting began with clearing the forest. Of course, this process was not easy to carry out with limited funds, minimal labour, and many risks. The colonial government or related institutions were considered necessary to take responsibility for clearing this land (Kinanti, 2023). Seeing the economic potential of large felled trees, the government decided to manage land clearing centrally and systematically, rather than leaving it to settlers. To prepare for the clearing of the forest, a temporary colonisation commission, the VKC (*Voorlopige Kolonisatie Commissie*), was formed, chaired by Mr K.L.J. Enthoven, with Mr J.Ch. van Schouwenburg as secretary and Mr Ch, A.E. Granpre Moliere as treasurer, with members Mr Jac Uden Masman, Colonel L. F. van Gent, V. Ahn, Major E. J. Geldorp, and M. S. Bamberg. The VKC was tasked with preparing and supervising the clearing of the forest, including discussing how the costs of clearing the forest (cutting down trees) would be covered by the profits from the timber produced and using credit assistance funds (*Tweeton-Fonds*). The VKC also discussed the duties of the colonists, who also had to build roads, water pipes, and bridges for the settlers, as well as construct temporary offices (Hoog, 1929). This marked a shift in the colonisation approach from simply handing over land to a more organised, project-based approach to reclamation. The VKC became the embodiment of agrarian control, ensuring that every inch of land was in line with the colonial government's IEV ambitions.

After the settlers successfully cleared the forest in Gisting, agricultural land in the form of plots was formed, each covering 25-35 hectares and inhabited by a family. The main commodity was coffee, and there were also cattle, chickens, and pigs, indicating that mixed farming, or agriculture and animal husbandry, was the mainstay of the economy in the Gisting area. The land was also used for food crops such as rice and corn. Although each family had its own land, there was still a principle of cooperation and a division of labour among families. The Indo-Europeans in Gisting once attempted to build a dam to create an irrigation system. Still, they failed because the water flowed through high ground (Personal interview with Mr Jaimin, December 6, 2022). This shows that efforts to implement water management have not been effective due to geographical conditions.

The official 10-year report of the IEV shows that in 1931, settlers successfully harvested their first coffee crop, amounting to 1,800 picols. In the same year, the average Indo-European settler in Gisting earned a net income of f 1800, a significant amount at that time (Kosters, 1932). Agriculture experienced a drastic decline when Japan took over all Dutch assets, including the Indo-European agricultural colonies in Gisting. Many Indo-Europeans in Gisting were repatriated to their home

countries, and many workers were detained or fled. Coffee plantations were abandoned, and agricultural land was converted to feed the Japanese military. The labourers, mainly from Java, were forced to manage the agricultural land under Japanese supervision. Shortly thereafter, when Japan surrendered unconditionally to the Allies, the land in Gisting was taken over by these Javanese labourers, and it has been passed down to their children and grandchildren to this day (Personal interview with Mr Jaimin, December 6, 2022).

Indo-European agricultural colonisation changed the landscape of Gisting, which was originally dense forest, opening it up for agricultural use, especially coffee cultivation. The agrarian structure also changed as agricultural colonisation progressed, with the land being cultivated by individuals under Indo-European auspices. Shortly after the Japanese arrived, the coffee plantations were no longer maintained and were even replaced with food crops. The situation changed again when the Japanese left and abandoned the agricultural land, so that the Javanese people who had previously worked on the land of the Indo-Europeans became landowners for generations to come.

## **Discussion**

This study opens up a broader perspective by examining the practice of agricultural colonisation in Gisting as a means for the colonial government to strengthen its grip on the colony through IEV. The colonial government positioned the Gisting project as an instrument to transform unproductive land into agricultural assets. Through VKC, the government did not intervene directly in the field but only supervised (Hoog, 1929). Indo-Europeans were the labour force behind the clearing of the Gisting forest. This illustrates an unequal mutualistic symbiosis, even though the government also provided credit assistance; it seems the burden borne by the IEV was greater. Not to mention the risks faced by the IEV, who risked both their dignity and their lives. The early Indo-European settlers in Gisting faced severe challenges due to unfamiliar natural conditions and limited infrastructure, and there were even frequent conflicts among settlers (Putri et al., 2025). The government shared IEV's optimism in fighting for its rights through colonisation. Gisting was also a form of strategic conflict management. The periodic relocation of Indo-Europeans from Java to Gisting (in the interior of Lampung) appeared to ease social tensions arising from the difficulty of accessing education and employment opportunities in Java's urban society (Nisa et al., 2021).

