

RESEARCH TRENDS IN INDONESIAN URBAN HISTORY: Society, Networks, and Economy in Batavia-Jakarta during the 19th and 20th Centuries

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between the natural and social sciences is one of the necessary methods for solving environmental problems. The Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) in Kyoto is one of the most active institutions in employing such a method, presently supporting several collaboration projects, one of which is the unique *Megacities and the Global Environment* (hereafter, *Megacity Project*). A megacity is defined by the United Nations as an urban center where more than 10 million people reside. Since the turn of the century, urban population in Asia has been increasing, sometimes exceeding rural population in areas like China, making the issue an important subject in analyzing Asian society. In addition, it also becomes essential to consider megacities when searching for solutions to environmental problems deeply linked with urban inhabitants.

The *Megacity Project* is a case study of Jakarta and its surrounding areas (JABODETABEK), which attempts to show how human beings and environment can co-exist by utilizing the methodologies of cognitive and design science. Ultimately, the main objective is to construct a management scenario for Jakarta by 2050. Historical investigation is one of the most fundamental factors in achieving this objective.

Turning to historical research being conducted on Indonesia, interest in urban history has increased over the past several years. In addition to Dick's [2003] social and economic history of Surabaya from 1900 to 2000, Makassar, which has existed for a long time as one of Indonesia's most important ports has also received attention in, for example, a description of its trade structure during the 19th century by Poelinggomang [2002] and Asba's [2007] network-based discussion of the copra trade within the relationship between local society and world markets. [Margana and Nursam 2010] is a collection of 18 articles on the subjects of identity, lifestyle, social problems, urbanization, and politico-economic dynamics in urban Indonesia, while Miyamoto and Konagaya [1999] focus on Jakarta from both historical and social aspects. Abeyasekere [1987] and Grijns and Nas [2000] deal with the sociocultural aspects of Batavia-Jakarta.

The purpose of the present paper, however, is to introduce the *Megacity Project* itself and point out research trends in the social and economic history of Batavia-Jakarta during the 19th and 20th centuries.

1. THE MEGACITY PROJECT

1.1 Objective

The objective of *Megacity Project* is described on its website as follows:

Cities today support half of the Earth's population. This project investigates the causes and effects of rapid urbanization in the megacity of greater Jakarta, and the kinds of governance and everyday human practices that can address, in a unified manner, the urban ecosystem and the key human institutions affecting it. In this context, this project describes megacities as dynamic environments comprised of both human and non-human elements; the challenge is to develop conceptual and practical tools that can support harmonious relations within and between these elements. The project is therefore fundamentally interdisciplinary, historical, spatial, driven by real problems in the world, and solution-oriented.

Seven teams have been organized to realize this objective: The Natural Environment Team, Built Environment Team, Food Consumption and Resources Team, Value System Study Team, Megacity Studies Team, Management-Scenario Team, and Historical Research Team. The approach of each team is to study the lifestyles and natural and human

environments of Jakarta in comparison with other megacities of Asia, like New Delhi, Shanghai, and Tokyo. The final target is to construct a management scenario for Jakarta come 2050. For this purpose, the Historical Research Team, which is the focus of this article, is investigating the long-term changes that occurred in Batavia-Jakarta from 1617 to the 1950s.

1.2 Project Team Members

The names, academic positions, and research interests of the members of the Historical Research Team are as follows.

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This particular lineup of members offers two advantages to the historical survey at hand. First, they are equipped to handle the various types of source materials concerning Batavia-Jakarta as specialists in such languages as classical and modern Chinese, Dutch, Indonesian, and Japanese. Secondly, they have the capacity to analyze the city not only in the context of Indonesia, but also in the broader context of global history.

The work has proceeded to date focusing on the three topics of 1) demographic trends in Batavia-Jakarta since the 18th century, 2) the urban landscape, and 3) the workings of Chinese networks in the city. The Team's approach has begun with a survey of the available archives, including those of the Kong Koan association. The Kong Koan archives comprise a large collection of classical Chinese and Malayan language sources on the Batavian Chinese community and its diaspora from the

20th century on. The collection is being published by Xiamen University and has been briefly introduced by Blussé and Chen [2003]. In 2010, the Team investigated the condition of the collection at Leiden University under the auspices of Leonard Blussé. In addition, surveys were conducted in 2011 at the National Archives of Indonesia (*Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*) and the National Library (*Perpustakaan Nasional*) in search of both published and unpublished sources of interest. On the basis of these surveys, the following topics will be discussed during 2012 and 2013.

