
GUARDIAN OF MEMORIES: *GARDU* IN URBAN JAVA

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Introduction

Unlike the “intelligent cities” in other regions of Southeast Asia, Indonesian cities have not yet surrendered the realm of discipline to the policing technology of security cameras. Instead, the guardhouse (known popularly as *gardu*) is still the prime resource for community defense, state policing, and surveillance. The reason for the proliferation of *gardus* in the urban landscape lies not only in the incapacity of the city to provide alternative security systems for its residents, but also in the active role the *gardu* still plays in the modality of Indonesian urban life.

Indonesians who have lived in urban Java would recognize the *gardu* as a gathering place (mostly for men) for nightwatch schemes and for leisure (including gambling and gossiping). Many of them would also recognize the variety of forms *gardus* have taken. The minimal one (generally found in rural areas) is often made from bamboo, wood planks, and a thatch roof. Usually supported on stilts (see Figure 1, below) and measuring about two by two meters, it is open on the front side and may or may not include a door.

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Figure 1. A *Gardu* at the entrance to a *kampung* in Surabaya, circa 1920s. KITLV, reprinted with permission.

In cities, the *gardu* is often a more permanent construction. It is like a tiny house made of brick often with a sofa or chair inside or beside it. In the new towns of major cities, *gardus* have occasionally been fashioned in elaborate styles, with high baroque motifs and Javanese architectural elements (see Figure 2, below). Those men who participate in the nightwatch—the primary function of the *gardu*—are armed with hand weapons that include a long bamboo, with its head shaped like a fork, a wooden stick, sometimes knives or machetes, but not firearms. The nightwatch's key instrument, however, is the *kentongan*, a hollowed-out tree branch with a cleft down the middle that produces sound when it is struck with a stick. Hung on the doorway of the *gardu*, the *kentongan* is used by members of the *ronda* (a group consisting of adult males on patrol) to sound an alert or send other messages to the community concerning the state of neighborhood security.

Gardus are visible at almost every junction in major cities in Indonesia, especially in the urban centers of Java. They are placed sporadically as well as strategically at sidewalks, over ditches, at the junctions of streets, at the entrances to *kampungs*, and at the gates of commercial buildings and housing complexes, as well as at the fronts of houses. During the period of national election campaigns that followed the collapse of Suharto's rule, they were painted in the symbolic colors of certain political parties and adorned with the party's banners, stickers, and slogans. During the celebration of Independence Day, they appeared in red and white, the colors of the national flag (see Figure 3, below).



Figure 2. A baroque *gardu* in a gated housing complex, 2003. Photo: F. Prihadi.



Figure 3. A *gardu* in the colors of the national flag. Taman Permata Indah, Kampung Gusti, 2003. Photo: A. Kusno.

Indonesians would thus recognize the *gardu* as an artifact that represents security and order, with connections to both the state and local power. Profoundly visible after the May 1998 riots, *gardus* (especially for the ethnic Chinese) also trigger memories of chaos, disturbance, and insecurity. Soon after the collapse of Suharto's government, the *gardu* had also been harnessed by the then-opposition party, the PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), to mobilize supporters and recall memories of Sukarno, the father of the party's leader, Megawati. (See Figures 4 and 5, below.)

This essay is about the interplay between urban memory, monuments, and symbolic struggles over identity and place. Benedict Anderson, who was perhaps the first to recognize monuments as an important type of “symbolic speech” for Indonesian political cultures (rather than simply an expression of the state’s ideology), points out that “few observers have recognized that monuments are a type of speech, or tried to discern concretely what is being said, why form and content are specifically what they are.”² Anderson suggests that to understand the intention and context of a particular culture, it would be important to analyze the form and the content of its monuments, even though we could not fully account for the role of these monuments in forming and transforming collective identity. Various meanings can indeed be invested in a single object. Yet it is precisely the fragmentary and imprecise nature of the experiences of monuments that has made the interpretative reading of these objects so important. By looking at the signifying functions of *gardus*, this essay aims to connect work on the spatial dimension of community identity with a study on Indonesian monuments and forms of memorialization.

However, it is important to recognize that the *gardu* is a form of “symbolic speech” that is intended to be neither a monument nor a memorial, even though in some cases (as this essay will show) it performs such functions. As a tiny construction located at the margin of “monumental” structures, the *gardu* is often neglected by urban conservationists and researchers of the city. As has happened with other urban artifacts that have become part of “normal” everyday life, the role of the *gardu* in registering public memory has usually been overlooked. I wish to argue that the mundane *gardu* is just as significant as a formal monument because it plays a crucial role in expressing political views, regulating public memory, and defining territory and collective identity.

This article examines the political functions and the changing meaning of *gardus*, genealogically, from our own times back to the past. It shows how the *gardu* has continued to be a visual medium through which collective memories are both formed and transformed across different historical orders. Instead of seeing the *gardu* as merely a symptom of a recent urban evolution associated with the rise of disciplinary society and gated communities worldwide, I aim to reflect on the *gardu* as an institution that embodies specific histories, ones that over time have shaped the collective memories of people who have lived through those histories. Such a tracing of the history of the *gardu* requires that we consider an ensemble of discursive moments and various signifying practices connected to the experience and territorial defense of ethnic Chinese, the Javanese concept of space, the territorial politics of Dutch colonialism, and the discourses associated with neighborhood watch under the Japanese occupation, as well as the political communications of Indonesians during the revolution and post-Independence era. I hope that, by reflecting on the *gardu*, this study will, in turn, encourage scholars to reconsider issues related to urban history, the politics of the built environment, and the meaning of guardhouses elsewhere. In other words, how does this everyday institution and artifact function as a mnemonic device that plays a role in registering public memories?

² Benedict Anderson, “Cartoons and Monuments: The Evolution of Political Communication under the New Order,” first published in 1974, updated and reprinted in *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 174.

1. Memories

The Posko of Megawati and the Platform of Sukarno

In 1998, on the eve of his resignation, President Suharto said quite bluntly that he had no problem with leaving office, but if he were to step down immediately, chaos or maybe even bloodshed and civil war would be the outcome, a situation that no one, not even his handpicked successor, B. J. Habibie, would be able to control.³ Thus, without Suharto and his military governance, Indonesians would find themselves in an uncertain and potentially vulnerable position. Suharto was ultimately forced to resign, and his “prophecy” that chaos, bloodshed, and unrest would follow has, in large part, come true. Soon after the riots in May 1998, which caused the deaths of hundreds of residents of Jakarta and prompted Suharto’s ouster, other violence erupted. In East Java, approximately 120 people accused of witchcraft were killed between December 1998 and the end of February 1999. In East Timor, massive violence took place, involving elements of the Indonesian military. Serious political violence and killings occurred in many different parts of Indonesia—in Aceh, Borneo, the Moluccas, Western New Guinea—and several bombing incidents took place in major cities on the islands of Java, Sumatra, and Bali.

Perhaps as a way of coping with this state of chaos and the fear that riots and killings might occur again, the residents of major cities in Java and Sumatra built, at their own expense, *gardus* at almost every corner of the city’s streets.⁴ The ethnic Chinese particularly felt this sense of urgency. They built fences and *gardus* for their neighborhoods and participated in nightwatch patrols. They also hired police and local hit men to watch over the streets from the *gardus*. In less than a year, the number of *gardus* and gates multiplied, becoming permanent features of the cityscape.

This community response to chaos was soon appropriated by Indonesia’s political elites to serve their aim of winning the public’s attention. In 1998, the political leaders of the then-opposition party, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI–P, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia–Perjuangan), chaired by Megawati Sukarno Putri, initiated the construction of *gardus*, known popularly as *posko* (*pos komunikasi*—that is, “communication posts”), at various places throughout the country (see Figure 4).⁵ In response, Jakarta’s governor instructed that all the *posko* be demolished, since they were cluttering the cityscape of Jakarta, but the PDI–P paid no heed and continued to construct *poskos* not only in the capital city, but also in other cities across Indonesia.⁶

³ Kees van Dijk, *A Country in Despair: Indonesia between 1997–2000* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2001), p. 203.

⁴ For a discussion on security discourses after 1998, see Kees van Dijk, “The Privatization of the Public Order: Relying on the Satgas,” in *Violence in Indonesia*, ed. Ingrid Wessel and Georgia Wimhöfer (Hamburg: Abera Verlag, 2001), pp. 152–67.

⁵ In less than six months after Suharto stepped down, urban residents across Java and Sumatra saw many *poskos* built by the PDI–P, Megawati’s party. There were 862 *poskos* in the region of Madiun, 1,000 in Magetan, and 380 in Ponorogo (“Posko Gotong Royong PDI Terlalu Banyak,” *Kompas* 17 [December 1998]: 10). By the beginning of 1999, in Semarang, there were 813 *poskos*; in Kendal, 843; in Kudus, 627; in Demak, 400; in Jepara and Kati, 750; and in Cilacap, over 1,200. In Jakarta, there were over 1,500 *poskos*, and in some areas, one could find a *posko* every fifty meters (“Posko Gotong Royong PDI: Bukan Balas Dendam Terhadap Kuningisasi,” *Kompas Cyber Media*, January 14, 1999; see also “Posko PDI Perjuangan Bukan Momok,” *Kompas Cyber Media*, February 1, 1999). The average size of a *posko* is around two by two square meters and, depending on the building materials, each costs around forty dollars to construct.

⁶ “Ancaman dari Posko-posko PDIP,” *Demokrasi dan Reformasi* (August 9–15, 1999): 28.



Figure 4. *Posko* PDI-P at Tubagus Angke Street with the shape of a *pendhopo* roof and the image of Megawati and an angry bull, 2003. Photo: A. Kusno.

In the urban center of Solo alone, the PDI-P built 262 *poskos* in less than six months. The construction of *posko* at various street corners coincided with the aftermath of the riots of May 1998, when Indonesians, especially the ethnic Chinese, protected themselves by constructing more *gardus*. In a way, followers of Megawati harnessed the ethnic Chinese's fear that riots might recur. Through *poskos*, the PDI-P offered the urbanite a sense of order and protection, even though *poskos* also served to remind passersby of violence and the possibility it might erupt again. According to Slamet Suryanto, one of the PDI's leaders in Solo, the *posko* contributed to the creation of order and security in the city after it had been damaged by burning, looting, and killing during the May 1998 riots:

Since the construction of *posko* in almost every street in Solo, the condition of the city has cheered up. If the post-May riots had made Solo a dead town with very few people on the streets, now [as a result of the *posko*] there is a sense that life has begun again.⁷

From the new *poskos*, the party also donated money and distributed aid packages to poor residents. Roy Janis, one of the leaders of the PDI-P's Jakarta branch, described the *posko* as a structure built for the purposes of "overcoming criminalities in the city, preventing students from fighting on the streets, and facilitating the distribution of food to the urban poor ... The *posko* [thus] belongs to the public, while it can be used for the party's political campaign."⁸ In the minds of the PDI-P elite, apparently, the presence of the *posko* suggested the party's concern for the public and symbolized the willingness of the political elites to communicate with the populace. As a form of what Anderson has called "symbolic speech," the *posko* moves between the ideology and practices of everyday life.

⁷ "Posko Gotong Royong Untuk Amankan Warga Kota Solo," *Suara Pembaruan* (October 19, 1998), p. 6.

⁸ "Posko Parpol harus di bongkar," *Kompas Cyber Media*, June 5, 1999.

The PDI-P chose the *posko* as the symbol of their campaign for various reasons. One of the leaders of the PDI-P stated that “the *posko* is a symbol that could mobilize crowds [*massa*] at any moment. It is also a sign of power.”⁹ To other members of the PDI-P, the *posko*, scattered all over the city and often unattached to any particular neighborhood, represented the “homelessness” of the PDI-P after its headquarters had been raided and destroyed. This sense of homelessness is well conveyed by the semi-permanent structure of the *posko*, which could be torn down and rebuilt quickly in other places.

However, there is something more to the *posko*. For Megawati, the *posko* was not merely a *gardu* post for communication, an emblem of her political party, but also a structure that represented her own public image and that of her father, the first president, Sukarno (1950–65). Megawati urged all those who belonged to or sympathized with her party to safeguard the *posko*, to use it properly as a center for education, and to avoid any action that would damage its image.¹⁰ In the eyes of her supporters, the *posko* embodies Megawati. They called every *posko* “the headquarters of Megawati Sukarno Putri” and displayed photos and drawings of both Megawati and Sukarno, positioned to suggest the images were standing on the platform of the *posko*, addressing the audience (see Figure 5, below). The images of Sukarno, in particular, invoked history since they depicted a leader whom Indonesians admired. The drawing of Sukarno pointing his finger recalled the well-known image of the first president standing at a podium, delivering speeches to a mass audience.

I do not claim that most Indonesians think of the podium as an embodiment of Sukarno, but evidence suggests the podium has been used to symbolize free speech in Indonesia. In 1996, as an act of protest against Suharto’s reinstatement of Soerjadi as the leader of PDI-P, the followers of Megawati set up a “free-speech podium” outside the PDI-P headquarters in Jakarta.¹¹ Placed outside the headquarters, the podium was meant to communicate the party’s outrage to the Indonesian public, but it also recalled the image of Sukarno delivering a spirited speech. For weeks, this free-speech podium was used as a prop for speakers who routinely denounced the New Order government until it was finally smashed to pieces on July 27, 1996. The PDI-P’s *posko* scattered throughout the city and beyond could thus be seen collectively as an icon that sought to commemorate the PDI-P’s resistance against suppression, the “free-speech podium” set up by Megawati’s followers, and the symbolic position of Megawati, daughter of Sukarno.

⁹ “Ancaman dari Posko-posko PDIP.”

¹⁰ Her critics perhaps knew about her concerns, and they often criticized her by looking at what has gone wrong with the *posko*. For instance, the ex-president Gus Dur, in his critique of Megawati, alleged that some people have been using the *posko* for “drinking, gambling, embezzling, and sexual transactions.” “Gus Dur Komentari Posko Gotong Royong PDI,” *Kompas*, January 12, 1999. The municipal authority also challenged Megawati by proclaiming that the placement of many of her *poskos* disturbed the aesthetics and the “visual comfort” (*kenyamanan*) of the city. See “Posko akan ditertibkan,” *Pikiran Rakyat*, September 14, 2002.

