

## The Role of *Asia Raya* Newspaper as a Japanese Propaganda Instrument, 1942 – 1945

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### ABSTRACT

The Japanese occupation of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945 transformed colonial society through the implementation of a wartime economic system designed to sustain Japanese military expansion in the Pacific. Within this context, mass media functioned not merely as channels of information but as strategic instruments of economic propaganda and colonial discourse. This study examines how the newspaper *Asia Raya*, published in Jakarta, was utilised to build public support for the Japanese war agenda and to disseminate ideological narratives on economic mobilisation, social discipline, and cultural integration. The research employs a historical method with a qualitative approach through textual analysis of *Asia Raya* archival materials from Khastara, complemented by books and scholarly journal sources. The findings reveal that *Asia Raya* systematically framed economic policies, labour mobilisation, and wartime sacrifice as collective moral responsibilities, thereby legitimising Japanese political authority in occupied Indonesia. The study demonstrates that the newspaper operated not only as a propaganda medium but also as a mechanism for shaping colonial perceptions and regulating public consciousness during wartime. This research contributes to the historiography of the Japanese occupation by emphasising the interconnection among wartime media, economic propaganda, and colonial power relations.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century, newspapers became important instruments for indigenous intellectuals to express political ideas and shape public opinion through publications in Dutch and local languages. This condition changed significantly during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia between 1942 and 1945, when many Dutch-controlled newspapers were replaced by Japanese-controlled media such as *Asia Raya*. The transition marked a shift in media authority from the Dutch colonial government to the Japanese military administration. It reflected the increasing strategic role of newspapers as instruments of political communication and propaganda during wartime. The Japanese occupation also brought profound transformations to Indonesian society, particularly through policies designed to support the Greater East Asia War (Padiatra, [2020](#)).

The Japanese military government placed mass media under strict supervision and censorship. Newspapers no longer functioned as independent channels of information but were systematically directed to support Japanese political and military interests in confronting the Allied forces. Information that contradicted Japanese interests was prohibited, while news reporting was framed to disseminate propaganda and legitimise Japanese authority. In this context, newspapers became one of the most effective media for influencing public perception and constructing ideological support for the Japanese war agenda (Achmad, [2014](#)).

Several newspapers operated during the Japanese occupation, including *Sinar Baroe*, *Soeara Asia*, and *Asia Raya*. Among these publications, *Asia Raya*, published in Jakarta by *Djawa Shinbun Kai* under the supervision of Domei Press, occupied a particularly strategic position because it functioned directly under the centre of the Japanese military administration (Mahayana, [2013](#)). Its close connection with government authorities enabled the newspaper to disseminate official narratives and propaganda more intensively across various regions of Java and beyond. The selection of *Asia Raya* as the object of this study is therefore based on its central role within the Japanese propaganda system during the occupation period.

As a propaganda medium, *Asia Raya* did not merely report on political developments but also framed economic, social, and cultural issues to support wartime mobilisation. Economic news became especially important because Japan

required large-scale agricultural production and resource mobilisation to sustain the Pacific War. Through persuasive reporting, the newspaper encouraged the population, particularly farmers, to increase agricultural productivity and participate in wartime economic programs. One example can be found in the article entitled “Doubling Agricultural Output” (*Melipatgandakan Hasil Boemi*), which emphasised agricultural intensification as a collective responsibility to support the war effort. In this context, economic reporting served not only as a means of disseminating information but also as a mechanism for legitimising Japanese wartime policies and shaping public behaviour.

The mobilisation of agriculture and natural resources reflected the exploitative nature of Japanese wartime policies in Indonesia. Agricultural production, compulsory planting systems, and rice collection programs were implemented primarily to fulfil military needs rather than public welfare (Berliani, [2022](#); Waworuntu & Tjahjawulan, [2021](#)). Mass media played a significant role in normalising these policies by presenting them as moral obligations and expressions of gratitude for Japan’s claim of liberating Indonesia from Dutch colonialism. Through propaganda, the Japanese administration attempted to shape public consciousness and secure compliance with wartime economic policies (Firmansyah et al., [2021](#)).

Previous studies have discussed Japanese propaganda and the role of newspapers during the occupation period. Research on *Asia Raya* has generally focused on political propaganda, media control, or the broader dynamics of Japanese colonial policies (Utari, [2023](#)). Studies specifically examining how economic reporting in *Asia Raya* functioned as a propaganda strategy to mobilise society for wartime purposes remain relatively limited. This study positions itself within that gap by focusing specifically on the role of economic news within the Japanese propaganda mechanism in the newspaper *Asia Raya*.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between Japanese occupation policies, propaganda, and mass media in Indonesia. Achmad ([2014](#)) explains that newspapers during the Japanese occupation served as instruments of political communication under strict military censorship, while Mahayana ([2013](#)) highlights the strategic position of *Asia Raya*, under the supervision of *Djawa Shinbun Kai* and Domei Press, in disseminating official narratives of the Japanese military government. Research by Utari ([2023](#)) further demonstrates how Japanese propaganda through print media was directed toward shaping public psychology and social obedience during wartime. Studies by Berliani ([2022](#)) and Waworuntu and Tjahjawulan ([2021](#)) also reveal that Japanese wartime policies relied heavily on the exploitation of agricultural resources and labour mobilisation to support military logistics in the Greater East Asia War. Putri et al. ([2023](#)) emphasise that agricultural policies became an integral part of Japan’s wartime economic system in Indonesia. Although these studies have discussed propaganda, media control, and wartime economic policies during the Japanese occupation, research specifically analysing how *Asia Raya* constructed economic news as a propaganda strategy to mobilise society remains limited. This study positions itself within that gap by focusing on the role of economic reporting in *Asia Raya* within the Japanese propaganda mechanism during the Pacific War.