1. The characteristic features of the Chinese community of Batavia in comparison with those in Semarang and Surabaya, as well as other locations of East Asia, like Kobe, Japan.
2. Analysis of other ethnic or social groups in Batavia.
3. Economic relations with the hinterland.

The team's finding will be published in book form come 2014.

2. BATAVIA-JAKARTA: SOCIETY, NETWORK, AND ECONOMY

This section will introduce the research on Batavia-Jakarta from the three aspects of 1) society in and around Batavia-Jakarta, 2) commercial networks, and 3) the relationship between the city's development and the emergence of an Indonesian national economy.

2.1 Society in and Around Batavia-Jakarta

2.1.1 Historical aspects

Jakarta, originally named of *Jaya Karta*, is the present national capital of the Republic of Indonesia and was known as Batavia prior to the Japanese Occupation of 1942–45. The city was founded by Jan Pieterszoon Coen, governor-general of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), south of the old port of Sunda Kelapa in 1617. As one of the important port polities of Southeast Asia, the city and its environs from the very beginning became home to colonies of various ethnic groups, including Chinese, Arabs, Balinese, and the social group known as *Mardijkers*, freed slaves or indigenen Christians who attended Batavia's Portuguese churches [Blussé 1986; Hirose 2004].

Out of this melting pot gradually arose the *mestizo* culture, a new category of ethnic "Batavian people" (*orang Betawi*), whose language is at present known as *bahasa Betawi*. Tsuchiya [1994] explains that the development of this culture was deeply related to the city's Dutch colonial rule and took place from the second half of the 19th century on.

During the 19th century, new communication technologies, including the telegraph and railway infrastructure, influenced how the modern colonial city was built. Tunas [2005] argues that the development of the railway in Batavia was one of the most important elements in its metropolitan development. In addition, the construction of the Suez Canal enabled Dutch nationals, especially women, to travel more easily to the Dutch East Indies, which contributed to the formation of a popular culture enjoyed by all the inhabitants of colonial Indonesia. For example, *kroncong* music, which originated in Batavia, was embraced by various social communities and thus spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago, even as far as Malaya in the 1930s. It was the network of *kroncong* musicians that formed the basis of the post-independence Jakarta-centered Indonesian entertainment industry [Keppy 2008]. What caused the culture of Batavian origins to become the “national” culture of Indonesia was the fact that for many ethnic groups to coexist on the Indonesian Archipelago, only a culture like *mestizo* based on the Malayan language could have been the answer for a sociopolitical movement attempting to construct a “national culture.” In short, Batavia became the epitome of Indonesia’s “imagined community.”

2.1.2. *Private estates*

While in the urban center each ethnic group built its own community, private estates (*particuliere landerijen*) were planted throughout the Batavian countryside, which was called *Ommelanden*. This system, which was instituted in the early 19th century under the governor-generalship of Daendels, involved the sale of land tenure to city residents in order to generate government revenue in a time of fiscal deficit. These private estates were exclusive to the island of Java, especially Batavia and *Ommelanden*. Each landowner was granted such privileges as judicature, taxation of local markets, and the right to appoint and dismiss village chiefs, to the extent that the Dutch colonial authorities could not easily intervene in estate affairs even during the 20th century. Consequently, the rural society in and around Batavia differed greatly from other regions of Java, where the colonial government succeeded in gaining control over the countryside, since the private estate system had not been introduced anywhere the east of Cheribon.

During the early 20th century, when the “*Ethische Politiek*” became the official colonial policy introduced under the Dutch Queen’s announcement that the Netherlands was responsible for the welfare of its colonial subjects (the “white man’s burden”), the colonial government began to repurchase the estates. Although there were some interruptions due to

the Great Depression and the Japanese Occupation, by 1958 all private estates in Java had been completely eliminated. Incidentally, most of the estates of *Ommelanden* were owned by Chinese inhabitants, who thus became the wealthiest and most prestigious members of the Chinese community of Batavia [Lohanda 2001].

One of the social aspects of the system was the rise of banditry in *Ommelanden*, especially around the private estates. Van Till [2011] has identified the features of banditry in West Java using the colonial archives and contemporary literature, while Pranoto [2010] examines the phenomenon in Java as a type of social protest movement on the part of the Javanese or Sundanese. These outlaws, called *jagoan* and *hajingan*, also appeared on the political scene during the Indonesian War of Independence in the 1950s [Cribb 1991; Fauzi 2005]. *Preman*, adopted from the Dutch *frijman* (free man), still exert influence on Indonesian local society both in Jakarta proper and throughout West Java.

