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## <Book Review>

Michael D. Pante

**Freek Colombijn and Joost Coté, eds. *Cars, Conduits, and Kampongs: The Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920–1960*. Leiden: Brill, 2015, 351p.**

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Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

process” (p. 16), there seems to be gaps in the understanding presented in this book. First, how can this discussion be holistic if there is nothing mentioned of political tactics and strategies taken by the urban lower class? For example, in my own research, a restaurant owner in a slum community in Don Muang district in northern Bangkok has acquired the most amount of capital in the community in terms of housing and occupation and is resisting the implementation of the Baan Mankong project because he does not want to share his capital with those who have less than him. Further, the urban lower class has responded to risks through its choice of community, district, and national leaders in elections, protesting against floods, and its participation or lack thereof in Baan Mankong projects. Therefore a discussion of the political strategies these community members have undertaken would complement this research. Second, although this book was published in 2014, the author mentions that fires are one of the biggest risks to communities but fails to mention the 2011 floods which severely hurt the livelihoods of the urban poor in Bangkok (and led to deaths of many) and which, I would argue, were a bigger setback than the fires were. Last, the author presents only economic data but never asks the communities about their own perceptions of risk—perhaps fire and economic lay-offs are not the biggest risks. Some more ethnographic data therefore would have also strengthened her data.

Despite these shortcomings, this book is nonetheless a useful contribution to the literature on the urban lower class in Southeast Asia. It valuably shows the connection between residence and occupation and reveals the differences within the class and some of the drivers of these differences. I recommend it as a good introduction to those interested in learning more about the daily lives of the urban lower class and the dynamics of the informal economy in cities in Southeast Asia.

Danny Marks

*School of Geosciences, The University of Sydney*

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## ***Cars, Conduits, and Kampongs: The Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920–1960***

FREEK COLOMBIJN and JOOST COTÉ, eds.  
Leiden: Brill, 2015, 351p.

*Cars, Conduits, and Kampongs: The Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920–1960* is a commendable collection of essays that present modernization and the city not as ahistorical ideal-types but

as dynamic concepts that changed as colonial cities became postcolonial urban nodes. The diachronic approach goes in tandem with the variations in the authors' chosen urban areas, revealing that even within a single nation-state differences in perceptions of modernity exist. Nonetheless, comparability rather than divergence across space and continuity rather than rupture through time define this work.

Freek Colombijn and Joost Coté's introductory essay, "Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920–1960," alerts readers to the book's fresh insights about the relationship between technological advancements and modernization, especially in the context of a colonial city. They point to the necessity of considering the degree of novelty of an innovation and the varying responses among the colonized toward them. Of course in early-twentieth-century Indonesia, novelty often refers to the Western character of innovation and the values usually attached to it, such as progress, rationality, and science. Easily juxtaposed against this notion of modernity is the way of life of the colonized, best exemplified by the *kampong*, the "obvious antithesis to modernity" (p. 4). Colonizers almost always understood the *kampong* in terms of what it lacked—whether it was sanitation, order, housing—and consequently regarded Western technology as the necessary remedy. Previous studies on Western colonialism have already argued that such an understanding of technological diffusion provided the justification for social engineering projects that were ostensibly designed to uplift but eventually appropriated by the colonized. This book, however, takes this argument even further by extending the temporal scope so as to include Japanese colonialism, the Revolutionary period, and the early years of the Republic and showing that these drastic political changes were not enough to alter the urban landscape and modernization process that Dutch colonialism set in motion. Not only had bureaucrats of the postcolonial state "internalized the dream of modernization" (p. 9), but more importantly the reality of social boundaries and inequalities produced by modernity survived the end of colonialism.

To understand the logic behind this continuity one has to analyze the responses of the colonized toward technological innovation. The responses varied, but the editors stress the selectivity, rather than passivity, of ordinary city dwellers toward modernity. For Colombijn and Coté, conscious consumption was crucial in how Western-derived modernity persisted into the postcolonial period. The agency of the colonized enabled the "counter-colonial process of defining an alternative modernity, one that the subaltern residents of the cities could own. This alternative modernity did not reject the fundamental ingredients of modernity . . . but challenged the assumption of exclusive ownership" (p. 11). Save for the introduction, the chapters of the book are divided into three sections based on the type of responses from the colonized: 1) "State Impositions and Passive Acceptance"; 2) "Partial Accommodation"; and, 3) "Selective Appropriation."