Although previous studies have discussed Japanese propaganda, wartime economic policies, and media control during the occupation period, most focus primarily on political propaganda, military policies, or the general history of the press, without specifically examining the construction of economic news as a propaganda mechanism in wartime newspapers. Existing scholarship tends to position *Asia Raya* merely as a colonial publication under Japanese supervision. At the same time, the role of economic reporting in shaping public consciousness, legitimising agricultural mobilisation, and directing societal participation in the Pacific War remains underexplored. This study offers novelty by analysing *Asia Raya* not only as a medium of political propaganda but also as an instrument of economic propaganda that systematically framed agricultural production, labour mobilisation, and wartime sacrifice as collective moral obligations. By emphasising the intersection of wartime media, economic discourse, and colonial power relations, this research offers a more specific and analytical perspective on the historiography of Japanese occupation media in Indonesia.

Based on the aforementioned background, this study was designed to examine three principal questions: (1) how the *Asia Raya* newspaper functioned as a propaganda instrument in supporting the Pacific War; (2) how economic news was constructed and presented in *Asia Raya*; and (3) how the characteristics of economic reporting in *Asia Raya* resembled those found in *Sinar Baroe*. This study aims to investigate the role and forms of propaganda employed by *Asia Raya* in legitimizing support for the Pacific War, while also identifying the similarities in the characteristics of economic news coverage between *Asia Raya* and *Sinar Baroe*.

## METHOD

The method used in this study is the historical method with a qualitative approach and archival text analysis focusing on the content and discourse of economic news published in the *Asia Raya* newspaper during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945. This study does not examine *Asia Raya* as a media institution but rather analyses how its news content served as a propaganda instrument to support Japanese wartime interests. Historical research consists of five stages: topic selection, heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. Qualitative research is understood as an exploratory process that encourages an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and historical events (Acim et al., [2023](#)). The research process was conducted through several stages: (1) topic selection based on the relevance of Japanese wartime propaganda and economic mobilization; (2) heuristics, involving the collection of primary sources from *Asia Raya* newspaper archives accessed through the Khastara website (*Khazanah Pustaka Nusantara*), as well as secondary sources from books and scientific journals; (3) verification or source criticism, consisting of external criticism to examine the authenticity of the newspaper archives and internal criticism to evaluate the credibility and consistency of the news content; (4) interpretation, involving the analysis of verified historical facts and the interpretation of propaganda narratives contained in economic news reporting; and (5) historiography, namely the systematic presentation of research findings in descriptive-analytical form (Kuntowijoyo, [2013](#)).

The primary source analysed in this study is the content of the *Asia Raya* newspaper, particularly economic and agricultural news related to wartime mobilization policies during the Japanese occupation. The newspaper was selected because it frequently published reports on agricultural production, food distribution, labour mobilization, and economic policies intended to support Japanese military interests in the Pacific War. The focus of the study is therefore on the discourse and propaganda narratives embedded in the news content rather than on the newspaper's institutional structure. Secondary sources, such as books, scientific journals, and previous studies on Japanese propaganda and wartime media, were also used to strengthen contextual interpretation and historical analysis.

Archival text analysis was conducted through purposive sampling of selected news articles published between 1942 and 1945. The selection criteria included: (1) articles discussing economic policies, agriculture, labour mobilization, and wartime productivity; (2) reports containing persuasive narratives or ideological messages supporting Japanese wartime interests; and (3) news texts reflecting efforts to shape public attitudes and behaviour. The selected articles were categorised into several thematic groups, including agricultural mobilisation, economic sacrifice, collective responsibility, and wartime productivity. The coding process focused on identifying recurring propaganda expressions, persuasive language patterns, and ideological narratives within the news reports. Through this approach, the study seeks to examine how economic discourse in *Asia Raya* was systematically constructed to legitimise Japanese wartime policies and mobilise Indonesian society during the Pacific War.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Construction of Economic Propaganda Discourse in *Asia Raya* during the Japanese Occupation

The *Asia Raya* newspaper functioned not merely as an information medium but as a discursive instrument strategically designed to construct public legitimacy toward Japanese wartime policies. Published between 29 April 1942 and 7 September 1945, under the supervision of the Propaganda Division of the Japanese military government in Jakarta, *Asia Raya* operated within a tightly controlled media system that positioned newspapers as extensions of state ideology rather than independent journalistic institutions (Rostineu et al., [2025](#)). The newspaper's structure, comprising political, economic, cultural, and social sections, reflected Japan's broader propaganda strategy for shaping public consciousness across multiple dimensions of everyday life. In this context, economic reporting occupied a central position because wartime mobilisation depended heavily on agricultural production and resource extraction from occupied territories. The newspaper, therefore, framed economic participation not simply as labour activity, but as a moral and patriotic obligation supporting the Greater East Asia War.