2.2 Commercial networks

Batavia-Jakarta has played an important role as a junction for commercial networks since the 17th century. According to Lohanda [1999], the minority communities—namely, Chinese, Arabian, Indian, and Japanese—should be included in the national history of Indonesia although they are not “native people” (*pribumi*). Reid [1997] refers to such minorities in Southeast Asia, especially the Chinese, as “essential outsiders” who have contributed to nation-building and most of whom built their own commercial networks based on ethnic or kinship ties. In other words, it is necessary to investigate the substance of such networks in order to understand the national history of Indonesia as well as the history of Batavia-Jakarta. This section will focus on Chinese, Moors and Bengalis, Arabs, Japanese, and Sumatran merchants as the components of commercial networks in Batavia-Jakarta.

2.2.1 The Chinese

The Chinese already boasted a long history in the Malayan world before the Europeans arrived. At first, the Chinese were employed in the sugar industry around Batavia, then were gradually forced into commerce due to the decline of that industry [Nagaoka 1960]. Under Dutch colonialism autonomy was granted to the Chinese under an appointed Kapitan (or Lieutenant) and during the 17th century levied several kinds of tax on their market, gambling, and other activities through the Kapitan [Nakamura 1969]. [Lohanda 2001] is the best study to date on the Chinese

Kapitans of Batavia under the Dutch colonial regime.

In general, the Chinese are considered to have acted as middlemen between the Dutch and rural society, as Furnivall [1939] described. During the 19th century, the Chinese began to build a network linking the urban and rural areas of Java through the practice of revenue-farming, especially the opium tax, but also collecting agricultural products for sale, like rice, from the peasantry [Shiraishi 1987; Rush 1990]. Consequently, Chinese merchants were able to maintain an intermediate position in Java's plural society [The 1997]. However, the Chinese were forbidden to leave their colony without a passport issued by the Kong Koan association, so that newcomers called *singkeh* or *totok* were forced to join the *peranakan* network to earn their livelihoods.

Come the 20th century, the rise of Chinese nationalism brought about important changes in Java's Chinese community. Not only the *peranakan* but also the *singkeh* frequently tried to urge the Chinese government to intervene in order to improve their social status in Dutch colonial society. It was a time when Chinese and other Asian inhabitants, including Arabs, were categorized as "foreign Orientals." In accordance with this political trend, the Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan (Chinese Association) and Siang Hui (Chinese Chamber of Commerce) in Batavia, which were established by several *peranakans*, gradually came to replace the Kong Koan, which was relegated to managing only such family issues as marriage and funerals.

At that time, the colonial government abolished the residential and passport systems, allowing the Chinese to travel freely throughout the Dutch East Indies. This meant that *singkeh*-Chinese could maintain close ties with China proper and do not have to participate in the *peranakan*-Chinese business network. Another change brought about by the rise of Chinese nationalism was the boycott against Japan during the 1920s and 1930s. *Singkeh*-Chinese, especially of the Hokkien and Hakka language groups, contributed to this political movement, which sometimes escalated into violent incidents in which *peranakan*-Chinese were threatened and even injured or killed [Lohanda 2002]. The boycott and violence interrupted the movement of such commodities as textiles and sundries, which were mainly sold by Chinese merchants. For example, during that time 80 % of Japanese-made goods in Batavia were being handled by Chinese merchants [Post 1995]. While the boycott appeared to have a serious impact on Japanese companies, the Chinese network still functioned as the infrastructure for trade between Japan and the Dutch East Indies. Kagotani [2000] has shown that Japanese textiles continued to be exported to Southeast Asia through the Kobe-Chinese network even after the outbreak of war with China in 1937.

2.2.2 *The Moors, Bengalis, and Arabs*

Merchants from Bengal Bay had been sailing in and out of the Indonesian Archipelago since antiquity and influenced the very formation of culture in Java. Nonetheless, the amount of research that has been done on the Moors and Bengalis is not great. According to Van den Berg [2010], it was in 1844 that an Arabic colony was established in Batavia, called “Pekojan” in Malay, because most of the residents were from Bengal. In the mid-19th century, Hadrami, who had immigrated from the Qu’ati state of Hadramaut (present day Yemen), resided in Krukut and Tanah Abang on the west side of Batavia and worked as moneylenders and merchants. On the political scene, the Hadrami influenced the Indonesian nationalist movement through their publication of the first magazines and newspapers printed in Malayan, Javanese, and Arabic [Hirose 2011].

2.2.3 *The Japanese*

Japanese residing in Batavia and trading with Japan date back as early as the 17th century, while it was from the end of the 19th century on that they began to emigrate to Java. [Post 1991], a pioneering work on Japanese enterprises in Indonesia, describes the first immigrants who started out as peddlers for several years, then after accumulating enough capital, were able to establish personal connections with Chinese and European companies, some of them opening their own shops known as *toko Jepang*. In Batavia, there were some Japanese shops located in the vicinity of Pasar Baru.