¹¹ See David Bouchier and Vedi Hadiz, “Introduction,” in *Indonesian Politics and Society: A Reader*, ed. David Bouchier and Vedi Hadiz (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), p. 18.



Figure 5. A *posko* of PDI-P at Surabaya Street with a painting of Sukarno on the door, 2003.
Photo: F. Prihadi.

In this sense, the construction of *posko* adorned with the image of Sukarno delivering a speech commemorated the violence that had been done to Megawati's political party and also sought to reconstitute the historical figure of Sukarno as the embodiment of "free speech." The followers of Megawati who invoked this image seemed to believe in the power that the podium possesses to concentrate the attention of the populace. The connection between Sukarno, the podium, and the people was, in fact, emphasized in one of Sukarno's own speeches. In his 1964 Independence Day speech, he stated:

For me, this podium—podium of 17th August [Independence Day] is a podium of people [*podium rakyat*], a podium of revolution, a podium that orients the determination of our nation! I use this podium as a space for dialogue between Sukarno, a person, and Sukarno, the leader of the revolution. I use this podium as a space of dialogue between Sukarno, the leader of the revolution, and the Indonesian people who are undergoing the revolution ... This is a podium where we form a dialogue. It is a place of communication for 103 million Indonesian people ... That is why every time I stand on this podium of 17 August, I am not only talking to the revolutionary people of Indonesia, but also to all human beings undergoing revolution.¹²

¹² *Amanat Bung Karno: Tahun "Vivere Pericoloso"* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Kendi, 2003), pp. 2-3.

From the podium, Sukarno gathered the support of his audience, even though most of the people in attendance could hardly see or hear him because they stood so far away in the crowd. For many, it was only the podium that they saw and could remember clearly. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, for instance, recalled the day of Sukarno's famous address, but while he could hardly remember the president's messages or facial expressions, he had not forgotten the props surrounding the leader, especially the high platform, the watchtower, and the loudspeaker that provided the setting for the event.¹³ The attraction of a leader who, when standing on a platform before an audience, figures as both a subject who sees and an object to be seen is inseparable from the changing modality of "seeing power" in traditional Java. (Below I will discuss the mutual gaze in traditional Java and how it binds persons considered to be powerful with their audiences.)



Figure 6. *Posko* PDI-P at Wijaya Street, located above the alleyway to a *kampung*. It recalls the image of a podium, 2003. Photo: F. Prihadi.

Megawati's *posko* were placed at nearly every street corner of the city (see Figure 6, above) in order to contact people and tell them something like "we are here to protect and serve you, and this structure represents the authority and the benevolence of our leader." Often without the consent of local residents, such a *posko* can assume the role of a territorial marker. Banners on some of the *posko* proclaimed messages such as "this is the territory of Banteng" (this banner showed a black "angry" bull, an icon of the PDI-P), "PDI-P is the party for the young people [*anak muda*]," and "you are entering the territory of PDI-P."¹⁴ For the followers of Megawati, what mattered most about the *posko* was not what it claimed, but that the *posko*, wherever it was located, should radiate its influence outward, reaching as far as possible.¹⁵ For them, the establishment of *poskos* (as well as their destruction by political rivals) was part of a political maneuver aimed at assuring the maintenance and expansion of their sphere of influence.

¹³ As suggested in Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 213.

¹⁴ "PDI Perjuangan, si Raja Posko," *Demokrasi dan Reformasi*, April 5-10, 1999, p. 28.

¹⁵ "Beribu Pesan Bertebaran di Jalan," *Kompas*, March 31, 2000.

The *poskos* and banners of Megawati did not only compete with those from other political parties, they also engaged with the billboards and advertisements widespread throughout the city. Political ideologies were thus set up alongside the ideology of market capitalism, both claiming the right to the city.

Pendhopo and the Boundary of Traditional Power

The *posko* constructed throughout Jakarta by rival political parties were meant to broadcast the mission of those parties: "... to help residents to overcome various problems that have emerged as a result of recent political situations."¹⁶ In doing so, they echoed messages previously delivered by traditional Javanese authorities and became involved in Javanese spatial politics of a kind that had been going on for generations. The *posko* of Megawati and her rivals frequently harked back to a Javanese symbol of power much older than the podium. Many *poskos* adopted the roof shape of the *pendhopo* because this shape manifests most clearly the "old" Javanese concept of power and authority.¹⁷ The *pendhopo* is a pavilion-like structure that stands in front of a Javanese housing compound (see figure 7). It is visible from the street and accessible to people (mostly male). Standing in front of the *Omah* (the inner structure of the Javanese house), the *pendhopo* mediates between the ruler and the ruled, the inner and the outer circle, by integrating the latter into the former's sphere of influence. As a symbol of traditional authority, the *pendhopo* thus spatializes the Javanese concept of power.¹⁸ Members of Javanese society often associate the *pendhopo* with an umbrella (*payung*) or a banyan tree (*waringin*), for it shelters people and offers a space for them to come together.¹⁹ By virtue of its spatial capacity to draw people into its domain (the practice of *mengayomi*), many Javanese believe that the *pendhopo* represents the power and authority of the owner of the house. They also assume that if the owner is powerful, he ought to be able to absorb everything from everywhere into his *pendhopo*. If the attractive center of the master's domain, represented by the *pendhopo*, is powerful, then there is no need in the traditional polity to mark the boundary of the ruler's territory, a demarcation that would limit the centripetal forces of the center. In the competitive

¹⁶ A leader of a PDI-P branch makes this statement, cited in "Posko Gotong Royong PDI terlalu Banyak," *Kompas*, December 17, 1998, p. 10.

¹⁷ See Benedict Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," in *Language and Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 17-77. We could extend Anderson's analysis by indicating that the sultans and power elites in Java associate their residences with the center of power. They share the idea that power emanates from their residence outward, in concentric circles, reaching as far as possible to the outermost territories. They also believe that the extent of their sphere of influence is based on whether their power is diminishing or increasing at the center. They know that, although the center of power is grounded in their residence, the extent of that center's influence cannot be decisively determined, since its outer limit is characterized by fluidity and uncertainty. For a discussion of the Javanese house, see Gunawan Tjahjono, "Center and Duality in the Javanese Dwellings," in *Dwellings, Settlements, and Traditions: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. J. P. Bourdier and Nezar Al Sayyad (Berkeley, CA: International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments, 1989), pp. 213-36; Josef Prijotomo, *Ideas and Forms of Javanese Architecture* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada Press, 1984); Reviando Budi Santosa, "Omah: The Production of Meanings in Javanese Domestic Settings" (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1997).

¹⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of the Javanese concept of power, see Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture."

¹⁹ The *pendhopo* is also associated with Mount Meru, the image of which is partly derived from the truncated pyramid shape of the roof (*Joglo*) supported by the four master pillars (*soko guru*) at the center. The master pillars and the *Joglo* roof suggest a concentric circle, which represents the master's sphere of influence, integrating subjects from the surroundings, as well as from the outer realms.

field of power, the higher, bigger, and more encompassing *pendhapos* would presumably play a significant role in attracting more followers.



Figure 7. A royal *pendhopo* in Cirebon, 2003. Photo: A. Kusno.

Thus the *posko* of today's political parties perform, in some ways, the function of the traditional *pendhopo*, a mediating structure where people were supposed to find power, protection, and security. Entering the *pendhopo*, one becomes part of the sphere, an act that resembles the movement of neighborhood residents who visit a *posko* seeking help and assistance. It is an act similar to passing through a gate, where one's identity is (temporarily) transformed, changing the visitor from an outsider to an insider. It is striking, but logical, that many *poskos* use the roof shape of *pendhopo* to increase their influence and incorporate members (see Figure 4, above).

In precolonial Java, the importance of the *pendhopo* lay not only in its capacity to invite and absorb allies, but also in its ability to conceal the king behind the walls of his residence. In contrast to the more common, open *pendhopo*, the king's entryway was entirely walled in. His invisibility and inaccessibility guaranteed his power. He only appeared on particular, ritual occasions, as the key figure in a procession that passed through a series of royal gates and *pendhopo* without showing itself to the people. The grand, royal *pendhopo*, which represented him, was all that people could see.

This old symbolism collapsed—at least visually—when Sukarno appeared on the podium. To the thousands of commoners, the appearance of Sukarno on the high, open platform meant that the hidden power of the leader had been displaced or had finally emerged and offered itself to them. No other form of communication could more convincingly demonstrate the newness of Sukarno's approach. Sukarno's comparatively modern white suits and his spontaneous speech were all in stark

contrast to the heavily ritualized procession of the king hidden behind or under the *pendhopo*. As seen by the commoners, Sukarno embodied a power that was visible, the power of a new leader who had (to a remarkable degree) freed himself from the grasp of traditional symbolism.

What I am suggesting here is that the fragmented images of the past lingered on in modern constructions. Sukarno's podium gained its power from displacing (if not replacing) the image of the traditional *pendhopo*. Both Sukarno's podium and the king's *pendhopo*, in turn, have provided precedents for Megawati's *posko*. Yet while Megawati adopted parts of her father's legacy, she adapted others. Notably, she directed her message to a different audience. Sukarno's audience was indeed the people (*rakyat*), and, regardless of whether they understood his speech or not, it was through the people that he gained political legitimacy. Megawati's primary audience, by contrast, was the "middle class," who feared the people (known in her time as the *massa*) whom the elites had been trying to avoid and control.²⁰ While Sukarno stood on a podium and spoke directly to the people, Megawati usually presented herself through her representations, in the form of the many *poskos* available on every street corner. If the podium of Sukarno symbolized his mobilization of the masses, whom he summoned to continue the revolution, the *posko* of Megawati called for power, security, and order. Megawati's call for stability actually borrowed from the legacy of a different president, for it recalled the discourses of her political enemy and predecessor, President Suharto (1966–1998).

Pos Hansip and the New Order

What was the *posko* before Megawati? In the social environment of Suharto, the *gardu* was called *pos hansip* (post for civil defense). The term "*posko*" was also used in Suharto's time, but it referred to a post for military command (*pos-komando*), a control center temporarily set up by Suharto's military units when they were posted in unfamiliar and untamed terrains. The presence of the "military *posko*" in a volatile region delineated the interaction between the army and the surrounding areas that it sought to control. "*Posko*" in the Suharto era was thus a term used in the context of combat in a "battleground." The *posko* aimed at controlling aspects of social and political life in the field to assure order and security. We should note that Suharto's army men spent most of their careers in a nonurban setting, in rural and jungle areas, where they were posted to stop "communism," which was believed to be infiltrating rural life. I believe it was in those areas, outside the city, that the term "*posko*" was first used. We can find the term "*posko taktis*" used in descriptions of the military program, *Abri Masuk Desa* (military joining the village),²¹ which started in the 1970s. The term was also probably used in the documents describing the annexation and pacification of East Timor and the other outer islands. When it functions as a structure for controlling

²⁰ For a discussion of the formation and transformation of the Indonesian "middle class" in relation to the fear of the "underclass," see James T. Siegel, *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter-Revolution Today* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

²¹ For a reference to "*posko taktis*," see *Jurnal Pelaksanaan Manunggal TNI ABRI Masuk Desa* (Jakarta: Departemen Penerangan, 1991), p. 34.

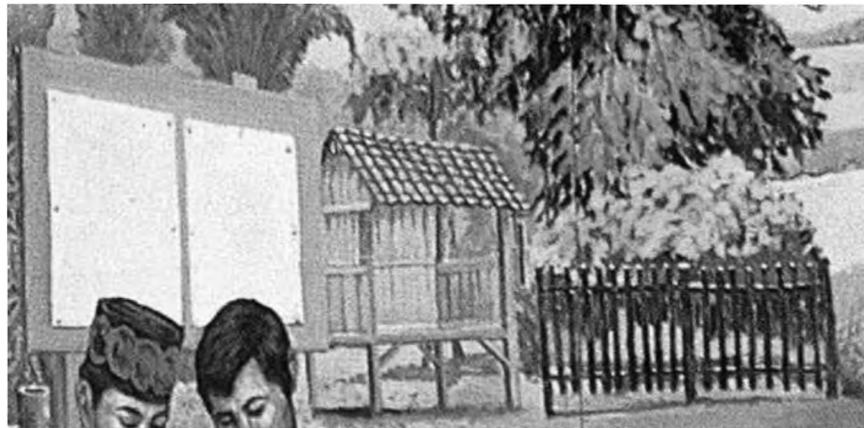
and pacifying unfamiliar and “dangerous” terrains, the *posko* becomes a symbol of menace and insecurity.

Toward the middle of the 1980s, army intelligence began to perceive a change in conditions that required them to adapt their operations. For years to come, according to army intelligence, security threats would no longer be coming from Aceh, East Timor, or the Irian, but most likely would be coming from urban areas. As units of the military were discharged from East Timor and the villages, many returned to urban Java, where they picked up security jobs with the police, jobs that had been created for them in the city. Thus, surplus labor in the army contributed to the militarization of urban space. Some ex-soldiers preferred to operate on the streets and organized themselves as gangs of urban thugs. Others found themselves involved in *pos hansip* in various neighborhoods, as well as in banks, shopping centers, and new private housing complexes, as well as in the houses of the elites. The owners of these sites either agreed to hire these security forces or had no choice but to accept the idea that Jakarta was an unsafe place and *gardus* in the form of *pos hansips* were needed as a defense against threats from the streets. Many “homecoming” army officials found work in state institutions and private enterprises and registered their presence by making the city their official combat zone.