The propaganda strategy employed in *Asia Raya* used narrative framing and persuasive rhetoric to normalise Japanese wartime policies. Economic news was consistently presented in collective and motivational language, emphasising sacrifice, productivity, discipline, and communal responsibility. Reports such as *Melipatgandakan Hasil Boemi* ("Doubling Agricultural Output") framed agricultural intensification as a shared national duty rather than a coercive colonial policy. Through this framing, the Japanese administration attempted to transform exploitative agricultural mobilisation into a discourse of collective struggle and gratitude for Japan's claimed liberation of Indonesia

from Dutch colonialism. The repeated use of persuasive expressions and ideological narratives illustrates how propaganda functioned structurally within news discourse by shaping perceptions of agricultural policies as beneficial and necessary for social stability and wartime success. This pattern demonstrates that propaganda in *Asia Raya* was not solely political but also operated economically, legitimising resource extraction and labour mobilisation through carefully crafted media narratives.

The role of *Asia Raya* as a propaganda medium can also be understood by comparing it with contemporary newspapers such as *Sinar Baroe*, *Tjahaja*, and *Soeara Asia*. Similar to *Asia Raya*, these newspapers adopted the Japanese Showa calendar and operated under strict wartime supervision, reflecting the centralised nature of Japanese media control (Mardiyya, [2024](#); Rosalini & Prianti, [2022](#)). However, *Asia Raya* occupied a more strategic position because it was directly connected to the administrative centre of the Japanese military government in Jakarta and managed under *Djawa Shinbun Kai* in coordination with Domei Press (Mustafa & Utami, [2023](#)). While newspapers such as *Sinar Baroe* also promoted agricultural mobilisation and wartime discipline, *Asia Raya* demonstrated a more systematic construction of economic discourse by integrating political legitimacy, economic sacrifice, and ideological persuasion within its reporting. The comparison reveals that wartime propaganda across Japanese-controlled newspapers shared similar themes, yet *Asia Raya* placed greater emphasis on legitimising Japanese authority through economic framing and colonial discourse.

The organisation of the *Asia Raya* editorial structure further reinforced the effectiveness of propaganda dissemination. The involvement of Indonesian figures such as Sanoesi Pane, Winarno, and B. M. Diah alongside Japanese supervisors created an appearance of local participation within the colonial media system (Birsyada et al., [2022](#); Yuwono et al., [2025](#)). This strategy strengthened the newspaper's persuasive power because propaganda messages appeared culturally familiar and socially legitimate to Indonesian readers. The Japanese administration thus utilised newspapers not only as channels of information but also as mechanisms for psychological control and ideological integration. Through repeated narratives that emphasised productivity, obedience, and collective wartime responsibility, *Asia Raya* contributed to constructing a colonial discourse that normalised exploitation under the guise of cooperation and social duty.

The findings indicate that the economic discourse presented in *Asia Raya* cannot be separated from Japan's broader wartime strategy in occupied Indonesia. Agricultural mobilisation, compulsory rice collection, and labour policies were systematically framed through media narratives that concealed the exploitative dimensions of colonial rule behind themes of prosperity, order, and Asian solidarity (Ab Razak & Dali, [2025](#)). In this regard, propaganda operated not only through direct political persuasion but also through the subtle construction of everyday economic narratives that shaped public perception regarding work, sacrifice, and wartime participation. The newspaper, therefore, functioned simultaneously as a medium of information, ideological control, and economic propaganda designed to support the sustainability of Japanese military expansion during the Pacific War.

### **Discursive Strategies of Japanese Wartime Propaganda in *Asia Raya***

Mass media functioned as a strategic apparatus for constructing political legitimacy and shaping public consciousness during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. In this context, the *Asia Raya* newspaper operated not merely as a channel of information but as a discursive instrument through which Japanese ideology and wartime propaganda were systematically disseminated to society. All published content was placed under the supervision of the Propaganda Division and controlled through the *Sendenbu* (*Propaganda Department*), which regulated information circulation and ensured that news narratives aligned with Japanese military interests (Kosasih, [2019](#)). Through this structure, propaganda in *Asia Raya* operated not only through direct political messages but also through narrative framing that portrayed Japan as the legitimate leader of Asian liberation against Western colonialism. News reporting repeatedly constructed the image of Japan as a protector and modernizer of Asia, while positioning Dutch colonialism as a symbol of Western oppression that needed to be eliminated. This framing strategy allowed propaganda to function ideologically by embedding political narratives into everyday news discourse.

The propaganda mechanism in *Asia Raya* relied heavily on rhetorical strategies designed to normalize Japanese authority and encourage public compliance. Persuasive language emphasising unity, sacrifice, discipline, and collective struggle consistently shaped emotional identification with Japanese wartime goals. Propaganda was therefore constructed not only through explicit political statements, but also through symbolic narratives that connected Japanese policies with moral responsibility and social order. The use of local terminology, cultural references, and Asian

solidarity narratives strengthened the effectiveness of propaganda by making the messages feel closer to Indonesian readers' social experiences. In this regard, propaganda functioned discursively by transforming colonial domination into a narrative of cooperation and shared destiny. This strategy reflects how media under wartime control became an ideological space where information, persuasion, and political power were interconnected within a single communication structure.