The three chapters in the first section "take a big picture approach, stretching their view across the twentieth century" (p. 16) to see how modernization played out in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Saki Murakami's "Call for Doctors! Uneven Medical Provision and the

Modernization of State Health Care during the Decolonization of Indonesia, 1930s–1950s” looks at how the Sukarno administration, in its objective to present the republic as the total opposite of Dutch colonial rule, tried to support rural healthcare through more geographically dispersed assignments for doctors. Unfortunately, the program ended as a disaster due to the lack of manpower and the failure of the legislators to consider the complex demands of the medical profession. In “(Post)Colonial Pipes: Urban Water Supply in Colonial and Contemporary Jakarta” Michelle Kooy and Karen Bakker use a postcolonial framework to show the fragmented geography of Jakarta’s water supply. This fragmented geography is caused by the differences among the city’s population in terms of access, a situation that is rooted in the city’s colonial infrastructure and discourse, and sadly remains true to this day. The trajectory of colonial origins leading to postcolonial appropriation that is evident in the first two essays is also present in Pauline K.M. van Roosmalen’s “Netherlands Indies Town Planning: An Agent of Modernization (1905–1957).” The author looks at the increasing awareness of the Indonesian population to town planning concepts that originated from Dutch planners, facilitated by the actual implementation of urban plans and even mass media. Increased participation of non-Europeans in the planning process made town planning an agent of modernization.

The second section emphasizes local response and resistance more than the previous one, which focused on the top-down character of the innovation-reaction plot. The issues of housing and the kampongs set the common ground for this group of essays. Hans Versnel and Colombijn’s “Rückert and Hoesni Thamrin: Bureaucrat and Politician in Colonial Kampong Improvement” compares the careers of two colonial-era civil servants who were active in the kampong improvement campaign. Though one was the administrator type and the other more of a politician, their perspectives regarding the modern Indonesian city and the kampong question were remarkably similar. In “Kotabaru and the Housing Estate as Bulwark against the Indigenization of Colonial Java” Farabi Fakh traces the development of housing projects in Yogyakarta and how these estates helped mold the modern Javanese conceptualization of domestic space. Fakh then extends the narrative into the postcolonial era to illustrate how colonial-era notions have remained influential in residential patterns. Continuity of colonial knowledge is also the thesis of Radjimo Sastro Wijono’s “Public Housing in Semarang and the Modernization of Kampongs, 1930–1960.” Wijono’s assessment is unequivocal: “Consequently, in the process of decolonization, architecture and town planning in Indonesia, as elsewhere in South-East Asia, continued to be largely inspired by such Western models without any significant reference to national (traditional) architecture” (p. 173). Gustaaf Reerink goes deeper into the kampong question by focusing on the specific neighborhood of Taman Sari in Bandung, whose urbanization was largely a product of its relative autonomy from the state. Reerink’s essay, “From Autonomous Village to ‘Informal Slum’: Kampong Development and State Control in Bandung (1930–1960),” contends that neither the colonial nor the postcolonial state gained “effective control” over the kampongs of Bandung to subject the residents to their

respective policies. Arjan Veering's "Breaking the Boundaries: The Uniekampong and Modernization of Dock Labour In Tanjung Priok, Batavia (1917–1949)" foregrounds the Uniekampong in Tanjung Priok, a housing project for port workers living in less-than-ideal downtown kampongs, as a tool for colonial modernity to proletarianize the laborers. The plan did not work, however, because the laborers did not support to the endeavor as they tried to maintain having alternative sources of income through traditional cyclical migration.

