

# THE ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT MARKET OF THE NETHERLAND EAST INDIES

By Donald W. Smith, Assistant Trade Commissioner

## INTRODUCTION

### GEOGRAPHY

The area known as the Netherland East Indies comprises a number of islands stretching between southeast Asia and Australia and has a total land surface of 733,681 square miles. The islands are divided into two groups for political and administrative reasons: Java and Madura, which are the most important commercially, and the islands of the "Outer Possessions," which include Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, and New Guinea, besides hundreds of smaller islands. Java and Madura have an area of 50,815 square miles, which is about the size of the State of New York. Sumatra with surrounding islands has an area of 162,258 square miles, Netherland Borneo 213,589 square miles, Celebes and the small islands in the immediate neighborhood 71,763 square miles, and Netherland New Guinea 153,321 square miles. Other islands, such as Ternati, Amboina, Timor, and Bali, complete the total.

The islands of the Outer Possessions are far behind Java in agricultural and commercial development. Sumatra, however, has made rapid strides during the past decade and is often referred to as the "island of the future." Netherland Borneo, New Guinea, and the Celebes, although rich in natural resources, have been opened up only along the coast. All of these islands except Java contain large tracts of virgin jungle, much of which has not yet been penetrated by the white man.

### CLIMATE

The temperature averages between 83° and 87° F. throughout the year, while the relative humidity is unusually high, averaging between 95 and 98 per cent. This warm, moist climate has an adverse effect on electrical equipment which is not properly insulated, the insulation being in danger of breaking down unless manufacturers construct their equipment with special windings and extra-heavy insulation. If this is not done, many complaints regarding the inability of their products to withstand the climatic conditions are likely to be received.

The climate also handicaps radio broadcasting, the island of Banka, which lies between Java and Suamtra being one of the worst spots in the world for radio reception.

With the exception of possible interruptions from the frequent electrical storms in the mountains of east Java, the climate is favorable for transmission-line work.