The role of *Sendenbu* further demonstrates the structural relationship between media control and propaganda production during the Japanese occupation. The Japanese military government (*Gunseikanbu*) carefully selected propagandists from influential social groups, including politicians, writers, artists, teachers, and religious instructors, because these figures possessed cultural authority within society (Ningrum & Wasono, 2023). Their involvement enabled propaganda narratives to circulate more effectively and appear socially legitimate among Indonesian audiences. This pattern was also visible in other contemporary newspapers such as *Sinar Baroe* and *Soeara Asia*, which similarly promoted Japanese ideological narratives through controlled reporting and wartime rhetoric. However, *Asia Raya* demonstrated a more centralised and systematic propaganda structure due to its direct connection to the Japanese administrative centre in Jakarta. Unlike regional newspapers that focused primarily on local mobilisation, *Asia Raya* integrated political messaging, ideological persuasion, and wartime economic discourse into a broader colonial narrative designed to legitimise Japanese rule across occupied Indonesia. The comparison indicates that Japanese wartime newspapers shared similar propaganda objectives but differed in the scale and intensity of the discursive control employed in their reporting strategies.

The findings reveal that propaganda in *Asia Raya* operated simultaneously at structural and discursive levels. Structurally, the newspaper functioned under strict institutional supervision through *Sendenbu* and the Japanese military administration. Discursively, propaganda was embedded within narrative construction, rhetorical framing, and symbolic representations that shaped public perception regarding Japan, colonialism, and wartime participation. The newspaper, therefore, served not only as an information medium but also as a mechanism for ideological control that sought to regulate how Indonesian society understood political authority, economic sacrifice, and social responsibility during the Pacific War.

### Cultural Framing and Identity Construction in Japanese Wartime Media

The *Asia Raya* newspaper functioned not only as a medium of information and political propaganda but also as a cultural instrument for disseminating Japanese social values and constructing new colonial identities during the occupation period. One of the most visible strategies was the incorporation of Japanese language instruction and cultural expressions within news reporting. The consistent use of Japanese terminology in headlines, public announcements, and educational content reflected a broader effort to normalise Japanese cultural dominance in everyday life. In this regard, language operated symbolically as a tool of ideological control, with the promotion of Japanese linguistic practices serving to reshape social orientation and weaken the lingering influence of Dutch colonial culture (Supratman, 2021). Through this cultural framing, *Asia Raya* positioned Japanese values not as foreign impositions, but as part of a modern Asian identity that readers were encouraged to adopt.

The dissemination of propaganda through cultural narratives relied on subtle rhetorical strategies rather than direct coercion. News discourse in *Asia Raya* frequently emphasised respect, discipline, loyalty, and obedience toward the Japanese military administration, presenting these values as moral virtues necessary for social order and wartime unity. Propaganda, therefore, operated discursively by embedding ideological messages within educational and cultural content, making political domination appear socially natural and ethically justified. The repeated promotion of Japanese-language use also served as a symbolic strategy to reduce Dutch cultural influence and establish Japan as the new centre of authority in occupied Indonesia (Hidayatullah et al., 2023). This process illustrates how media propaganda extended beyond political communication into the sphere of cultural engineering, where newspapers became instruments for shaping collective identity and public behaviour.

The cultural propaganda strategy in *Asia Raya* also reflected Japan's broader concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, which promoted Asian unity under Japanese leadership. Through news reports, educational columns, and cultural narratives, Japan framed itself as the protector and leader of Asian nations against Western colonialism. This narrative construction sought to create emotional and ideological solidarity between Indonesian society and the Japanese empire. The rhetoric of "Asian brotherhood" was repeatedly used to legitimise Japanese authority and reduce resistance among the occupied population. In this context, propaganda worked by constructing symbolic oppositions

between “Asian liberation” represented by Japan and “Western oppression” associated with Dutch colonialism. The newspaper, therefore, became an ideological space where colonial domination was reframed as a cooperative and civilizational mission.

The use of cultural symbols in *Asia Raya* further strengthened the persuasive power of propaganda. Japanese customs, language expressions, imperial ceremonies, and references to loyalty toward Tenno Heika were frequently inserted into news narratives and public communication. These symbolic representations functioned rhetorically to cultivate admiration and emotional attachment toward Japanese authority. Cultural propaganda thus operated not only through explicit messages, but also through repeated symbolic exposure that normalised Japanese presence in everyday colonial life. The repeated circulation of these symbols gradually constructed a new cultural atmosphere in which Japanese values appeared authoritative, modern, and morally superior. Such practices demonstrate that wartime propaganda relied heavily on symbolic repetition and narrative consistency to shape public perception.

The involvement of Indonesian intellectuals, teachers, writers, and journalists in disseminating propaganda also contributed to the effectiveness of Japanese cultural messaging. The Japanese administration understood that propaganda would gain greater legitimacy if conveyed through familiar local figures rather than solely through military authorities. In this regard, newspapers became collaborative spaces where colonial power and local intermediaries interacted to reproduce ideological narratives. The participation of local elites enabled propaganda messages to appear culturally acceptable and socially persuasive among Indonesian readers. This strategy reflects a discursive mechanism in which colonial authority was not imposed solely through coercion, but also through negotiated forms of cultural adaptation and symbolic inclusion.

