

Java Sugar Mill Blog Part 5
29 July 2017
Asembagus Mill - Asembagus

Exploring the north lines

This first part of the trip - the pre tour - focussed on 3 of the 6 mills that still have diesel trains going out into the field to collect the cane. Today we visited Asembagus the most remote of these from Situbondo. This mill once had lines to the south as well as the north but these days only the northern fields are served by rail. Today, 7 fields were being cut from the far ends of the system in the east and west and 2 fields directly north.

After leaving the mills, after about 2 km there is a 3-way split of lines and after another 2 km north a two way split. We were told of lines being worked to the east (3), the north (2), the north west (1) and the west (1) and found a number of these especially the two to the north, one close to the port in the north west and one at the first junction to the east. Seven fields being worked compares with Wringinanom's 2-3 and Olean's 2. Asembagus still has a lot more cane coming in by rail than the other two but at all 3 mills the truck yard and the roads outside the truck yard are crowded with loaded cane trucks which have arrived by road. The supply exceeds the milling capacity at all 3 mills.



Drinking coffee by the mill railway entrance on the main east-west road at Asembagus, not all road transport is diesel or petrol.



Here I am with a strong black coffee without a grain of sugar - always a bit of a laugh just outside a sugar mill.



There is a logical place to go to hang out once the main-road traffic, the cane trucks, the dust and the inquisitive mill security officials get too much and that is the 3-way split of lines in the country 1.5 - 2km to the north which is a 5-minute walk from the nearest small road. Everything to or from the mill by rail these days must pass through here. The big change in 2017 is a warung serving freshly made food and drinks and providing seating in the shade of the big old tree. Despite our explorations further afield, we spent two extended spells here today.



The 3 ladies had cooked up two types of savoury snacks. One seemed to be a tofu envelope filled with a vegetable mix and the other a batter version of the same. I tried both and they were good but preferred the tofu version. They should be eaten with the snack in the right hand and a small hot chilli in the left hand according to Combo - a custom that must pre-date the Islamisation of Java!



They also cooked up rice crackers - in this case they said they were crab crackers rather than the more standard prawn crackers. They were preparing lunch for workers in the nearby fields although we were absent when the influx occurred.



This is a general view looking north with the lines to the west and east diverging here. The pointsman's hut is on the left and the warung on the right. That's Wilson appearing keen and eager with his video camera ready for action on his tripod.



This was a morning cane train with big Japanese Keio diesel No. 8 coming from the fields being worked not far to the north.



As well as trains, the track is used by other vehicles, this ox cart was the largest vehicle we saw.



We followed the lines about 2 km to the north to catch this train of empties about to diverge to the west and the port of Jankar. The track beyond to the north behind us was not in use. The north west field being cut is just before the old sugar warehouse at the port and I plan to take the group to see both the port and the cane field when I return. The volcanic mountains behind include Mount Merapi far left 2800m.

The rest of the shots are back at the 3-way junction after lunch. Nothing is

ever predictable but we had plenty of activity before the light went around 16:30.



Two loco turned up light engine from the mill after shift change at 14:30. The big Japanese diesel behind headed to the north west line to bring back cane from Jankar. Loco No. 5 an American Brookville built in 1949 headed about 2 km west to a field being worked there.



An 'against the light' shot showing the Brookville passing the warung and heading off west. Neither of these locos returned with their loaded trains before we called it a day.



Linesiding in the shade. The pointsman moved a bench for us so we could enjoy the action in comfort.



We are not quite sure what this loco was doing despite keeping very busy. It arrived from the north with a few loaded wagons, disappeared east for a long time without a train before returning light engine and then connecting to this small train to take it back to the mill. It was almost like a roaming shunter or perhaps a sweeper in football parlance. Perhaps its role really was to assist and clean up.



Our final shot of the day in muted late afternoon light as No. 3 heads its short train to the mill with two sanders on the front of it.

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