By the 1980s, Suharto’s army was engaged in transforming the village-based military *posko* into the urban-based *pos hansip*. In other words, the army had to change the (to them) unfamiliar territory of the city into a familiar place by first ousting all imagined and real threats and then installing in strategic places *pos hansip* as part of the urban-based community. To function effectively as the apparatus of the state, the *pos hansip* would have to be immersed in the everyday life of the community. The army would accomplish this by facilitating the nightwatch patrols and by providing a space for socialization and the monitoring of public life. The transformation of the military *posko* into the *pos hansip* was crucial to Suharto’s politics of space, as crucial as transferring the primary location of military operations from the village to the city.²²

A billboard from this time, depicting the “development” of rural areas of Indonesia, provides a most poignant, but perhaps unconscious, image of this process (see Figures 8 and 9, below). On the billboard we see a *gardu*, which represented the order and security of the presumably prosperous village of Cianjur. The *gardu* also represented Suharto’s leadership, for the president is depicted giving instructions over the radio. Suharto often associated himself with rural folk—*orang desa*—even though, as president, he resided at the center of Jakarta. What is peculiar about this billboard is that, while it depicted a village scene, it was intended for an urban audience. Placed in the central part of Jakarta, the billboard could be seen as informing the urbanite about secure conditions in the *desa* as well as representing a desire for those conditions to be implemented in the city. It was displayed in the mid-1980s, at a critical stage in national “development,” a time when standardized security measures were about to be established in the city.

²² See Aris Santoso, “Operasi Pengamanan ABRI: Dari Hutan Belantara ke Perkotaan,” *Tempo Interaktif*, February 2–March 15, 1997.



Figures 8 and 9. Image of a village *gardu* shown on the upper left of a billboard displayed in Jakarta by the Department of Education. Source: Paul Zach and Gretchen Liu. eds., *Jakarta* (Singapore: Times Edition, 1987).

The city was a relatively new setting for Suharto's army. It only became the major site of military operations after East Timor, the villages, and the outer islands had been pacified. The soldiers appeared in many guises. In the early 1990s, residents of Jakarta occasionally saw units of army men (such as the *sapu bersih*) in black uniforms (Jakarta residents called such men "ninjas") flying down ropes strung from the skyscrapers in the business district of Jakarta. As the ninja skillfully surveyed their new terrains and impressed the urbanites with their performances, the military officials established *poskos* because, according to military intelligence, the city is far more complex than the rural areas and the jungle because "it is hard to identify the enemy combatant in the

city.”²³ The military *posko* that had been stationed in villages and in East Timor were thus transferred to the city of Jakarta. From their urban *posko*, the military units gathered information, surveyed movements, and monitored the “cleaning up” of potential threats to the city.

Suharto built his regime on the idea of cleansing (*-bersih*) the nation of communism. This obsession with *bersih* was expressed through the terms used for various military missions. The army unit responsible for urban warfare, for instance, was called the unit of *sapu bersih* (sweeping).²⁴ The military also established bureaus, which screened citizens to ensure that they were all from a “clean environment” (*bersih lingkungan*), untainted by the kind of social environment conducive to communism. To qualify for a job, citizens were required to obtain a certificate of good behavior from the neighborhood where they were living as evidence that they did not need to undergo “self cleaning” (*bersih diri*) from communism. It is logical, therefore, that the “clean environment” registered itself, most visibly, in the discourses concerning *kampung* improvement projects, the establishment of new urban neighborhoods, and the setting up of *pos hansip* in every neighborhood, since control of the built environment clearly verified the state’s effort to promote cleanliness. The streets and the *kampung* of Jakarta were identified as “less clean” compared with the sanitized new urban neighborhoods. State discourse concerning the new neighborhoods was related to the New Order’s attempt to create a depoliticized Suharto generation and to induce these citizens to forget the image of Sukarno standing on an open podium in a public space, concentrating the force of the masses and stirring their passion for revolution.²⁵

The famous governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin (1966-1975), was instrumental in fulfilling the objectives of Suharto’s regime.²⁶ One of his main tasks during his tenure was to prevent the retrieval of Jakarta’s past as a space for the mobilization of revolutionary masses. He made several important moves, one of which was to categorize groups of people—“illiterate and unskilled cheap laborers from the countryside, trishaw drivers, construction workers, vendors, the homeless, beggars, and prostitutes”²⁷—as potentially threatening to the public order. According to the governor, these people were part of the mass of Jakarta’s poor residents (60 percent of the city’s inhabitants) who lived in *kampung*, a term “no longer suitable, given the order of the city, for it reminds people of a backward society.”²⁸ Throughout his tenure, the governor attempted to control the *kampung* and its inhabitants through “the environment security system [*siskamling*].” “For the easier process of monitoring and servicing, I need to limit the number of RT [*Rukun Tetangga*, Neighborhood Association] to forty families and each RW [*Rukun Warga*, District Administration] to fifteen to twenty RT.”²⁹ Through this program, the governor co-opted, systematized, and upgraded the “traditional” methods of cooperation [*gotong royong*] that bind

²³ As cited in Santoso, “Operasi Pengamanan ABRI: Dari Hutan Belantara ke Perkotaan.”

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2000), chap. 4.

²⁶ Ali Sadikin, however, worked independently and, at the height of Suharto’s power, had become one of the most established critics of the New Order regime.

²⁷ Ali Sadikin, *Gita Jaya: Catatan H. Ali Sadikin, Gubernur Kepala Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta, 1966-1977* (Jakarta: Pemda Khusus Ibu kota Jakarta, 1977), p. 160.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 112.

²⁹ Ibid.

members of a Javanese community and contribute to “humanizing the environment.”³⁰ In his memoir, Sadikin reported that in the 1970s, the Ministry of Defense institutionalized the neighborhood watch (*ronda*), and by 1977, 16,718 persons had been trained as officers of civil defense (*hansip*). For the purpose of *ronda*, about 2,280 *gardus* (*pos hansips*) were constructed throughout Jakarta by 1977.³¹

The targets for this disciplinary discourse were not limited to the *kampung*, since the privileged were also the targets of surveillance. The governor formed similar community organizations for the upper-middle-class neighborhoods. By the late 1980s, Jakarta’s real estate market for urban housing began to make security a major component in the selling of new urban residence (see Figure 10). The grand and intimidating gateways, the *pos hansips* with their security guards, are now the first structures developers build when preparing to market new urban housing projects.



Figure 10. *Pos hansip* at Kelapa Gading housing complex, 2003. Photo: F. Prihadi.

By the 1990s, with the discourse of security and order registered in the minds of the urban residents, the *pos hansip*, attached to buildings and neighborhoods, had become a familiar urban feature for the residents of Jakarta. It became the symbol of security and order connected to the power of the regime. No matter how varied the styles of the *pos hansip* might be, in the minds of the public they were all connected to one source: the state. From this source emanated a constellation of other meanings that were associated with private capital, private corporate business, and the prestige of the “middle class,” as well as their fear of the streets (see Figure 11, below).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 168.

³¹ Ibid., p. 138.



Figure 11. The Bali-Sanur *gardu* for a gated community in Jakarta, 2003. Photo: F. Prihadi.

Many Jakartans who lived in the new urban developments during the New Order were aware that the *pos hansip* functioned as the eyes and ears of the state, guard posts from which the government could survey the daily life of the streets and the inhabitants of the city. Yet, for the middle class of Jakarta, it was the state that supposedly guaranteed their security and the social hierarchy. In fact, the new urban neighborhoods where they live continue to spatialize a hierarchical social order. Through the *pos hansip*, both social and physical boundaries have been created for the neighborhood. Those who live behind the *pos hansip* are the “insiders” as opposed to the “outsiders,” who are wandering the streets. At the *pos hansip*, one can often find a notice: “guests that stay for more than twenty-four hours are expected to file a report,” or “scavengers cannot enter,” a strategy to discourage unwelcome visitors and wanderers (see Figure 12, below). This disciplinary method has never worked in practice. People are always capable of finding a way in and out of the checkpoint without being noticed, and no one seems to bother reporting his or her guests to the *pos hansip*. Nevertheless, with the installation of networks of *pos hansips* on the streets, there is now less chance that unauthorized platforms will be erected for the mobilization of crowds. In the time of Suharto, the *gardu* was indeed a post for command and not the place intended to mediate between “Sukarno and his revolutionary masses.”

That said, it is important to note that although the *gardu* has become part of the political apparatus of the state, it can provide ways for certain groups to conceptualize their own defense, especially when the state turns against them. Unprotected by government and city security forces during the riots of May 1998 (many believe security forces were pulled back as part of the state’s strategy to terrorize the populace), various communities (especially Indonesians of Chinese background) took

over the *pos hansips* in their neighborhoods and resisted the invading mobs from that point. The collapse of the Suharto regime destroyed the state network of the *pos hansips*, but the structure has persisted, and its function has been transformed. It has been appropriated by communities and individuals who use it to safeguard their own properties. Increasing numbers of *gardus* and gates are now being built, but without the authorization of the state (see Figure 12).



Figure 12. A modest *gardu* in Taman Surya with warning signs: "Guests report every 24 hours; Sorry, no throughway; Scavengers cannot enter." 2002. Photo: A. Kusno.

The *posko* of Megawati exploited the mixed sense of empowerment, fragmentation, and insecurity in the public that followed the overthrow of Suharto. Through her *posko*, she communicated the idea of restoring order and security in the neighborhood, a discourse that derived ironically from the previous regime, which she had challenged in her campaign for the presidency. The *gardu* provided a vocabulary for Megawati to integrate fragments of the past (the precolonial *pendhopo*, Sukarno's podium, and Suharto's militarism), along with the experiences of Indonesia's ethnic Chinese, into the consciousness of the present.

2. Traces

The *gardu* I have been discussing till now looked simultaneously in both local and global directions. Today, the *gardu* is part of a global cultural form and, as part of the realm of "gated communities," it is connected to much of the contemporary urban world. Yet, it is also part of the specific history of Indonesia. The last two centuries of European colonialism contribute greatly to the significance of today's *gardu*. As we have seen, the *gardu* suggests a clear territorial demarcation, the origin of which can be

traced back to the spatial politics of the Dutch colonial state. The *gardu* represented the emergence of the colonial state in nineteenth-century Java. That state reorganized space in both the Indonesian city and the village. During this same period, the *gardu* also figured as a significant marker for the ethnic Chinese who lived through periods of unrest, when violence was directed against them. This section thus deals with the earlier forms and practices of *gardu* associated with Dutch colonialism and the experiences of ethnic Chinese.

In two valuable works, Joshua Barker has studied the spatial dimension of neighborhood security in the construction of communal identities in urban Indonesia.³² Examining the institution of neighborhood security, Barker shows the intertwined relations between the state strategy of surveillance and the local practices of security watch. He illustrates how the state and the local community mutually cooperate and contest with each other in defining who are the criminals, the foreigners, and the insiders (as well as who are in between). This contestation is marked by a sense of territoriality that is profoundly unsettling. Barker's critical observation of the intermingling of state and local power encourages us to look at the earlier discourses of territoriality that involved Dutch colonial power and the spatial strategies of the ethnic Chinese. In what ways did the earlier discourses of territoriality determine the present strategies of the state and the local communities?

In their studies of the rural politics of colonial Java, historians Jan Breman and Onghokham have traced the complex processes by which a bordered *desa* (village) came into being in the nineteenth century.³³ Their accounts are instructive because the territoriality of urban neighborhoods investigated by Barker could be seen as deriving from the colonial discourses concerned with the bordered *desa*. The *gardu* is thus intimately connected to the spatial politics of Java under colonial conditions, and it has long been part of the apparatus for the structuring of community identity. The studies of Barker, Breman, and Onghokham suggest that *gardus* are tied to a particular territory. Their studies also prompt us to consider the ways in which *gardus* can lead a "life" of their own and move across time and space. At one point, they continue to serve as an institution of the state and particular neighborhoods; at other points, they may operate as sites for resistance; and at other points (as shown above), they work as artifacts for memorialization.

If the meaning of the *gardu* has changed over time as it has been adapted to social practices and political projects, its origin is even more obscure. I believe it owes much to the emergence of various sites, including that of the cross-regional highway, the political construction of the "village community," the formation of city police in early twentieth-century Java, and the experience of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. What social, political, and other effects did the spatial politics of the Dutch have on the institutionalization of *gardu* in the landscape of Java? By way of responding to this question, let me first pay tribute to the Javanese concept of space and show how such a

³² Joshua Barker, "A State of Fear: Controlling the Criminal Contagion in Suharto's New Order," *Indonesia* 66 (October 1998): 7-43; and "Surveillance and Territoriality in Bandung," in *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, ed. Vicente Rafael (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), pp. 95-127.

³³ Jan Breman, *The Village on Java and the Early Colonial State* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University Comparative Asian Studies Programme, 1980); Onghokham, *Social Change in Madiun during the Nineteenth Century: Taxes and their Influence on Landholding* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1981).

powerful system could not by itself generate the tradition of *gardu*. This tracing is necessary to dispose of the traditional, orthodox perception that the much-loved and much-hated *gardu* is really a product of a single culture inherited from “our” ancestors.

Space in Flux

As indicated earlier, the Indonesian public has associated the *gardu* with informal gatherings (for men) and information exchange; the *gardu* has also been related to ideologies of security, discipline, and the spectacle of power. However, an inquiry into the “origins” of the *gardu* requires that we be sensitive to the diverse functions and different signs it once symbolized. We must also be aware of the dependency of those functions and signs on changes in the social and physical environments within which they are embedded.

It is reasonable to believe that *gardus* were already in existence in Java before the advent of European colonialism. They could be found at the entrances to the compounds of the nobility or the notables (see Figure 13). However, the purpose of precolonial *gardus* was neither for demarcating territory nor for defense and exclusion. Instead, the point of their presence, like the conspicuous presence of the guards, was to show the power of the king as the center of the cosmos. For instance, the nine guarded gates of the Yogyakarta palace refer to the king’s body (the nine “cosmic” holes of the king’s body) rather than the territorial stretch of his kingdom.³⁴



Figure 13. Guards protecting the *kraton* (palace) of Yogyakarta. Sketched by A. de Nelly, one of Johannes Rach’s pupils, in c. 1771. Source: Peter Carey, ed., *The British in Java, 1811-1816: A Javanese Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³⁴ K. P. H. Brongtodiningrat, *The Royal Palace (Kraton) of Yogyakarta: Its Architecture and Its Meaning*, trans. R. Murdani Hadiatmaja (Yogyakarta: Karaton Museum Yogyakarta, 1975), pp. 22–23.