A comparison with contemporary newspapers such as *Sinar Baroe* and *Soeara Asia* reveals similarities in the dissemination of Japanese cultural propaganda, particularly through the use of Japanese terminology, wartime slogans, and narratives emphasising Asian solidarity. However, *Asia Raya* demonstrated a more centralised and systematic propaganda structure because the Japanese administration in Jakarta directly supervised it. While regional newspapers tended to focus on local social mobilisation, *Asia Raya* integrated political narratives, cultural values, and wartime ideology into a broader colonial discourse intended for audiences across occupied Indonesia. The comparison indicates that Japanese-controlled newspapers shared common ideological objectives but differed in the scale and intensity of the narratives used to shape public consciousness.

The findings demonstrate that propaganda in *Asia Raya* functioned beyond the dissemination of political information. The newspaper operated as a medium of cultural transformation designed to reconstruct identity, social values, and patterns of public loyalty under Japanese rule. Through language policy, symbolic representation, rhetorical persuasion, and cultural framing, *Asia Raya* contributed to the formation of a wartime discourse that legitimised Japanese colonial authority while simultaneously attempting to redefine Indonesian society within the ideological framework of the Japanese empire.

### **Economic Framing and Wartime Mobilization in *Asia Raya***

Economic reporting in the *Asia Raya* newspaper functioned not merely as the dissemination of information on agriculture and food production, but also as a discursive mechanism for legitimising Japanese wartime mobilisation policies. The newspaper consistently framed agricultural production as a collective obligation closely connected to the success of the Greater East Asia War. Through this framing strategy, economic activities such as rice production, food distribution, and agricultural intensification were transformed into ideological narratives emphasising sacrifice, discipline, and loyalty to the Japanese administration. The repeated use of persuasive terms such as “required” and “must” in economic reporting created a rhetorical structure that normalised public compliance while concealing the coercive dimensions of colonial exploitation. Propaganda, therefore, operated not only through explicit political messages but also through everyday economic discourse that shaped public understanding of labour and productivity as moral duties during wartime.

This discursive strategy can be observed in the *Asia Raya* edition of 8 April 1942, through the article entitled “Regulations Concerning Rice Deliveries,” which discussed the obligation of farmers to surrender rice harvests to agencies appointed by the Japanese administration. The article stated:

*"Segenap penghasilan padi diwadajibkan menjoeal semoea hasil padinja pada tiap panen kepada Juyo Bussi Koolan atau badan lain jang ditetapkan oleh Solo-Ko Koochi Somuchookan oentoek menerimanja, kejoeli padi oentoek persediaan makan isi roemah sendiri dan boeat bibit." ("Peratoeran tentang penjerahan padi," 1942).*

Translated:

"All rice farmers are required to sell their entire rice harvest at each harvest to Juyo Bussi Koolan or another agency designated by the Solo-Ko Koochi Somuchookan to receive it, except for rice intended for household consumption and for seeds."

The use of the word "required" emphasises the compliance of Solo farmers with the Japanese government's policy to sell their rice harvests to the *Juyo Bussi Koolan* (Commodity Collection Agency). This news article was written in Indonesian/Malay using the Van Ophuijsen spelling system introduced by Charles van Ophuijsen in 1901, marking the initial stage of adopting the Latin alphabet for the Malay language. This spelling system follows the phonetic rules of the Dutch language, for example, using "oe" for the sound "u," "dj" for the sound "j," "j" for the sound "y," and "tj" for the sound "c." The linguistic adaptation was not merely technical but also rhetorical, enabling Japanese propaganda to appear familiar and accessible to Indonesian readers. Through this strategy, propaganda discourse was embedded within everyday language structures that normalised Japanese authority and economic control.

The news also supported the implementation of agricultural obligations imposed by the Japanese military government through the inclusion of punitive regulations. The article stated:

*"...Barang siapa jang melanggar peratoeran di atas ini dihukum penjara selama-lamanja 3 boelan atau didenda sebanyak-banjaknja f 100." ("Peratoeran tentang penjerahan padi," 1942).*

Translated:

"...Anyone who violates the aforementioned regulations shall be subject to imprisonment for a maximum of 3 months or a fine of up to f 100."

The inclusion of imprisonment and fines demonstrates that propaganda in *Asia Raya* combined persuasive rhetoric with coercive mechanisms of control. Structurally, the Japanese administration relied on legal sanctions to enforce wartime economic policies. Discursively, however, these coercive policies were framed as necessary regulations to maintain collective stability and support wartime needs. The propaganda strategy, therefore, operated by masking exploitation under narratives of discipline, responsibility, and social order.

This policy was primarily aimed at meeting the Japanese military's food demands during the Pacific War. Although the exploitative dimension was not explicitly stated, the reporting reveals that the occupying government sought to mobilise natural resources systematically for military purposes. In the 15 February 1942 edition, *Asia Raya* published an article entitled "Government Plan to Increase Agricultural Output," discussing efforts to encourage farmers to intensify agricultural production. The article stated:

*"...Semangat kaum tani oentoek memperbanjak hasil boemi tahoen ini haroes terus dibangkitkan dengan menjadarkan mereka akan maksud peperangan Asia Timoer Raya jang sedang berkobar sekarang. Kepada mereka haroes diterangkan bahwa mempertinggi hasil boemi itoe adalah satoe sumbangan jang besar bagi oentoek menjapai kemenangan achir bangsa-bangsa Asia." ("Rentjana pemerintah oentoek mempertinggi hasil boemi," 1942).*

Translated:

"...This year, farmers' enthusiasm for increasing agricultural yields must continue to be spurred by making them aware of the objectives of the Great East Asian War, which is currently raging. It should be explained that this increase in agricultural yields is a significant contribution to the effort to achieve final victory for the Asian nations."