The landscape of Gisting gradually changed from dense forest to agricultural land. The commodity that was prepared for planting was coffee. In preparing the land for coffee plantations, Indo-Europeans needed labourers, among them coolies from Java. This was no coincidence, as in the previous period the colonial government had intensified its colonisation program for the Javanese people in Lampung, including Wonosobo and Pringsewu. It was as if two colonisation currents had converged, because the two areas were close to Gisting, making it easy for Indo-Europeans to obtain Javanese labourers and leading them to seem like small landlords in Gisting. Javanese labourers worked for a low wage of only 40 cents per day. Thanks to the labourers, 20-25 hectares of land were quickly transformed into prosperous coffee plantations. In addition to coffee, Indo-European settlers also tried to grow vegetables. This gave rise to new economic competition between the Indo-Europeans and the Chinese, who were known for their tenacity and efficiency as vegetable farmers. In this competition, the Indo-Europeans were at a disadvantage in terms of efficiency because of their high standard of living, which was similar to that of native Europeans. Competition with Chinese traders is also tied to the coffee trading process, as Chinese traders often buy settlers' coffee at higher prices. The Indo-European colony had actually received assistance from members of their union in the city of Palembang and elsewhere for the sale of some Gisting products. Still, this sympathetic assistance was far from an organised sales centre (Groenen, 1939). Despite the unstructured distribution of coffee, economic relations have emerged that promote Gisting as a coffee-producing region.

Nearly half of the settlers were Catholic, so, over time, a priest from the Pringsewu area came every Monday to provide religious education for Catholic children. Holy Mass was held on the third Sunday of every month (Groenen, 1939). In 1942, there was a transition of government when Japan took over the southern part of Sumatra, with a significant impact on conditions in Gisting. After the Japanese troops arrived in Gisting, they ordered all Indo-Europeans, including priests and nuns, to board trucks that had been prepared to take them to Pringsewu. There were 13 Germans and 9 Dutch nationals. Towards evening, they were taken to Tanjungkarang for reasons kept secret by the Japanese. The men

were then imprisoned in Lebak Budi, while the women were employed as labourers at the Durian Payung police station (Ardani, 2023).

Over a short period, Japan took over the coffee plantations and replaced them with rice crops to meet the economic demands of the war, while continuing to employ Javanese labourers (Kinanti, 2023). So, for the Javanese labourers, they only changed masters. The Japanese ruled for approximately three years before surrendering unconditionally to the Allies. As a result, the agricultural land in Gisting lost its "landlords" and was left without authority. Based on interviews with Mr Jaimin, the land and plantations were taken over by Javanese labourers. They chose a plot far from the main road for safety, fearing that their former landlords would return and reclaim it.

## Conclusion

The colonisation of Gisting through the Indo-European Association (IEV) was not only a poverty alleviation project but also a social and agrarian instrument for the Dutch colonial government. Through the VKC supervision mechanism, the government succeeded in expanding its control over Lampung's interior by placing the entire financial and physical risks on the Indo-Europeans. This created an "unequal symbiosis," in which the government gained new productive land while the Indo-Europeans risked their lives to face natural challenges and social isolation. The colonisation of Gisting also became a saviour for the potential Indo-European conflict in the discriminated urban areas of Java. In reality, they became "small landlords" on plantations because they used Javanese coolies, the result of the meeting of colonisation currents. A drastic turning point occurred during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). The three-and-a-half-year occupation period marked the total deconstruction of the IEV agrarian structure. Through a policy of arresting colonists and forcibly converting coffee plantations to rice fields, the Japanese destroyed the social hierarchy that had been built over decades. The power vacuum after Japan's defeat ultimately legitimised the occupation of land by Javanese labourers. This transfer of land ownership did not occur through legal-administrative means, but rather through mechanisms of survival and physical control in the field. Ultimately, the history of Gisting shows how an ambitious colonial design can collapse instantly due to geopolitical upheaval, leaving behind a legacy of land ownership changes now completely controlled by those who were once considered mere labourers.

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