Benedict Anderson, Soemarsaid Moertono, and Oliver Wolters have written about the absence of a concept of boundaries in the Javanese polity.³⁵ They emphasized the permanent state of flux and the instability of the traditional polity. Similarly, Anthony Reid and J. Kathirithamby-Wells have discussed the difficulty of defining the “city” of Southeast Asia in terms of its boundary, since there are no clear divisions among the compounds outside the king’s palace, as well as no explicit physical differentiation between what lies inside the town and what lies outside it.³⁶

Historians of the rural politics of Java, such as Jan Breman and Onghokham, have discovered a similar tendency in rural areas. The domains of both the local notables and the peasants were not demarcated territorially. Instead, they were spread out over various settlements and underwent regrouping according to the prestige and the prosperity of the notables and the up-and-down fortunes of the agricultural producers. The degree of instability was intensified by the notables’ constant engagement in competitive struggles to win the favor of higher authorities as well as the subservience of the peasants. The consequence of these struggles was that a notable’s degree of success was determined not by the extent of his territory, but by the number of people he could draw into his circle. An extract from a survey report on a district in West Java dating from the end of the nineteenth century documents the reaction of the colonial state that couldn’t abide such a state of flux:

Until the reorganization of 1870, the *desa* [village] boundaries were never clearly delineated. The *desa* was a conglomeration of persons, falling under the jurisdiction of one *loerah* [headman], with the consequence that, at any time, everyone was free to renounce their obedience to him and had the option to place themselves under the authority of another chief. The land, no matter where it was situated, always went with the person, so that there could be no question of a demarcated *desa* area: *tjingtjing di mana, ngawoela ka mana soeka*, “live where you like, serve whom you will”—is an old proverb that retained its force until 1870.³⁷

Without going into detail concerning the political basis of rural organization in precolonial times (a topic that has been extensively studied), it is sufficient to say that the organization of the Javanese countryside, like that of its urban counterpart, was always in a state of flux. Had there been *gardus*, they would have been used sporadically and would never have constituted a network that would help systematize the notions of bondage, territory, and boundary. The idea of territorial demarcation and community formation defined by boundary is foreign to Java.

In what follows, I will show how the emergence of the *gardu* as an institution demarcating territorial boundaries in the Indonesian village and town is connected to the decline of sultanate power and the rise of the colonial West in Java. Let me start by discussing rural Java, the political creation of boundaries there and the establishment of the “village community,” of which the *gardu* was a crucial part. The Indonesian

³⁵ Oliver Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982); Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1981); Benedict Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture.”

³⁶ Anthony Reid, “The Structure of Cities in Southeast Asia, 15th to 17th Centuries,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11,2 (1980): 235-50; J. Kathirithamby-Wells, “The Islamic City: Melaka to Jogjakarta c. 1500-1800,” *Modern Asian Studies* 20,2 (1986): 333-51.

³⁷ As cited in Jan Breman, *The Village on Java and the Early Colonial State*, p. 36.

principle of tolerating erratic, vaguely defined village boundaries underwent change in the nineteenth century as a result of Dutch colonial rule; this happened most notably under the rule of the French “Napoleonic” Governor General Daendels (1805-11), under Governor Raffles during the English Interregnum (1811-15), and during the period of the Cultivation System (1830-70). The intermingling of these different regimes of power gave rise to territorial consciousness and, as I will show, the gradual formation of a local attachment to the *gardu*. The evolution of the *gardu*'s function was not driven solely by colonial discourse regarding security, but also involved the representation of power, territory, and identity.

Guarding the Road

The most significant change in the morphology of the Javanese town occurred when Herman Willem Daendels, the French governor general of the Netherlands Indies, ruled Java (1805–11).³⁸ It is quite plausible to suggest that the *gardu* and its role in the institution of day- and nightwatch (*ronda*) began as a result of Daendels's orders. The Indonesian word “*gardu*” might even come from the French word “*garde*.”³⁹ In any case, Daendels was the first person to use territorial demarcation as part of a strategy to rule Java. He institutionalized the idea of the boundary by dividing the Dutch territories in Java into sharply demarcated spaces called “residencies.”⁴⁰ He then connected these residencies by a thoroughfare called the Grand Post Road (*Jalan Pos Besar* in Malay or the *Groote Postweg* in Dutch) in 1808, which ran across the coastal and inland area of Java, from the west coast of Anyer to the east coast of Banyuwangi. This massive construction project, which caused the deaths of thousands of Javanese forced laborers, stemmed from the Dutch need to improve communication between the “residencies,” expand trade, and, perhaps most importantly, to facilitate forceful pacification of the uprisings in certain areas in Java.⁴¹

Peter Nas and Pratiwo have studied the historical layout of the *Groote Postweg* and its later development.⁴² One of the important points they have made concerns the effect of the thoroughfare on the urban symbolism of the Javanese town. The new road stretching along the island of Java, oriented east-west, disrupted or undermined the spatial orientation of the Javanese “town,” which had traditionally been laid out on a north-south axis. This change of spatial orientation contributed to the undermining of

³⁸ King Lodewijk Napoleon of France, who governed Holland, appointed Daendels.

³⁹ H. C. C. Clockener Brousson, *Batavia Awal Abad 20 (Gedenkschriften van een oud-koloniaal)*, trans. Achmand Sunjayadi (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2003 [(1903-06?)], p. 121.

⁴⁰ Onghokham, *The Thugs, the Curtain Thief, and the Sugar Lord: Power, Politics, and Culture in Colonial Java* (Jakarta: Metaphor Publishing, 2003), p. 161.

⁴¹ The colonial government of the twentieth century promoted the highway in this manner:

“Through the pathless forest, climbing towards the clefts left by volcanic upheaval, past inhospitable villages and over rivers that become raging torrents with every tropical storm, the builders pushed on to their goal. So well did they build that the run by motor car from Batavia to Soerabaya, a distance of 846 kms., has been done in less than twelve hours, or an average of better than 70 kms. per hour, over roads that carry heavy traffic. These roads are filled from daylight to dark with natives on foot, plodding bullock carts, bad-tempered ponies in assorted two wheels, [*sic*] and that racing monster, the autobus, careering madly past all and sundry, its grinning sarong-clad passengers getting a thrill with every sway of the usually much overloaded vehicle. *De Koloniale Roeping van Nederland* (The Hague: Dutch-British Publishing Company, Limited, 1930), p. A5.

⁴² Peter J. M. Nas and Pratiwo, “Java and De Groote Postweg, La Grande Route, the Great Mail Road, Jalan Raya Pos,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 158,4 (2002): 707–25.

traditional authority throughout Java, already in decline since the eighteenth century.⁴³ In addition to this spatial disruption, there was also a symbolic displacement of Javanese authority caused by the building of the *Groote Postweg*. It is on this road that we encounter colonial *gardu*. As part of the transport system of the *Groote Postweg*, a series of posts, which were essentially guardhouses, were installed along the road at regular intervals, intended for the use of travelers needing to change horses (see Figure 14).



Figure 14. A *pendhopo* guardhouse in the nineteenth century. Source: Steven Wachlin, *Woodbury and Page: Photographers of Java* (Leiden: KITLV, 1994). Reprinted with permission.

Steven Wachlin, the editor of the photo collection compiled by colonial photographers Woodbury and Page, describes the *Groote Postweg* in relation to the guardhouse in this way:

Changing horses in a *pendhopo* in Cisokan, on the Groote Postweg near Cianjur. In order to facilitate traffic, *pendhopo* were built every nine kilometres along the Groote Postweg, the Great Postroad stretching from west to east along the whole length of Java. Travellers rode in special carriages drawn by four to six horses,

⁴³ What was the response of the Javanese king(s) and commoners to this change in “cosmology”? Partly as a result of the extension of the road network of the *Groote Postweg*, Prince Diponegoro decided to start the Java War in 1825 because he believed the road extension had violated his symbolic “sphere of influence.” Liem Thian Joe stated in his chronicle: “Because the Dutch wanted to replace one of the Prince’s residences with a wide street, the Prince resisted, and thus the war lasting for years erupted.” Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang, 1416–1931* (Semarang-Batavia: Boekhandel Ho Kim Yoe, 1933), p. 96.

which were operated by entrepreneurs who obtained concessions from the government. A journey from Batavia to Surabaya lasted about nine days.⁴⁴

The *pendhopo* mentioned here was functionally a *gardu* that adopted the characteristic roof shape of the *pendhopo*. Once attached to the housing compounds of the Javanese elite, the *pendhopo* had been displaced to the *Groote Postweg*. These shelters appeared as freestanding structures guarding the road every nine kilometers. We could say that the *Groote Postweg* pioneered the commercial use of the *pendhopo* and inaugurated the Dutch as the new authority of Java. But why was the *pendhopo* adopted for regulating the traffic of the *Groote Postweg*? One reason might be that the *pendhopo* was associated with “traditional” power and protection, as well as, perhaps, in the eyes of the Dutch, a picturesque, exotic quality because of the roof. The *Groote Postweg* appropriated the symbolism and function of the *pendhopo* to gain attention and influence in Java. By detaching the form from the body of the Javanese “royal” residence, the Dutch displaced the *pendhopo* and resurrected it as the first commercially administered guardhouse.

It would be valuable to find and study the public’s perceptions, as well as that of the Javanese court, at the time of the construction of the *Groote Postweg*, with its *pendhopo gardus* located along the way. Late nineteenth-century European travelers identified the *gardu* of the *Groote Postweg* as a kind of “rest-house.”⁴⁵ According to one account by traveler E. R. Scidmore, who wrote in the 1890s: “twice we found busy passers-by going on in droves beside these rest-houses—picturesque gatherings of men, women, and children (and) the main road was crowded all the way like a city street, and around these passers-by the highway hummed with voices.”⁴⁶

Unfortunately, while the road attracted people’s attention, it also invited robbers. A historian of Semarang, Liem Thian Joe, has indicated that robbery attempts were frequent along the *Postweg*, forcing merchants and travelers to hire martial guards to accompany them on their journey.⁴⁷ While the road posed these dangers to travelers, it was still widely used and became a focus for the inhabitants around the area. The thoroughfare and its *pendhopo* reoriented the patterns of settlements and the subjectivity of the populace along its way. A new center, in the form of a road, one fraught with anxiety and providing a new form of mobility, was thus created, challenging the centrality of the sultan’s court. Perhaps, within this context, travelers saw “rows of open houses on each side of the highway”⁴⁸ and “along every bit of the road were posted the names of the *kampung*s and estates charged to maintain the highway in perfect condition.”⁴⁹ With security at stake, a routine of watches (*ronda*) was first institutionalized to guard both the *kampung*s and the estates, as well as to help provide security for the *Postweg*. Henri C. C. Brousson perhaps was right when he theorized that the French “*garde*” was transformed eventually into the Indonesian

⁴⁴ Steven Wachlin (with a contribution by Marianne Fluitsma and Gerrit Knaap), *Woodbury and Page: Photographers of Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), p. 81.

⁴⁵ Soon hotels were built adjacent to the locations of the “rest-houses.” For example, one of the first hotels in the Indies, Hotel Preanger in Bandung, was built next to one of these rest houses.

⁴⁶ E. R. Scidmore, *Java, the Garden of the East* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984 [orig. New York: The Century Company, 1899]), p. 176.

⁴⁷ Liem, *Riwayat Semarang*, p. 99.

⁴⁸ Scidmore, *Java, the Garden of the East*, p. 179.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

word “*gardu*” (*rumah jaga*, the guardhouse), an unconscious tribute to Daendels’s role in the history of the guardhouse.

The “Village Community”

The English interregnum (1811-1815), while brief, contributed a great deal to the formation of territorial consciousness and boundary policing, for it introduced a tax system based on landholding, a practice that had never been a tradition in Java. The land-based tax system, appropriated perhaps from British India, required a concentrated and permanently settled population. At the very least, the mobility of the population would have to be calculated and each member of the settlement registered.⁵⁰ The need to secure peace and order along the *Postweg* was thus extended to the state’s impulse to patrol the movement of people in and out the registered land. Along with this, a master plan was made to group the scattered homesteads into concentrated settlements. In his study of rural West Java, Breman helpfully included the master plan, which deserves a closer look.

Figure 15 (below) shows “the plan of a *desa* as it presently exists.” There is no clear boundary or territorial demarcation on which one could base an argument for a “village community.” The houses are scattered, connected by unconfigured pathways. In contrast, Figure 16 gives us a master plan that shows the layout of a new village, fenced off, with one guarded entrance from the main street.⁵¹ The existing layout of the new village was fully altered to achieve the geometrical order or a disciplinary space with a clear point of entry and exit for the purpose of surveillance. One could argue that the *gardu* at the entrance from the main street provided coherence for the “village community.”