This article demonstrates how propaganda narratives linked agricultural productivity with ideological participation in the Greater East Asia War. Farmers were discursively positioned not merely as producers, but as contributors to a broader Asian struggle under Japanese leadership. Through this framing strategy, economic labour was transformed into a symbolic act of nationalism and wartime solidarity. The narrative, therefore, concealed the exploitative reality of resource extraction behind rhetoric emphasising collective contribution and regional liberation.

The newspaper further constructed the image of the Japanese administration as a protector and supporter of agricultural society through reports regarding pest eradication and seed distribution programs. One report explained:

*"...Oentoek memadjoekan pertanian, maka soal jang terseboet di atas tadi adalah penting sekali, terlebih-lebih pemberantasan hama dan tikus. Oentoek itoe Goenseikanbu telah mendatangkan obat pembasmi hama dan alat pembasmi tikus dari Nippon." ("Rentjana pemerintah oentoek mempertinggi hasil boemi," [1942](#)).*

Translated:

"...To advance agriculture, the issues mentioned above are of the utmost importance, particularly the eradication of pests and rat infestations. For this reason, the Goenseikanbu has imported pesticides and rat traps from Japan to eradicate rat infestations in Java."

Another report stated:

*"...Khusoes oentoek mempertinggi hasil sajur-sajuran, sekarang Gunseikanbu telah membagikan bibit-bibit ke seloeroeh tanah Djawa sebagai bantuan oentoek mempertinggi hasil boemi tahoen ini." ("Rentjana pemerintah oentoek mempertinggi hasil boemi," [1942](#)).*

Translated:

"...Especially to increase the yield of green vegetables, the Gunseikanbu has now distributed seeds throughout Java, as a contribution to boosting this year's agricultural output."

These reports illustrate how propaganda employed paternalistic rhetoric to generate sympathy and trust among farmers. Assistance programs such as pest eradication and seed distribution were framed as evidence of Japanese concern for public welfare. However, the underlying objective remained the stabilisation of agricultural production to secure food supplies for Japanese military operations during the Pacific War. Propaganda, therefore, functioned discursively by transforming exploitative wartime policies into seemingly benevolent programs designed for the collective good.

The same propaganda pattern appears in the article "Food, Clothing, and Oil to Be Doubled," published on 31 March 1942, which emphasised the urgency of increasing essential supplies through coordinated agricultural mobilisation. The article stated:

*"...Pada hari pertama, tanggal 29 Maret, poekoel 10 pagi di gedoeng Tyuubo Sangi-In di Djakarta diadakan rapat ahli-ahli pertanian dari seloeroeh Djawa jang membitjarakan soal mempertinggi persediaan bahan makanan penting." ("Bahan makanan, pakaian dan minyak haroes diperlipatgandakan," [1942](#)).*

Translated:

"...A meeting of agricultural experts from all over Java, held on the first day, March 29, at 10:00 a.m. at the Tyuubo Sangi-In building in Jakarta, discussed the issue of increasing essential food supplies."

Another excerpt explained:

*"...Oentoek tahoen 20 Showa, djumlah bahan makanan jang diboetoehkan tentara belum dapat dipastikan. Akan tetapi, oentoek keperluan rakjat diperkirakan masih haroes ditambah 50.000 ton beras dan 30.000 ton djaeeng. Sebab itoe kita haroes bekerdja lebih keras lagi oentoek mempertinggi persediaan bahan makanan." ("Bahan makanan, pakaian dan minyak haroes diperlipatgandakan," [1942](#)).*

Translated:

"...For the year 20 Showa, the exact amount of food supplies required by the military has not yet been determined. Meanwhile, for civilian needs, it is estimated that an additional 50,000 tons of rice and 30,000 tons of corn are required. Therefore, we must work even harder to increase food supplies."

The repeated use of collective language, such as "we must work even harder," illustrates a rhetorical strategy that constructs shared responsibility between the colonial administration and society. This framing sought to erase the unequal relationship between the occupying and occupied populations by presenting wartime mobilisation as a common struggle. The article further reinforced this narrative through statements emphasising farmers' confidence in the Japanese victory:

*"...Ini menandakan bahwa kaum tani telah mengerti maksud dan tujuan peperangan sekarang. Mereka mempunyai keyakinan teguh bahwa kita pasti menang." ("Bahan makanan, pakaian dan minyak haroes diperlipatgandakan," [1942](#)).*

Translated:

"...This indicates that farmers have come to realize the purpose and objectives of the current war. They possess firm conviction that we will certainly win."