The last section presents cases of "selective appropriation," although the introductory chapter fails to elaborate on this phrase, which I think is a major reason why the overarching theme of this set seems the weakest among the three. Nonetheless, individually the final four essays in this section are just as insightful as the earlier ones. While the other chapters were not explicit in using class analysis, Johny A. Khusyairi and Colombijn's "Moving at a Different Velocity: The Modernization of Transportation and Social Differentiation in Surabaya in the 1920s" is straightforward in stating that class has more analytical weight than ethnicity/race in understanding modernization, as reflected in the motorization of Surabaya's transport system. In "The Two *alun-alun* of Malang (1930–1960)," Purnawan Basundoro presents Malang as a crucial case study due to the fact that it had two alun-alun, or town square, rather than just one. The meaning of Malang's alun-alun underwent changes as Indonesia's political landscape evolved through time, from Dutch colonialism to the period of independence. The importance of the oil industry as a symbol of modernity is the topic of Ida Liana Tanjung's "The Indonesianization of the Symbols of Modernity in Plaju (Palembang), 1930s–1960s." On the one hand, oil made Plaju a modern town, not to mention a signifier of European economic might, because of the facilities built for its extraction. On the other hand, Plaju's isolation from the constellation of Indonesian cities (it is worth mentioning that Plaju is the only city outside of Java that is tackled in this book) delayed the process of Indonesianization in this town after 1945. Finally, Sarkawi B. Husain's "Chinese Cemeteries as a Symbol of Sacred Space: Control, Conflict, and Negotiation in Surabaya" presents the precarious state of Chinese cemeteries in Surabaya vis-à-vis the pressure of modernization. While the postcolonial state viewed the cemeteries as anathema to its version of modernity, Surabaya's rapidly growing urban population, as evinced by the increasing number of cases of informal settlers encroaching on cemetery spaces, exacerbated the pressure on urban space and the tensions among stakeholders fighting over it.

Ideally, in a multi-authored edited volume the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Unfortunately certain weak points diminish the overall impact of the book. One of the book's shortcomings is the lack of an adequate assessment of significant events and personalities that recur chapter after chapter. The introduction could have revisited the Ethical Policy, the colonial paradigm initiated in 1901 to supposedly promote the welfare of the colonized over the profit motive, or the lesser-known 1903 Decentralization Act, a law designed to encourage local autonomy and a clear offshoot of the Ethical Policy, to reappraise their significance in the formation of modern

Indonesia given that these policies are constantly referenced in the individual essays. What about urban reformers like Thomas Karsten or H. F. Tillema or urban-based technocrats involved in healthcare, urban planning, and housing policies? The editors have missed a great opportunity to contribute to scholarship by expounding on the contributions of these personalities who are relegated to minor roles, if at all mentioned, in traditional historical accounts that privilege the nation-state. Another major weakness is the uneven quality of the chapters in terms of sticking to the theme. Not all essays followed the set temporal scope. For instance, in some essays the postcolonial period seems more of an afterthought (such as in Wijono's) or even entirely neglected (such as in Khusyairi and Colombijn's).

Nevertheless, the book is still laudable for forcing us to question the artificiality of boundaries separating the colonial and postcolonial periods, especially when dealing with urban history or even social history in general. Southeast Asianists stand to benefit from the new perspectives that the authors offer regarding how technology and society interact in colonial cities.

Michael D. Pante

*Department of History, Ateneo de Manila University*

***Subversive Lives: A Family Memoir of the Marcos Years***

SUSAN F. QUIMPO and NATHAN GILBERT QUIMPO

Manila: Anvil Publishing, 2012, 468p.

In recent years, there have been a number of publications which reflect on the troubled history of the Philippines during the Marcos years, a period from 1965–86 characterized as a fascist dictatorial revolution presumed to emanate from the center. It was contested by rebellious movements from the Marxist-influenced Left and Moro secessionism and a traditional reformist elite displaced by a different patronage politics of supporting national leaders in exchange for exclusive business contracts, unrestrained local dominion, and nepotistic appointments to government positions (see de Dios *et al.* 1988). While writings published in the years immediately after the downfall of Marcos sprang from journalistic coverage and generally focused on the political, socio-economic, and religious state of the nation (Allarey-Mercado 1986; Project 28 Days 1986; Burton 1989; de Dios *et al.* 1988; Thompson 1996), books released in the last several years have dealt with the more personal dimensions of the anti-Marcos struggle. They share individual political involvement (Segovia 2008; Vizmanos 2003; Abreu 2009), gather thought-provoking perspectives on the experiences of activists during those tumultuous times (Llanes 2012; Maglipon 2012), and creatively reflect on those experiences (Cimatu and Tolentino 2010). Such works are much needed contributions to creating a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the period. *Subversive Lives* offers