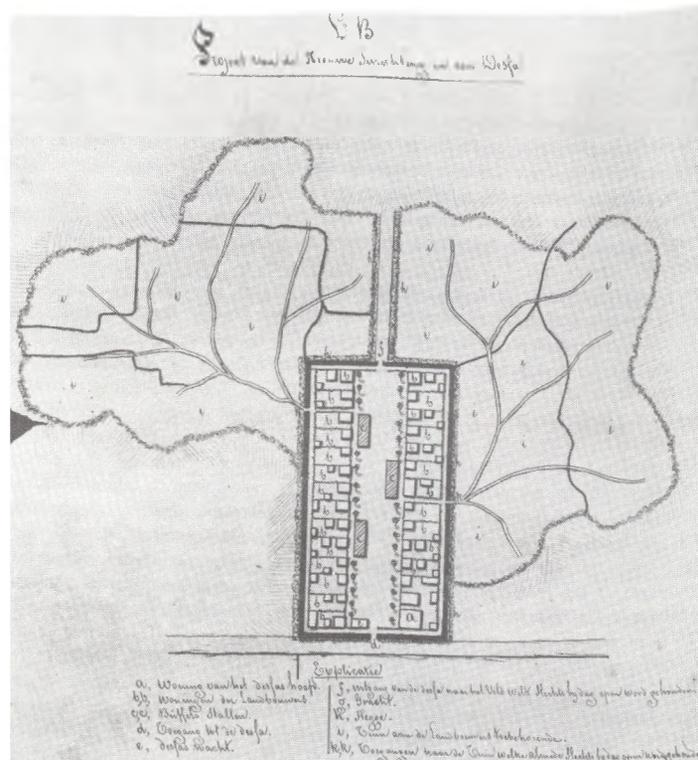
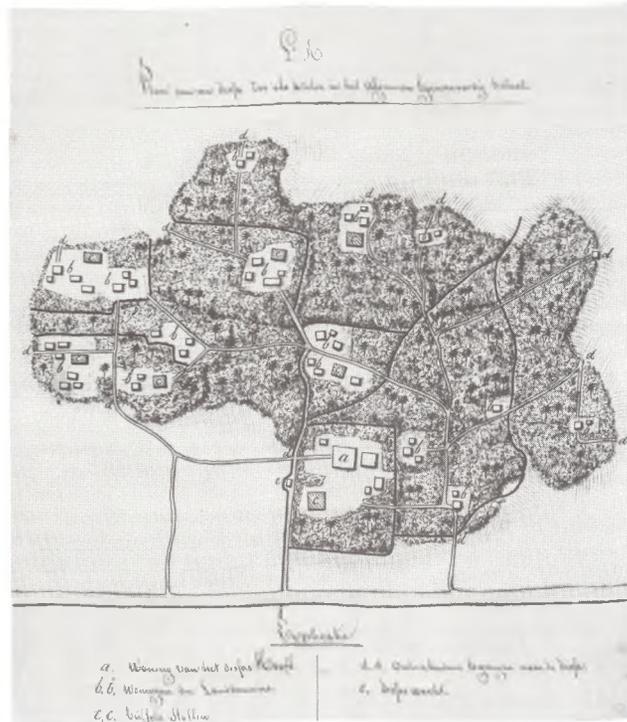
This systematization of rural community reached its peak after the Java War (1825-1830) in the form of state plantations operated under what is now known as the Dutch Cultivation System (1830-1870). Onghokham indicates that, by then, for the first time, “the whole of Java was divided into villages, each with its own territory, and one bordering on another, so that there was no administrative vacuum in Java.”⁵² This colonial state plantation system brought together scattered settlements and formed what we know today as the “village community.”⁵³ This plantation system resulted in the organization of boundaries sustained ultimately by a network of *gardu* (see Figure 17, below).

⁵⁰ In Breman’s words, “each new arrival or departure had to be reported immediately and in detail to the district head.” See Jan Breman, *The Village on Java and the Early-Colonial State*, p. 40.

⁵¹ Breman, *The Village on Java and the Early-Colonial State*, p. 40.

⁵² Onghokham, *The Thugs, the Curtain Thief, and the Sugar Lord*, p. 126.

⁵³ *Ibid.*



Figures 15 and 16: "The plan of a *desa* as it presently exists" with a *gardu* only for the house of the notable; and the "Plan of the new establishment in a *desa*" with a *gardu* for the whole village community. Source: Jan Breman, *The Village on Java and the Early-Colonial State* (Rotterdam: CASP, 1980).



Figure 17: A colorful drawing of what seems to be a utopian space with a *gardu* at the entrance to a gated community of a *desa*. Source: J.C. Lamster, *Java: Eerste Deel* (Haerlem: Uitgave N.V. Droste's Cacao-En Chocoladefabrieken, 1934).

With the creation of the “gated community” came the idea of insiders and outsiders: the normal and the pathological. In *Hikayat Siti Mariah*, a romantic novel written in 1910-12 about a semi-village life in the late nineteenth century, the author, Haji Mukti, began his story with a *kampung* guard shouting from a *gardu*, “*Horda!*” (from the Dutch *wier daar*, meaning “who is that?”), which was answered from the other side, “*Prin!*” (friend!). By securing a space and introducing a guard trained to call out a standard challenge to all who approached, this system established a disciplinary procedure to identify those who were not recognized as “friends” of the community. With the establishment of the *gardu* and “village community,” the state was finally able to identify and define the “wandering class.”

They are not to be depended upon. They left often for the most trivial of reasons and just as unexpectedly as they had come. Their number remained consistently unstable and uncertain. These roving folk usually had a lower moral standard than the settled population. It has been said of them that they found their greatest delight in “gaming, the seductive dancing girl and poisonous opium.”⁵⁴

Once physical space has been firmly delineated, the establishment of knowledge and power can proceed with more clarity. By this time, the government had already found a tool to cope with the increasing appearance in 1870s of the “wandering class” and the activities of the organized *kecu* (rural thugs) who “disturbed” the order and peace of the villages. Dutch Resident Zoutelief, who controlled the residency of Surakarta, Central Java, had already instituted a *ronda* and established a “gated community” that could be made to “close the door to the village compound.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Burger, 1975, as cited in Breman, *The Village on Java and the Early-Colonial State*, p. 41.

⁵⁵ Suhartono, *Apanage dan Bengkel: Perubahan Sosial di Pedesaan Surakarta 1830-1920* (Yogyakarta: PT Tiara Wacana Yogya, 1991), p. 157.

While the Dutch colonials were clearly “seeing like a state,”⁵⁶ it would be misleading to think that they had a complete hold on the everyday governance of the Javanese village and town. On the contrary, the colonial state did not monopolize control of social life, nor did it impose a standardized law applicable to everyone under its authority. Instead, the colonial state allowed local authorities substantial power to rule and govern as long as the interests of the state were not compromised. Onghokham has written about this division of power, established by the Dutch to “indirectly” manage Java through the state plantation system. Onghokham shows how the Dutch, after taking over Java in 1830, delegated authority to the native regents (*bupati*, local lords) who organized thugs, known as *jago*, to maintain order and security in both rural and urban Java.⁵⁷ This hierarchy of power is known to historians as the Dutch dualistic principle for organizing its colony.⁵⁸ For members of these colonial “plural societies,” the *gardu* could be seen as a symbol of local autonomy, even as through these guardhouses were tied to the politics of the colonial state. The territorial demarcation and the dualistic power hierarchy introduced by European power could thus be said to have given rise to a tradition of *gardu*.

Observers recognized that the Javanese had begun to accept and adapt the *gardu* to serve their own purposes. As Europeans in the last half of the nineteenth century became increasingly fascinated by the culture and civilization of Java, the *gardu* were portrayed as the expression of Javanese culture—an object both of menace and desire (see Figure 18, below). They became an object of study for scholars and bureaucrats. For instance, in 1893, a long article was devoted to the study of *gardu*. Its author, H. A. de Groot, discussed *gardu* (*wachthuizen*, in Dutch) in relation to the possibility of establishing a police system in the colony. The context for this sort of discussion of *gardu* was a profound sense of insecurity created by *kecu* in the villages and peri-urban centers of Java.⁵⁹ In a way, we could say that the establishment of *gardu* throughout Indonesia was an imperfect compromise adopted by a colonial state reluctant to impose a more overarching system of policing on the country. If the colonial state had instituted a unified security system, is it possible the neighborhood *gardu* would have never come into existence?

In this section, I have tried to outline the ways in which the *gardu* came to be formed as a product of the colonial state’s spatial politics. To explain how the *gardu* came to be imagined by the Javanese as a cultural tradition representing the local community of Java, we must (re)turn to the city and examine the discourse of security during the radical “age in motion” and the concomitant formation of an overarching police system.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve Human Conditions Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁵⁷ Onghokham, *The Thugs, The Curtain Thief, and the Sugar Lord*, pp. 10–15, 113–145; see also Henk Schulte Nordholt and Margreet van Till, “Colonial Criminals in Java,” in *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, ed. Vicente Rafael (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1999), pp. 47–69.

⁵⁸ J. A. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948).

⁵⁹ H. A. de Groot, “De uitoefening der politie op Java III. De wachthuizen,” *De Locomotief* (December 20, 1893).

⁶⁰ See Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

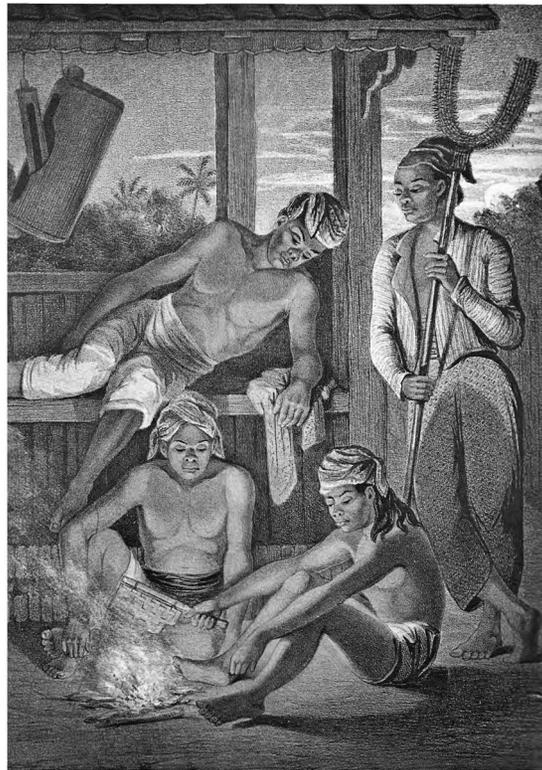


Figure 18: An exotic depiction of members of a *gardu* and their instruments.
Source: A. van Pers and J. C. Hageman, *Nederlandsch Oost-Indische typen* (s'Gravenhage: Mieling, 1856).

Urban Radicalism and the Police Station

In the photo album of Woodbury and Page, a *gardu* is shown standing in a prominent place in the Meester Cornelis neighborhood, at that time an intermediate area between the city and the country (see Figure 19, below). The *gardu* was made of permanent building materials, carefully crafted to appear like a monument, and sited like a monument, so it could be seen, unobstructed, from a distance. Evidence indicates that *gardu* were prominently represented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban centers of Java.⁶¹ Like Woodbury and Page, H. C. C. Clockener Brousson, a journalist who lived at the turn of the century, was impressed during his trip to Batavia by the “*gardu* that were placed at a regular interval along the street

⁶¹ For this period, Marieke Bloembergen has kindly offered the following Dutch references for those who are interested in investigating the printed sources on *gardu*. See W. Boekhoudt, *Rapport reorganisatie van het politiewezen op Java en Madoera (Uitgezonderd de vorstenlanden, de particuliere landerijen en de hoofdplaatsen Batavia, Semarang en Soerabaia) 1906–07* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1908); H. A. de Groot, “De uitoefening der politie op Java III. De wachthuizen,” *De Locomotief* (December 20, 1893); C. Lulofs, “Nachtwakerskorpse,” *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur* 47 (1914): 207-214; Reg. Tjaa. Mees, “Het recht en de politie bij de inlandsche bevolking op Java en Madoera, zooals daarvan gebleeken is uit het ingestelde onderzoek naar hare mindere welvaart,” *Orgaan der vereeniging Moederland en Kolonien* 10,1 (1910): 13-46.

where people lived.”⁶² By the early twentieth century, the imagined unity of a “village community,” the image of *gardu*, had been fully materialized in the city.



Figure 19: One of a series of *gardu* on the road between Weltevreden, in Batavia, and Meester Cornelis, before 1880. Source: KITLV. Reprinted with permission.

As far as the function of the *gardu* is concerned, the routines in the villages and in the city were similar. The colonial state allowed non-Europeans in urban centers, as in rural areas, to maintain the security of their own quarters. What is significant about the city, however, is that the urban center consisted of people from various ethnic backgrounds. The powerful colonial institution responded to this multiplicity of cultures by preserving racial privileges and segregation, even though unofficial and loosely integrated ethnic clusters had already been formed before Europeans came to the archipelago. The different population groups thus lived more or less separated from each other in town, divided according to colonial ethnic classifications.⁶³

Before the emergence of the city police (which I will discuss below), the Dutch “protected” the people of the Indies by delegating power to the elites of the ethnic groups who often hired urban thugs to safeguard their quarters in strategically placed *gardus*. The Chinese quarter thus had its own head and security guards, as did the

⁶² Brousson, *Batavia Awal Abad* 20, p. 120.

⁶³ In discussing the formation of spatial boundaries and the establishment of legal distinctions, we are also talking about the privileged group imposing power on others through legal restrictions. While different ethnic groups were asked to maintain their own legal systems, the colonial state also imposed restrictions on those groups and their mobility. For instance, the subsequent imposition of a “passport regulation” (*passenstelsel*, 1821-1906), a “residential regulation” (*wijkenstelsel*, 1841-1915), and the *politierol* (a law empowering the police to enforce these other restrictions, 1848-1910s) had contributed much to the emergence of the “Kampong Cina” (Chinese camp). See Mona Lohanda, *Growing Pains: The Chinese and the Dutch in Colonial Java, 1890-1942* (Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 2002), pp. 36-48.

indigenous *kampung*. The European neighborhoods also had their own *gardus* organized by the local governors. The formation of urban *gardu* was thus connected to the segregation of colonial space, which divided the city into the European enclave, the Chinese *Kampung*, the *Kampung* for Arabs, the *Kampung* for Malays (*Melayu*), and *Kampung Keling* for Indians, among others. With the *gardu*, each quarter organized its own day- and nightwatch schemes. The nightwatch was the basic form of security for the segregated neighborhoods in the urban center.