The comparison with contemporary newspapers such as *Sinar Baroe* demonstrates that similar themes of agricultural mobilisation and wartime productivity were widely disseminated across Japanese-controlled media. However, *Asia Raya* displayed a more centralised and systematic economic framing due to its direct relationship with the Japanese administrative centre in Jakarta. While *Sinar Baroe* primarily emphasised regional participation in agricultural production, *Asia Raya* integrated economic discourse with broader ideological narratives concerning Asian unity, wartime sacrifice, and loyalty to the Japanese empire. The comparison reveals that Japanese wartime newspapers shared common propaganda objectives, yet differed in the scale and sophistication of their narrative construction strategies.

The findings demonstrate that economic news in *Asia Raya* functioned simultaneously as information, ideological persuasion, and colonial control. Through framing strategies, rhetorical narratives, and symbolic representations of welfare and collective responsibility, the newspaper transformed exploitative wartime policies into seemingly legitimate social obligations. Economic propaganda, therefore, became a central mechanism through which the Japanese administration mobilised agricultural resources, regulated public behaviour, and maintained colonial authority during the Pacific War.

### Comparative Economic Propaganda in *Asia Raya* and *Sinar Baroe*

Economic propaganda published in *Asia Raya* and *Sinar Baroe* demonstrates significant similarities in the construction of wartime narratives regarding agricultural mobilisation and public participation. Both newspapers framed the increase of agricultural production not merely as an economic necessity, but as a moral obligation closely tied to loyalty toward the Japanese military administration and the success of the Greater East Asia War. In this context, economic discourse functioned ideologically by transforming agricultural labour into a symbol of gratitude, religious duty, and collective sacrifice. One example can be observed in the *Sinar Baroe* article entitled “*Memperbanjak Hasil Boemi*,” written by the leadership of Masyumi in agreement with *Syuumubu* Jakarta. The article stated:

*“...Karena Balatentara Dai Nippon soedah melepaskan kita, kaoem moeslimin, dari penindasan Belanda, Inggris dan Amerika, dan Pemerintah Balatentara Dai Nippon soedah memberikan banjak perlindoengan-perlindoengan terhadap kaoem moeslim di Djawa, wajiblah kita semoea sebagai kaoem moeslimin, toeroet menjoesoen barisan belakang jang kokoh dan koeat itoe oentoek membantoe pemerintah Balatentara Dai Nippon dalam segala oesahanja, sebagai tanda terima kasih kita.” (“Memperbanjak hasil boemi,” 1944).*

Translated:

“...Because the Dai Nippon Army has liberated us, the Muslim community, from the oppression of the Dutch, British, and Americans, and because the Dai Nippon Military Government has provided much protection for Muslims in Java, it is obligatory for all Muslims to strengthen the home front in order to assist the Dai Nippon Military Government in all its efforts as a sign of our gratitude.”

The article framed support for Japanese wartime policies as a religious and moral responsibility of Muslim communities. This framing strategy resembles the propaganda pattern found in *Asia Raya*, where agricultural mobilisation was also represented as a collective obligation connected to wartime victory and Asian solidarity. However, *Sinar Baroe* employed a more explicit religious narrative, emphasising Islamic identity and gratitude toward Japan for liberating Indonesians from Western colonial powers. Through this rhetorical strategy, propaganda discourse attempted to integrate religious legitimacy with wartime economic mobilisation. A similar propaganda construction appears in another excerpt from *Sinar Baroe*:

*“...Bagi kaoem tani moeslimin salah soeatu djalan oentoek toeroet menjoesoen dan memperkokoh barisan belakang ini dan membantoe pemerintah balatentara ialah bekerdja dengan sekoeat-koeatnja oentoek memperbanjak hasil boeminja. Memperbanjak hasil boemi adalah soeatu kewadajiban bagi kaoem tani moeslimin. Lebih-lebih dalam waktow peperangan ini.” (“Memperbanjak hasil boemi,” 1944).*

Translated:

“...For Muslim farmers, one way to strengthen the home front and assist the military government is to work as hard as possible to increase agricultural production. Increasing agricultural yields is an obligation for Muslim farmers, especially during this time of war.”

This narrative demonstrates how agricultural production was framed as a religious obligation rather than merely an economic activity. Similar to *Asia Raya*, the newspaper utilised persuasive language emphasising duty, sacrifice, and collective struggle. The repeated use of the term “obligation” reflects a rhetorical strategy that normalises wartime exploitation through moral discourse. In both newspapers, propaganda functioned by transforming coercive economic

policies into ethical responsibilities connected to social solidarity and wartime participation. The ideological construction of wartime mobilisation became more explicit in another *Sinar Baroe* report, which stated:

*"...Ini tanah Djawa haroes poela menjediakan makanan oentoek balatentara jang sedang berdjoeang goena menentramkan tanah Djawa, di medan perang jang letaknja tidak djaoeh dari tanah Djawa oentoek menggagalkan serangan moesoeh. Djuga oentoek pasoeakan soeka rela tentara Pembela Tanah Air haroes disediakan barang-barang makanan. Oleh karena itoe, hasil barang-barang makanan haroes diperlipatgandakan." ("Memperbanjak hasil boemi," 1944).*

Translated:

"...Java must also provide food for the military forces currently fighting to secure Java on battlefields located not far from the island, in order to repel enemy attacks. Food supplies must also be provided for the volunteer forces of the Defenders of the Homeland. Therefore, food production must be multiplied."

