THE FORMATION OF SOILS IN EQUATORIAL REGIONS, WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAVA (NETHERLANDS EAST
INDIES)

by

M. W. Senstius
The University of Chicago.

If it is true that a natural, residual, undisturbed soil is a function of the climate, as has once been said by Von Richthofen, where should we expect to find the most favorable conditions to test out that statement?

Apparently not primarily in our own middle latitudes, which, as we all know, have a great variety of climates, each one characterized by great variability; in addition, there are only few areas in the middle latitudes which have not undergone more or less profound changes of climate in recent geological times.

The equatorial regions, on the other hand, are free from such disturbing factors; they are and have been characterized for a much longer time by an equable climate.

Of all the countries in the equatorial belt, the island of Java, so far has offered perhaps the best opportunities for testing out the theory as stated above. This is due to various circumstances of which we may mention only the fact that for the last one hundred years or so it has had a stable government under white supervision. Since agriculture is the main industry of the country, the government has paid particular attention to the scientific investigation of problems relating to soils and their best uses. Thus it came about that Dutch agricultural chemists have accumulated a wealth of material on fundamental problems, a. o. with respect to soil formation in equatorial regions. But, owing to the fact that their contributions have, for the greater part, been published in the Dutch language only, their names and works are hardly known outside of their own country, except, perhaps, for such men as Van Bemmelen (now dead) and Hissink.

It is the work of those little-known investigators in relation to Von Richthofen's dictum that I would like to bring to your attention, and in particular the work of Dr. E. C. Julius Mohr, at one time director of the agro-geological laboratory of the Department of Agriculture in the Netherlands East Indies, the man to whom I personally am indebted for my initiation in the study of soils and for constant inspiration ever since.