One important characteristic of neighborhood security as embodied in the *gardu* was its passivity as a form of defense. The watchmen tended to remain in the *gardu* or patrol around their compound equipped with the *kentongan*, a bell-like instrument. They would not patrol the streets beyond the designated territory of a *kampung*.⁶⁴ However, by the early twentieth century, this rather passive form of security watch was considered outdated. As Java experienced the popular urban radicalism that characterized this "age in motion," residents began to feel their neighborhoods were endangered.⁶⁵ Different security measures were deemed necessary. The newly established city government issued an instruction that the *gardu* system was to be replaced by a centralized police system.⁶⁶ Significantly, this police force would patrol the streets surrounding the *kampung*.

This initiative was prompted by several developments. The most important factor was the increasing number of European families residing in the colony's urban centers, many of whom felt unusually insecure as a result of unrest in the cities. Meanwhile, the growth of the urban population had blurred the distance between the safe European enclave and the "native" *kampung*. The task of the twentieth-century police was to maintain the city as a safe haven for Europeans. The lack of safety, as historian Marieke Bloembergen points out, was "a specifically European problem."⁶⁷

The first systematically organized city police unit was formed in 1914. The number of recruits considered necessary to safeguard the city increased each year, with European recruits installed in the top rank and Indonesians at the subordinate level. In Surabaya alone, as Bloembergen indicates, the number of police was increased from 297 members in 1905 to a total of 1358 in 1917.⁶⁸ In 1918, the Dutch colonial

⁶⁴ We can see the effect of this *gardu* system in Haji Mukti's novel, *Hikayat Siti Mariah*. See Haji Mukti, *Hikayat Siti Mariah*, ed. Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Jakarta: Lentera Dipantara, 2003). What is peculiar about this story is that it represented the Cultivation System era as a time of peace and order. No reference is made to the fact that the exploitative era was marked by social unrest, banditry, and an unprecedented sense of insecurity, especially among the European communities. The novel's only indication that conditions were unstable is its portrayal of the nightwatch and the *gardu*. The story apparently takes place inside a "European" *kampung* under the watch of the *gardu*. Little information is offered about the streets beyond that community.

⁶⁵ Mr. A. N. de W., "Hal Polisi," in *Kitab Peringatan oentoek Hindia Belanda ketika S.B. Maharadja Poeteri tjoeboek 25 tahoen bertuchta keradjaan, 1898-1923* (Batavia: G. Kolff and Co., 1923), p. 109.

⁶⁶ Marieke Bloembergen indicates that in *Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Arsip Binnenlands bestuur, BB 3540*, one can find information concerning "Java-wide research on the possibility to dispose of the *gardoe* and *ronda* services (1924), also a short report on the outer province (1927)"; BB 3539, idem, including the Outer Provinces, 1928-1933.

⁶⁷ Marieke Blombergen, "Between Public Safety and Political Control: Modern Colonial Policing in Surabaya (1911-1919)" (paper presented at the First International Conference on Urban History, University of Airlangga and Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Surabaya, August 23-25, 2004), p. 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7. Prior to 1914, the police forces were relatively neglected, insignificant, and unorganized. For a brief report on the development of police forces, see Mr. A. N. de W., "Hal Polisi."

government, alerted by “the rise of (political) consciousness of the people in Java following their counterparts in East Asia.”⁶⁹ expanded the security measures to reach the outskirts of the big cities. Soon, some three thousand civilians (including Indonesians) had been recruited and trained as field police (*veldpolisi*) to safeguard the outer perimeters of Java’s largest cities. These professional police “spoke the native language and understood local culture, but they were not allowed to police the areas where they were originally from.”⁷⁰ The decision to post police recruits far from their homes had an important consequence discussed below, but here let me just note that the policy created a distance between the police and the community.

As far as methods of security are concerned, what seems to have been new in the early twentieth century was the visibility of police on the streets, a display that was deemed necessary to the success of street surveillance. During this era, police houses (*politie posthuis*) were built in strategic nodes encompassing different neighborhoods, with a concentration in the European neighborhoods and around European businesses, as one might expect. In the beginning, the police houses resembled the village’s *gardu*, but unlike the watchman occupying the *gardu*, the policemen distinguished themselves by wearing uniforms (see Figure 20).



Figure 20: City police in uniform in a semi-permanent guardhouse (*Posthuizen*) after 1914. Source: G. H. von Faber, *Nieuw Soerabaia* (Soerabaja: Uitgave N.V. Boekhandel en Drukkerij H. van Ingen, 1934).

Soon, the police had fully emancipated themselves from the world of the watchman by occupying office-like buildings. This type of building was placed at strategic locations related to European interests, such as near the post office (*posthuis*),

⁶⁹ Mr. A. N. de W., “Hal Polisi,” pp. 108-09. One could also make a connection between the reform of the police as an institution in 1914 and the subsequent abolition of the policy on spatial segregation in 1919.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

government buildings, and large private offices (see Figure 21).⁷¹ At first, the new *politie* was expected to be able to replace the *gardu* and *ronda*, and in fact orders were given to remove the *gardu*.⁷² Yet, this plan to centralize urban security systems under the watch of the police was never fulfilled. Many factors might have been behind the failure of the colonial state to impose unified security measures. Economic and financial constraints were obviously of fundamental importance, but one of the crucial reasons, I think, was that by the turn of the century, the colonized citizenry (inspired by the volatile “age in motion”) had begun to identify with the *gardu* as a symbol of their culture, one that could be mobilized to challenge the authority of the state’s police. The *gardu* thus continued to exist. It remained a local institution, but one that had become somewhat hostile, at least symbolically, to the “national” police.



Figure 21: A *politie posthuis* after 1914. Source: G. H. von Faber, *Nieuw Soerabaia*.

Since the emergence of the new police forces, the *gardu* were increasingly perceived by Javanese socio-political organizations, such as the Syarikat Islam (SI), as a symbol of local power, one that could be mobilized to represent resistance to the colonial state. Marieke Bloembergen describes how the Syarikat Islam installed several *gardus* to guarantee the safety of the workers in Surabaya when the latter were engaged in a dispute over revenue with a landowner. For the members of the SI, the installation of the *gardu* was both functional and symbolic. The organization regarded *gardus* as providing not only public safety and support for the underprivileged, but also challenging the authority of the new police and consolidating power for their organization. The staging of *gardu* could be seen as a sign of SI’s support for workers in Surabaya. Though such *gardu* were considered “illegal” by the colonial state,⁷³ the SI

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 108.

⁷² Blombergen, “Between Public Safety and Political Control,” p. 7.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 16.

nevertheless continued the practice. This use of the *gardu* by SI clearly foreshadows Megawati's use of the *posko* years later.

The *gardu* in this context reflects competing claims for authority, but it also expresses the sense of the colonial society from which it derives meaning. Yet, the meaning of the *gardu* changes constantly as it moves across different social environments. What I have tried to indicate in this section is the process by which the *gardu* came to be conceived as an element in the colonial security apparatus and then appropriated by the Javanese. I have also indicated the "new-ness" of this supposedly old practice. Only at the turn of the century, then, did the *gardu* find its territorial "community" and come to be imagined as "local tradition." Under the Ethical Policy at the beginning of the twentieth century, this "village-urban community," along with its ethos of mutual help (*gotong rojong*) and its institution of *ronda*, was promoted by Dutch scholars and the Javanese elite as the archetype of Javanese tradition. The Japanese military administration (as we will see later) would reconstruct its own version of the neighborhood association in Indonesia and extend its control through that means.

The Chinese Experience

In the discourse involving Indonesian *gardu*, the experiences of ethnic Chinese are of particular interest and importance, largely because discussions of the *gardu*'s significance have presented it as either a Dutch-colonial institution or as the cultural property of the Javanese. But the *gardu* has also had a specific meaning and history for the ethnic Chinese community. In the first place, the ethnic Chinese have been implicated in social unrest and subjected to attack since (if not before) the early formation of colonial power. Their continuous experience as a customary target must have motivated them to come up with coping strategies, and it is likely these strategies contributed to the multiplication of Indonesian *gardu*. It is also possible that Chinese ethnic traditions influenced the shape of some of Indonesia's earliest *gardu*, for gates, walls, and guards have always been endemic to the Chinese townscape. If Denys Lombard is right, we might want to consider his suggestion that the traditional Chinese defense routine based on a neighborhood watch system, known as the *Pao Tjia* system (said to be invented around the tenth century), could have been implemented by ethnic Chinese in Java's coastal area long before the arrival of Europeans.⁷⁴

In any case, let me make a start by considering the ethnic Chinese experiences of spatial segregation in colonial cities. We have seen that colonial spatial divisions, drawn along ethnic lines, segregated the urban landscape, but we have not discussed how such segregation encouraged each neighborhood's defense of its space, which in turn contributed to the formation of the "ethnic" communities.⁷⁵ The practice of placing

⁷⁴ Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya II: Jaringan Asia*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1996), p. 278.

⁷⁵ The pass system created an identification card for the ethnic Chinese, and the residential rule fixed their spatial identity. The residential rules (*wijkenstelsel*) gathered the ethnic Chinese, who previously had been scattered throughout various places, into one *kampung* in each urban area and decreed they would need to obtain passes to travel outside their own *kampungs*. These two regulations were enforced by *politieiroel*, a law that gave the police chief unlimited power to punish without trial those who were considered to have violated the passport and residential systems. Liem Thian Joe described the process of identity formation through spatial and legal segregation in a way that calls to mind the difficulties people encountered attempting to secure visas into the United States and Europe after September 11: "To obtain a pass, the

communities in ethnic ghettos had prepared the ground for the tactics of self-defense, such as barricading the segregated space with *gardu* at the gate in order to defend oneself against the chaos of riots and wars.

Liem Thian Joe, the chronicler of the city of Semarang, points out that “matters concerning guards [*djaga*] and guardhouses [*gardoe*] began during the era of the Company [the Dutch East India Company].”⁷⁶ The first institutionalized racial segregation of space in the Dutch East Indies indeed took place after the massacre of the Chinese in 1740, a result of fierce competition for trade and land in developing Batavia. Initially there had been an area, known today as Glodok, set aside for the Chinese people.⁷⁷ Liem indicated that in 1741, a year after the massacre of the Chinese in Batavia, the Chinese in Semarang decided to build a barricade around their neighborhood.⁷⁸ They “built *betengan* [barricades] made of strong timbers and boards in front of Chinese *kampongs*, which during that time were clusters of open space surrounded by rivers ... Headed by the *Kapiten*, the Chinese populace patrolled the barricades day and night.”⁷⁹ From this same bulwark of resistance, the Chinese in Semarang eventually waged war against Dutch East Indies forces, with the help of ethnic Chinese mobilized from other regions. This event was clearly significant and the method of defense unprecedented, as the local populace remembered the whole barricaded area as a bastion (*betengan*, in Malay, or *pan[g]-shia*, in Fukianese).⁸⁰

By the nineteenth century, the ethnic Chinese in Java had learned that they would be a customary target in any conflict involving Dutch authority and the sultans of Java. Since that time, barricades, gates, and guardhouses—some perhaps modeled after traditional Chinese village fortifications—became permanent features of the Chinese quarters. A rumor of conflict would be sufficient to generate an alert and create a sense of threat and uncertainty. One report describes the cloud of rumors stirred up by the war between Prince Diponegoro and the Dutch in 1825:

person has to meet the Chinese *kapitan* (or the head of his district appointed by the Dutch). He has to inform him where he is going, with what transportation, with whom, and how long he will be staying. He has to pay several fees to every officer who processes his paper work (from the officer down to the clerk). Upon his arrival, he has to report to the officer of the place. There are various kinds of passes: The road pass is for going from one place to another; the market pass is for selling objects (the items of which also have to be registered) in the market; the village pass is for going to the fields to obtain agricultural goods. Later, when photography is introduced, those who obtain the market and village passes will have their pictures on the cards. There is also a year pass for merchants to go from one place to another. To go from one city to another, such as from Semarang to Soerakarta or Djokjakarta, one has to apply one month in advance, and again he has to specify the purpose of the trip, to whose house he is going, with whom and on what transportation. And of course, to pay for the stamp and the clerk.” Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang*, pp. 87-88.

⁷⁶ Liem, *Riwajat Semarang*, p. 109. Perhaps Liem was referring to the great, stone-walled castle of Batavia, reputedly built in 1619 by the Dutch East Indian Company, which was equipped with a watchtower and guardhouses. The concern of this paper is more on the origin and spread of guardhouses in the non-European quarters.

⁷⁷ Leonard Blussé, “Batavia, 1619-1940: The Rise and Fall of a Chinese Colonial Town,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 12 (1981): 159-78.

⁷⁸ According to Liem, before this time the Chinese in Semarang marked their territories by placing temples, statues of the earth deities (*Thow Tee Kong*, a local/indigenous deity refashioned in Chinese style), and inscriptions of Buddhist sayings for peace (such as “*Lam Boe O Mie Too Hoet Kiat An*”) at the entrances to their *kampongs*. Liem, *Riwajat Semarang*, p. 60.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

... the rumors [*kabar-kabar angin*] spread in Semarang. Some say that one of the [Javanese] kings is fighting against the Dutch government; others believe that the latter is having a war with a foreign country. Quite a few think that thousands of bandits have been raiding everywhere. All these have created confusion in Semarang.⁸¹

In response to these “rumors,” Chinese communities in Semarang constructed gates and *gardus* around their *kampung*.