This report reveals how wartime propaganda linked agricultural production directly to military survival and territorial defence. Similar to *Asia Raya*, the newspaper framed increased food production as essential for supporting Japanese military operations and maintaining security. However, *Sinar Baroe* placed greater emphasis on emotional and religious appeals directed at Muslim farmers, while *Asia Raya* tended to employ broader narratives of Asian unity and collective wartime productivity. The comparison indicates that both newspapers shared common propaganda objectives but differed in their rhetorical emphasis and target audiences. Another important similarity can be observed in the article entitled "*Melipatgandakan Hasil Boemi*," published in *Sinar Baroe* on 18 March 1944. The article stated:

*"...Sesoeai dengan rentjana melipatgandakan hasil boemi oentoek oesaha perang soetji, baroe-baroe ini 200.000 pendoedoek di Garut-Ken jang terdiri dari anggauta-anggauta Keibodan, Seinendan, Hujinkai, moerid sekolah dan rakjat dibawah pimpinan masing-masing pemimpinja, telah dikerahkan." ("Melipatgandakan hasil boemi," 1944).*

Translated:

"...In accordance with the plan to multiply agricultural yields for the holy war effort, recently 200,000 residents in Garut-Ken, consisting of members of Keibodan, Seinendan, Hujinkai, school students, and local people under their respective leaders, have been mobilized."

The article highlighted the successful mobilisation of 200,000 people in agricultural activities and portrayed them as enthusiastic voluntary participants working for the collective benefit of wartime society. This narrative construction closely resembles the propaganda strategy in *Asia Raya*, which consistently represented public participation as voluntary, disciplined, and ideologically motivated. Structurally, both newspapers concealed the coercive nature of wartime labour mobilisation by framing participation as an expression of loyalty, gratitude, and patriotism. Discursively, propaganda operated through symbolic representations of social unity and collective sacrifice designed to shape public perception and encourage obedience toward Japanese policies.

The comparison between *Asia Raya* and *Sinar Baroe* demonstrates that Japanese-controlled newspapers shared similar propaganda strategies to promote economic mobilisation and wartime productivity. Both newspapers framed agricultural production as a moral obligation and emphasised society's positive contribution to supporting Japanese military interests. However, *Asia Raya* displayed a more centralised, politically oriented propaganda structure linked to the Japanese administrative centre in Jakarta. At the same time, *Sinar Baroe* relied more heavily on religious narratives and emotional appeals directed toward Muslim communities. This difference indicates that wartime propaganda was tailored to regional audiences and ideological contexts, even as the broader objective remained the same: legitimising Japanese colonial authority and mobilising economic resources for the Pacific War.

The findings demonstrate that propaganda in both *Asia Raya* and *Sinar Baroe* operated not only through direct political messaging but also through rhetorical framing, religious narratives, and symbolic constructions of collective responsibility. Economic discourse, therefore, became a strategic instrument for shaping public consciousness, normalising wartime exploitation, and strengthening support for Japanese military policies during the occupation period.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that *Asia Raya* functioned not merely as a wartime newspaper but as a strategic discursive instrument through which the Japanese military administration constructed political legitimacy, mobilised economic resources, and shaped public consciousness during the occupation of Indonesia. Propaganda in *Asia Raya* operated structurally through strict supervision by the Japanese Propaganda Department and discursively through

framing strategies, rhetorical narratives, and symbolic representations embedded within economic, social, and cultural reporting. Economic news concerning agricultural production, food distribution, and labour mobilisation was systematically framed as a collective moral obligation closely linked to the success of the Greater East Asia War. Through this mechanism, exploitative wartime policies were transformed into narratives of sacrifice, discipline, gratitude, and Asian solidarity, enabling Japanese authority to appear legitimate and socially acceptable within colonial society.

The comparison between *Asia Raya* and *Sinar Baroe* further reveals that Japanese-controlled newspapers shared common propaganda objectives in promoting wartime productivity and public obedience. However, they differed in rhetorical emphasis and narrative construction. *Asia Raya* employed a more centralised, politically oriented discourse tied to the Japanese administrative centre in Jakarta. At the same time, *Sinar Baroe* relied more on religious narratives and emotional appeals directed at Muslim communities. This comparison indicates that Japanese wartime propaganda was adaptive and context-sensitive, adjusting its discursive strategies according to audience characteristics while maintaining the broader objective of mobilising society for wartime interests. The study, therefore, argues that economic reporting during the Japanese occupation cannot be understood solely as information dissemination but must also be interpreted as a form of colonial discourse designed to normalise exploitation and regulate public behaviour through persuasive media narratives.

This research contributes to the historiography of Japanese occupation media in Indonesia by emphasising the intersection between wartime propaganda, economic discourse, and colonial power relations. Previous studies have generally focused on political propaganda or institutional media control, whereas this study highlights how economic news itself served as an ideological mechanism for legitimising wartime mobilisation. The study remains limited to textual analysis of selected editions of *Asia Raya* and comparative references from *Sinar Baroe*, without examining audience reception or the broader social impact of propaganda on local communities. Future research could therefore explore reader responses, regional propaganda networks, or comparative analyses of Japanese-controlled newspapers in other occupied territories in Southeast Asia to develop a broader understanding of wartime media and colonial communication strategies.

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