The lives of these Japanese merchants became entwined with the economic expansion being enjoyed in the homeland during the 1920s and 1930s. It was the outbreak of World War I that enabled Japan to export its products to Java in the midst of stoppages in commodity flows from Europe [Dick 1989]; and several large Japanese enterprises, like Toyo Menka, open branches there. The Great Depression of 1929 also presented the Japanese with the opportunity to expand their operations, since all the inhabitants in Java, suffering from a serious shrinkage in the money supply, demanded more cheap commodities made in Japan during the 1930s. Consequently, the Japanese are said to have succeeded in establishing a commercial network “stretching from Yokohama to *desa* (village),” in the words of Van Gelderen [1939].

The Japanese population of Surabaya was greater than that of Batavia, a fact that stems from the differences in the trading structure of the two ports. Since Surabaya was the main port for sugar exporting, Japanese conglomerates like Mitsui Bussan set up their offices there.

According to Kataoka [1991], Japanese fishermen, most of whom

were from Okinawa and used the technique of drive-in net fishery, called *muroami*, began from the mid-1920s to settle in Java and supply fresh fish to the markets in Batavia. The *muroami* technique has been employed by Indonesian fishermen since that time [Butcher 2004].

2.2.4 Sumatran merchants in Batavia-Jakarta

The anti-Japanese boycott waged by Chinese merchants and the aforementioned increase in demand for cheap Japanese products during the Depression resulted in an expansion of business opportunities for indigenous merchants, especially those from Sumatra, like the firm Djohan & Djohor, which was one of the most active Sumatran merchants trading with the Japanese. In 1932, a D&D company manager by the name of Rais traveled to Japan with his nephew, Muhammad Hatta, in order to open a branch for exporting Japanese goods. Dasaad Musin also traded with the Japanese, and the site of his office still stands near the Café Batavia. These Sumatran groups played an important role in establishing an Indonesian “national economy” during the 1950s [Robinson 1986; Post 1997; Lindblad 2008]. In other words, the situation in the 1930s can be said to have prepared the stage for the appearance of a new type of businessman in Batavia who would contribute to nation-building during the post-independence period.

2.3 Batavia-Jakarta and the emergence of a national economy

Although Sukarno, the first president of the Republic of Indonesia, declared independence on 17 August 1945, the new nation still remained under the control of European capital at the beginning of the 1950s. Nevertheless, we can identify a seed of national economy prior to the 1940s.

The research on Indonesianization (*Indonesianisasi*), which began with [Sutter 1959], has recently been reconsidered [Lindblad 2008; Lindblad and Post 2009]; and Dick [2002] has defined the period from the 1930s to the 1950s as the time of the formation of a national economy. During the 1930s, the Dutch colonial government introduced several policies to combat stagnation in the export of cash crops due to the Great Depression, among which was the promotion of industrialization for import substitution. During this period, Batavia-Jakarta became the center of the national economy, but the details have yet to be analyzed by economic historians.

One clue as to the rise of Batavia-Jakarta may be differences among local economic structures. Since the introduction of the Cultivation System (*Cultuurstelsel*) in the 1830s, which required a portion of agricultural

production to be devoted to export crops, Surabaya had become the center of the colonial economy because its hinterland was the main area for the sugar industry, meaning that East Java suffered from the impact of the Great Depression more seriously than West Java. This fact may be one reason why West Java was able to recover more quickly than Surabaya or Semarang and is most essential for considering the reason why Batavia-Jakarta was able to become a megacity, but the research on the economic history of Batavia-Jakarta has only just begun.

PENDING ISSUES

On the basis of the above research trends, the *Magacities Project* is now confronted with three main problems to be solved.

1. Regarding the national history of Indonesia:
 - Understanding the relationship between urban development and rural society
 - Comparison of the Chinese communities of Semarang and Batavia-Jakarta
 - Understanding the function of the city in commercial networks
2. Regarding the regional history of Southeast Asia:
 - What has been the impact of Singapore on the historical development of Batavia-Jakarta? The only research is [Yong 2003], which analyzes the role of Singapore in Indonesian independence.
3. Regarding world history:
 - What is the historical role of the megacity in responding to globalization?

Concerning this last problem, we can no longer ignore the existence of globalization in our daily lives. As to Batavia-Jakarta, it was integrated into the globalization process from the beginning, which means that this megacity has been forced to respond to external influences for as many as 400 years. Moreover, Batavia-Jakarta has been able to assimilate many different foreign cultures and systems as if they originated in its urban society.

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