The gate was made so strong. It was reinforced on its two sides by a very thick wall, so it would be very difficult to break in. It closed at dark. Every night, grownups guarded the gates. Inside the gates, women and children are moved to the temple from where everyone will fight to the end. For months, the gates were guarded every night, for dangers might come unexpectedly.⁸²

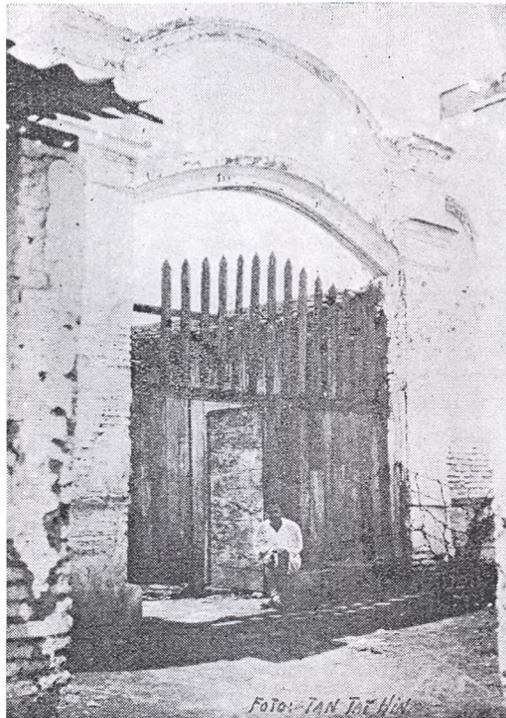


Figure 22: A guard at the entrance to a Chinese *kampung* in Semarang, date not specified.
Photo: Tan Tat Hin. Source: Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang*, 1933.

These gates were left intact after the war (1830), for “who knows, if the ‘*gegeran*’ [turmoil] returns, the gates will provide security for the Chinese *kampung*.”⁸³ Liem reported that, by the 1840s, the practice of conducting *ronda* had been established, with

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91. According to Liem, it took several months for people in Semarang to realize that Prince Diponegoro was conducting a war against the Dutch government. This event was known as “*gegeran* Diponegoro” (the shocking action of Diponegoro). Even though Semarang was not damaged by the war, the effects of living in worry and confusion were deep enough to make many Semarang residents (regardless of their ethnicities) name their children “Geger” (shocking).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸³ Liem, *Riwajat Semarang*, p. 96.

one chief heading each *kampung*. The chief of the nightwatch was called *kepala tontong* (the head of “tontong,” the instrument that produces a sound when struck with a wooden stick). By this time, the Chinese community in Semarang had also incorporated several words into the technical vocabulary associated with *ronda* in the village, including the exclamations quoted in Mukti’s novel: *Horde* and *Vrend*.

A *gardoe* and a *kentongan* are required at a junction or entrance to a street [*moeloet jalan*] or a village [*moeloet doesoen*]. Every Chinese man who lives in the city, as well as in smaller places, cannot escape from patrolling at night. Those who cannot fulfill this obligation are allowed to hire a substitute. Every *gardoe* is required to have two guards: one watches from evening to 1 am; and the other from that time until morning. They are not there just to watch, but they also move around the neighborhood [*ronda*] with a special weapon. If there is a killing, the guard will strike three times on the *kentongan* he brings with him; if there is a fire, he has to strike four times so that everyone knows where the danger is. If he sees anyone (especially strangers) after 9 pm, he has to shout: “who is there?” The person then ought to reply: “*vrend*” [friend]. Otherwise the guard has the right to catch and bring the suspicious person to the police.⁸⁴

The fact that Liem’s *Riwayat Semarang* was filled with stories about guarding and the *gardu* is not surprising, given the continuous experience of violence against the ethnic Chinese in the urban history of Java, especially since the eighteenth century. It is much less clear how other quarters shared the experience of guardhouses in their respective communities.⁸⁵ It is also not clear whether the nightwatch scheme was first practiced in eighteenth-century urban Chinese neighborhoods, then exported to the villages by the colonial state before being imported back to the urban centers. In any case, the history of *gardu* in Indonesia is intimately connected to the experiences and collective memories of the ethnic Chinese and their responses to threat.

In the following section, I pick up the account of Kwee Thiam Tjing, an ethnic Chinese journalist who volunteered as a city guard (*stadswacht*) during the Indonesian era of “revolution.”⁸⁶ Kwee’s account is instructive, for it shows us again how matters concerning guarding and *gardus* are inextricably bound to the experiences of ethnic Chinese, even as this community approached the era of “decolonization.” Kwee also shows how his impressions as an observer and participant in *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* (Indonesia on Embers and Fire) owed everything to his experience as the guard of the city.

Guarding in “Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara”

On the eve of the Japanese Occupation, the Dutch, desperate for manpower to defend the Indies, promoted a program that sought to train civilians who would like to

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 108-09.

⁸⁵ So far, I have only found sources that talk with focused interest about gates and *gardus* from the perspective of the ethnic Chinese; Liem’s account of Semarang is one example. Yet there must be sources that describe perceptions of guardhouses by members of other communities.

⁸⁶ Kwee Thiam Tjing had his account published under a pseudonym, Tjamboek Berdoeri, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* (Malang: n.p., 1947). I am using this version for reference. The book was republished in 2004 by Elkasa Jakarta with an illuminating introduction by Benedict Anderson discussing the author and his time.

volunteer as city guards (*stadswacht*). This proved to be the first mobilization of civilians by the colonial state to safeguard Indonesia's cities. The Chinese Indonesian journalist, Kwee Thiam Tjing, volunteered to become a guard in Malang, where he lived; later he would report his experiences in a remarkable book titled *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara*. Kwee used the term *wacht* (from the Dutch *wachthuis*, watchhouse), rather than *gardu*, to refer to his post. This in itself indicates to us a conceptual and political difference between the meaning and practice of *gardu* (with its local associations) and the *stadswacht* (a city-guard program initiated by the colonial state). The imagery of guarding and guardhouse occupies a substantial place in his book. We could even say that Kwee's subjectivity was partially formed and transformed by his position as a guard of the city.

From the beginning of the book, Kwee illustrates the power of guardhouses to affect consciousness. When he volunteered to guard the city, he saw guardhouses (*wacht-wacht*) everywhere, "at the junction of various streets, especially those on the way to the city."⁸⁷ Significantly, he perceived these fortifications and the presence of guards like him not as proof of the regime's strength, but as evidence that the Dutch regime was collapsing. He knew that the training of the city guards and the proliferation of guardhouses on the eve of Japanese occupation were last-ditch attempts by the Dutch to display their authority by mobilizing colonial subjects to defend their own "motherland." Yet the more guardhouses and guards Kwee saw around him, the more hopeless he felt, for no one, not even the most ignorant residents of Indonesia, respected or felt themselves protected or empowered by these defenses. Kwee felt that, even though he had been equipped with all kinds of military protocols, uniforms, and weaponry and stationed in a guardhouse, no one seemed to respect his profession, no matter how hard he tried to fulfill his duties. "Our rifle is created to be mute. The only order we were given is to remain calm, calm, and calm like Buddha when he was in Nirvana ... the passerby could have put some flowers down and burned incense for us."⁸⁸ At the guardhouse, Kwee and his fellows were even bullied by children and mocked by adults who thought that the Dutch had already lost their grip on the country.

While we are sitting at our guardhouse [*wacht*], a group of Indonesians walk in our direction. From their clothes and manner, we know they are from the village. As they get closer to our guardhouse, one of them asks his friend, following the style of villagers talking in such a loud voice that everyone on the street can hear, – "Brother, what are they doing?" "Don't worry! They are just Dutch soldiers [*serdadu Londo*]! What else could they do? The Dutch have already lost!" They talk just like that, while passing in front of us as if we are not there. They think we are just like wind.⁸⁹

Deprived of its enabling political networks, the symbolic authority of the guardhouse disappeared. Yet, Kwee Thiam Tjing illustrates how the power of the guardhouse was defined not only by its appearance, but, more importantly, by how it defined his identity and the social relations within which he and his fellow guards are embedded.

⁸⁷ Kwee, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara*, p. 65

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Indonesia dalem Bara dan Api starts with the experience of Kwee as a city guard volunteer, even though he is never fully convinced that his efforts will help prop up the crumbling regime. Nevertheless, his job as the guard of the city allows him to construct his subject position as someone who is both observing and participating in the transformation of his hometown. As Kwee witnesses the unfolding events in Malang, his vision owes much to his situation as an appointed observer, who is better positioned than most to see what his fellow Indonesians are doing to each other. No wonder he starts his account by discussing his experience as a guard and ends with his eventual sense of failure to become one.

At a deeper level, Kwee Thiam Tjing communicates the profound ambivalence of the ethnic Chinese's attitude towards *gardu* and the whole practice of guarding. The *gardu* is a structure that members of ethnic Chinese communities have relied upon, especially during volatile periods, even while worrying about their dependency on these defenses. By volunteering as a city guard, Kwee was, in fact, attempting to conquer such fear, for he moved beyond the standard form of community defense associated with the Chinese neighborhood, as described by Liem Thian Joe of Semarang. Kwee could have helped organize a neighborhood watch for the ethnic Chinese by creating *betengan* or *phangshia* around Chinese neighborhoods in Malang, but he chose instead to commit himself to help protect a larger entity: the whole city. But *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara* shows precisely the danger and horror of such a commitment to broader civic responsibility. In the end, Kwee went back to his own neighborhood and found no one at home. After an intense search, he discovered the killing field at Mergosono and the remains of many ethnic Chinese, including his friends and family members who had been brutally murdered by the Indonesian mobs (*the Djamino and Djoliteng*), which wreaked havoc under the guise of revolutionary *pemuda*.

At that time, my heart was in terrible pain, and I was mad with anger. I left the Ang Hien Hoo (one of the Chinese associations which did not seem to care what had happened), and went to the [Dutch] *Troepen Commandent*. I told him that I was an ex-city guard [*stadswacht*], and I would like to be a volunteer (again) to mobilize friends to find the killers. I asked him to lend me the weapons, and said I will carry out the revenge. I don't need to be paid. I don't mind if I die, for I am doing this for my Chinese [*Tionghoa*] community ...⁹⁰

Indonesia dalem Bara dan Api is a story haunted by the narrator's sense of horror, disappointment, and guilt that he, as a guard (trained by the supposedly powerful colonial state and committed to safeguard the city), could not stop the massacre of persons from his own community. Ultimately, he discovers that he did not know whom he ought to guard against. The enemy was both internal and external. Guarding and failing to guard haunt the pages of *Indonesia dalem Bara dan Api*. Positioned on a changeable boundary line, Kwee saw himself as the guardian of human conscience who witnessed the helplessness of humanity to defend itself against the brutality of the mobs aroused by this era of profound and rapid change (*zaman pantjaroba*).

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 221.

3. Retrievals

Since we have now traced the ways in which the guardhouse was constituted under Dutch colonialism and how it evolved and was perceived in the Chinese community, it is no longer possible to say that the *gardu* was a product of one culture. Nor was it monopolized by one culture, for many different groups in Indonesia made use of the *gardu* and organized their own *ronda*. The Dutch and the Chinese played a decisive and historic role in the history of this institution, but the Japanese were perhaps as influential. In this section, I will show how, under the Japanese Occupation, the *gardu* and the neighborhood watch came to be recognized as Indonesian cultural traditions, significant elements in “our” cultural heritage. Discourses concerning the *gardu* and its perceived status as a Javanese institution cannot be grasped without understanding the impact that the Japanese Occupation had on postcolonial political elites as well as the Indonesian public.

Japan Incorporated

Towards the end of the Asia Pacific War, Mohamad Hatta, the first vice president of Indonesia, remarked:

What matters above all other benefits [introduced by the Japanese Occupation] is that people’s minds have been liberated from their sense of inferiority. In contrast to the Dutch, the Imperial army [of Japan] has taught us to be brave and to recognize ourselves on our own merits.⁹¹

The Japanese military administration in Indonesia, while only lasting for three and a half years, was significant for its style of governance and, as Hatta pointed out, was in complete contrast to that of the Dutch. Whereas the Dutch preferred an indirect hierarchical rule that relied, in part, on divisions constructed between colonial subjects, Japan, with its ideology of Pan-Asianism, sought to integrate all Asians as “brothers” under its rule. Central to the Japanese Occupation was the mobilization of civilians, especially the youth, for the Asia-Pacific war. Japanese historian Goto Ken’ichi indicates that, in a short period of time, as many as “37,000 young men in Java alone received strict military training and ideological education under the banner of ‘defense of the fatherland,’ a program that would have been unimaginable under Dutch rule.”⁹²

This wartime mobilization was in stark contrast to the Dutch quest for “peaceful” colonization in the Indies. If the training of the city guard by the Dutch produced only scarecrows who were afraid of aircraft and ghosts, “the training course of Japan for Indonesian youth was designed to instantly turn them into cruel beings who would

⁹¹ Mohamad Hatta, as cited in Goto Ken’ichi, “Modern Japan and Indonesia: The Dynamics and Legacy of Wartime Rule,” in *Japan, Indonesia, and the War*, ed. by Peter Post and Elly Touwen-Bouwisma (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997), p. 20. Ken’ichi remarked that this statement made by Hatta via radio should be understood within the context of Japanese military censorship. Yet, the statement still indicates an important aspect of the Japanese Occupation that influenced the outlook of Indonesians. For Kwee Thiam Tjing (Tjamboek Berdoeri), an ethnic Chinese, “the new environment [under the Japanese military] had eliminated the freedom which once existed, at least in the mind of the people.” See Kwee, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara*, p. 156.

⁹² Ken’ichi, “Modern Japan and Indonesia,” p. 21.

follow order.”⁹³ While Kwee Thiam Tjing found no one paying attention to the city guard in Malang, under the Japanese Occupation, by contrast, Indonesians were instructed to stop and pay respect to the city guard. Where the city guards under the Dutch were trained with disciplinary protocols, the Japanese “little brothers” were treated with corporal punishment. “Even a small mistake would receive slapping, kicking, and hitting.”⁹⁴ In a short period of time, as R. Joesoef, a high-ranking police officer, indicated in his brief report, many Indonesians were appointed as policemen and very soon “everyone knew very well how to march properly.”⁹⁵

Changes were not only taking place at the level of government. The everyday life of Indonesians was restructured during the Japanese Occupation through participatory works that were intended to lead to a meaningful goal—the liberation of Indonesians from Western imperialism. One of the most important pieces of apparatus used to incorporate Indonesian people of various backgrounds into a unified citizenry capable of running the occupied region (in resistance to the “European colonizer”) was the *tonarigumi* (neighborhood association). The system of *tonarigumi* was imposed in both urban and rural areas. In each case, ten to twenty adjacent households were organized to share community responsibilities designed to ensure both order within that community and loyalty to the government.⁹⁶ This technique of community “mobilization and control” was perhaps developed first in the Japanese colonies in Korea, Manchuria, and Taiwan before it was imported back to Japan in the late 1930s to organize Japan’s own citizens for the coming war.⁹⁷ In the Japanese occupied territory of Indonesia, the neighborhood was parceled into several units, and communal life was institutionalized, all in order to help Japan to win the war in Asia. Aiko Kurasawa reported that “the total number of *tonarigumi* for the whole of Java was 508,745, and the total number of households was 8,967,320. These figures mean that there was approximately one *tonarigumi* for every seventeen to eighteen households.”⁹⁸ Some twelve households in each cluster would become “a big family with mutual love

⁹³ Kwee, *Indonesia dalem Api dan Bara*, p. 138. In this book, Kwee records the effects of Japanese occupation on the subjectivity of Indonesians.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153. At the level of everyday life, things were worse for the Chinese in Indonesia. Kwee indicates that looting and robbing were among the methods Japan used to subjugate its colonial subjects. The bull’s eye was pinned on the Chinese community, which “had been accustomed to be the target of violence, no matter under which government and under what flag.” *Ibid.*, p. 64. Kwee continues: “One of the habits of Japanese troops was breaking into the houses and shops belong to Chinese. Once the door was opened, they casually took things, often of little value, and walked away as if nothing had happened. They purposefully did this under the watchful eyes of Indonesian (as well as Chinese) thugs who gathered around the building. Seeing how the Japanese so easily stole things belonging to other people, the thugs eventually gained courage to not only pick up small things, but to steal everything possible (including windows and doors) from the houses and shops they visited.” *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁹⁵ R. Joesoef, “Keamanan di kota Bandoeng,” *Tjahaja*, 2602 (1942).

⁹⁶ According to Aiko Kurasawa and an announcement by the Japanese government issued on January 11, 1944, the tasks of the *tonarigumi* included: assisting security in the neighborhood by combating spies and criminals and keeping watch against air raids; notifying residents of government instructions, increasing food production, and distributing goods; promoting mutual aid among inhabitants; and serving the government in military affairs. See Aiko Kurasawa, “Mobilization and Control: A Study of Social Change in Rural Java, 1842-45” (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1988).

⁹⁷ See Naoki Yoshihara and Raphaella Dewantari Dwianto, *Grass Roots and the Neighborhood Associations: On Japan’s Chonakui and Indonesia’s RT/RW* (Jakarta: Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 2003), p. 18.

⁹⁸ Kurasawa, “Mobilization and Control,” p. 286.

and help, just like in one's own family" with father(s) as the head(s) of the group, even though the *tonarigumi* "was mostly taken care of by women."⁹⁹

Central to the *tonarigumi* was the security organization called *Keibodan*, whose members were inhabitants of the neighborhood. The job of the *Keibodan*, according to Aboe Djamal, one of the community leaders from the island of Madura, was basically policing.

The task involves some secrecy in order to combat espionage, to check the circulation of goods, to watch over security, to help defend against air raids, to increase the production and delivery of paddy and other crops, and to observe people under suspicions, especially those along coastal area.¹⁰⁰

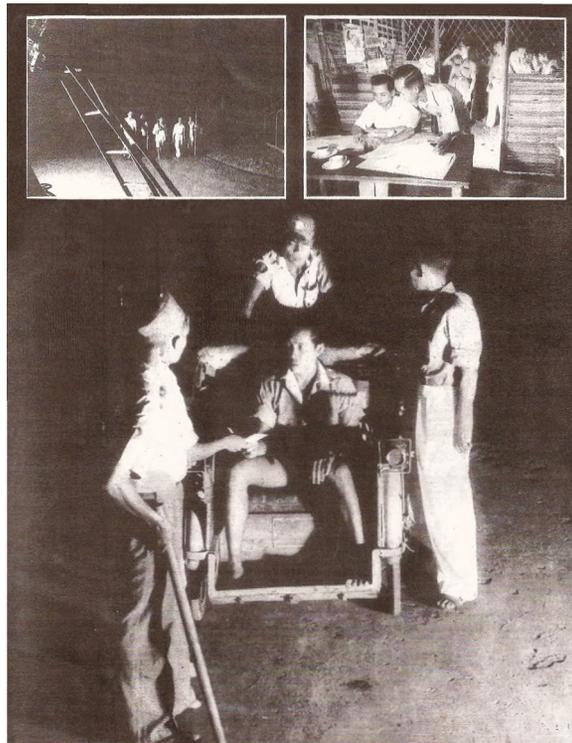


Figure 23: Note top right insert. Members of *Keibodan* measure the state of security in a *gardu* with *kampung* watchmen in the background. Source: *Djawa Baroe* 16, August 15, 1944.

Community vigilance of this sort was strengthened by the imposition of collective responsibility for supervising the behavior of one's fellow *tonarigumi* members. Everyone in the community was responsible for preventing espionage or antigovernment activities, as well as watching out for undesirable ways of thinking and lifestyles in their neighborhood. They were also asked to contribute financially to the operation of the *Keibodan*. The Japanese military administration made steady use of *Keibodan* and co-opted the neighborhood chiefs of the towns and villages in Java to coordinate the operation of these neighborhood units. Above all, it made use of the

⁹⁹ S. Ozu, "Roeangan Wanita: Tonarigumi," *Sinar Baroe*, 2603 (July 5, 1943), p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ "Setahun Keibodan: Langkah Menoejoe keamanan: Tjorak persamaan dan persahabatan, *Sinar Baroe*, 2604 (May 1, 1944), p. 3.

gardu to coordinate mutual household surveillance. In Figure 23 (above; note top right insert), we see a picture of a *gardu* taken from within, signifying the incorporation of Japanese military practice into the daily life of an Indonesian neighborhood. This kind of shot would not have been taken by the Dutch, who, for reasons delineated above, could only see the *gardu* from a detached position exterior to the building.

The Japanese military government was very careful in harnessing the practice of the neighborhood watch. Members of *Keibodan* were portrayed as working together, in the spirit of mutual help (*gotong rojong*) with the *kampung* guard (*pendjaga kampoeng*) of the neighborhood. For the Japanese government, the *gardu* could be seen as the symbol of the cooperation between the state and the neighborhood. The *gardu* was not merely the representation of *kampung* security, but also a stimulus for a stronger “spirit of mutual help [*gotong rojong*]” between the state and the community.¹⁰¹ If the policemen under Dutch colonial rule were seen as belonging to the realm of the outsider because they “rarely entered the *kampung* but carefully patrolled the asphalt roads that encircled them,”¹⁰² the *Keibodan* ruled the *kampung* from within, working hand-in-hand with the *pendjaga kampoeng* of the neighborhood.¹⁰³

The *Sinar Baroe* newspaper noted:

... all *kampung* residents have contributed as much as they could by becoming part of the *Keibodan*, which is the key institution that watches over matters concerning security. Today, *gardus* (also called *roemah djaga* during this time) have been built at various places, and every night members of the *Keibodan* have been guarding the community. The public knows how useful the nightwatch is. So don't hesitate to contribute financially for the construction of more *roemah djaga*.¹⁰⁴

Thus, we can say that the Japanese abolished the dual (or plural) system of Dutch colonial administration by creating the institution of *Keibodan* to bridge the separated worlds. Through an identification with and involvement in the *gardu*, the Japanese

¹⁰¹ “Keibodan dan pendjaga kampoeng,” *Sinar Baroe*, 2603 (May 19, 1943), p. 2.

¹⁰² As told to Bill Frederick by an informant in 1977. See Bill Frederick, “Indonesian Urban Society in Transition: Surabaya, 1926-1946” (PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii, 1978), pp. 49-50.

¹⁰³ The guardhouse also represented the command structure and pedagogical apparatus of Japan's military administration. This function took place outside the *kampung*, in the crowded urban space where public buildings (such as stations and markets) were located. Soon after the Occupation, the Japanese military government ordered the construction of guardhouses for its policemen. Considering this as a new decree, *Sinar Baroe* reported that the guardhouse would allow the policemen to work day and night. However, there were other functions of these new guardhouses that were more symbolic. The Japanese military had issued an instruction that everyone who bumped into a policeman on a street should stop and pay respect (*hormat*) by performing a prescribed gesture. Yet, to the annoyance of the authorities, many people were still ignorant of this order, even though a large sign (which said “must give respect to the police guard”) had been placed fifteen meters from many of the guardhouses to remind passers-by of their obligations. Thus we can suggest that the Japanese erected guardhouses at strategic spots to create a permanent visual focus for passers-by, so that they could see the new authority and know where the *hormat* could be performed. In this sense, the guardhouse made visible the body of the colonial administration while articulating a formal pedagogy for the disciplining of its subject. See “Roemah-roemah Djaga Polisi,” *Sinar Baroe*, 2602 (page number and date unclear in original). See also “Memberi hormat pada polisi djaga,” *Sinar Baroe*, 2602 (November 16, 1942). *Sinar Baroe* kept reminding readers to pay respect to the police guard. The newspaper highlighted messages concerning *hormat* and published easy-to-understand drawings of how to pay respect to the guard.

¹⁰⁴ “Pendjagaan Kampoeng,” *Kampo Sinar Baroe*, August 2, 1943, p. 4.

military government replaced the Dutch colonial governance with a centralized system based on direct state intervention into community life.

Within a year, the Japanese military government in the occupied region of Indonesia had already institutionalized the culture of the *gardu*. In Solo, *Sinar Baroe* reported that:

... all the *kampung* people [*rakyat*] have been mobilized to watch over the security of their *kampungs*. Regulations have been imposed without any distinctions between the rich and the poor. As the rear guard supporting forces at the front, every inhabitant in the *kampung* is obliged to watch over the security of his or her neighborhood. Those who resist will be punished and, if necessary, be expelled from his/her *kampong*.¹⁰⁵

The *gardu* combined communal memories with forced aspirations. Yet, it is with this mix of politics and everyday life that the *gardu* played a significant role not only in commanding and maintaining order at a local level, but also serving as a symbol of Japan's ideology in Asia: the unification of all the colonized peoples in resisting "Western power." The practice of collectively guarding one's neighborhood brought together people from various ethnicities and classes. The *Sinar Baroe* reported instances where Indonesians, Arabs, Chinese, Indians, Malays, and Javanese cooperated as members of the *gardu* in their co-surveillance of each other's communities. The practice of nightwatch cut across differences in class and status. "Even an aristocrat [*bangsawan*] or a prince would fulfill the obligation of nightwatch with his clerk or servant of his palace."¹⁰⁶ Perhaps in order to live with this new institutional requirement that imposed communalism, S. P. Pakoealaman, one of the princes in Central Java, found it necessary to suppress the power hierarchy of his realm. He proclaimed that the spirit of *tonarigumi* could indeed be found in the *Kedjawen* (a belief system of the Javanese), and it should therefore be valued as part of the ancestral heritage of the nation (*pusaka tanah air dan lelehoer*). Pakoealaman declared: "I hope *tonarigumi* will spread the feeling of care for all people in our nation as well as reviving our belief system in order to expel the [individualistic] slogan of: 'who you are, and who I am' [*sopo siro sopo ingsoen*]."¹⁰⁷ Through the practice of co-surveillance, the *gardu* supposedly brought together people from various ethnicities and classes, all on the same platform, watching others as well as being watched. Despite the fact that it certainly projected Japan's military values, the *gardu* seemed to make claims for both a new future—the liberation of Indonesians from the subjection of Dutch colonialism—and the continuation of an age-old *gardu* tradition inherited from "our" ancestors.

Once Indonesians conceived of *gardu* as the embodiment of their nation's imagined past and future, it became part of a shared national culture, an institution that apparently reinforced their own cultural practices. Yet culture does not operate in a vacuum. Instructions published in the state-sponsored popular media, such as *Sinar Baroe*, reminded Indonesians that this "invented tradition" was their own and advised them how they ought to practice it. As noted earlier, the Dutch (especially through the

¹⁰⁵ "Solo: Menjaga keamanan kampong," *Sinar Baroe*, 2603 (August 18, 1943).

¹⁰⁶ "Setahun Keibodan: Langkah Menoejoe keamanan: Tjorak persamaan dan persahabatan, *Sinar Baroe*, 2604 (May 1, 1944), p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ "Tonari Gumi di lantik dengan resmi oleh S.P. Pakoealaman-Ko," *Sinar Baroe* 2604 (January 6, 1944), p. 2.

Ethical Policy) did contribute to the discourses of *gardu*, especially the idea of *gotong royong*, and they helped establish it as an archetype of Javanese tradition, but instructions for systematizing, organizing, and popularizing this newly recognized archetype to facilitate social and political control were not issued until the Japanese Occupation.

Yet, from what perspective was it possible for the Japanese military administration to view *gardus* and security watch as embodying an age-old tradition of Java/Indonesia/Asia? There were at least two conditions that had helped turn the practice of *gardu* into a “traditional” institution. First, as part of the discourse advocating liberation from the West, Japan encouraged Indonesians to identify themselves with cultures that were supposedly “non-Western.” In this sense, the urge to differentiate Asia from the West transformed the institution of *gardu* into a definitive tradition of the East.

Second, and perhaps more important, the *tonarigumi* was, in fact, derived from the Chinese *Pao-Tjia* system of defense, which had been known since the Song dynasty and which Lombard has suggested might have been implemented by ethnic Chinese throughout coastal Java long before the colonial era, as noted above.¹⁰⁸ Since the Japanese had spread across Asia, occupying vast territories, including a number of European colonies (and, notably, the territories of their own East Asian neighbors), they had no trouble perceiving the existing practices of *gardu* and nightwatch as the embodiment of Pan-Asian Eastern culture. In other words, when the Japanese military administration arrived in Java, the practices of neighborhood watch and the *gardus* were available as part of a repertoire that the administration could retrieve, repackage, and redistribute in the form of *tonarigumi* to every part of Java and Indonesia. Japan formalized the practice by encouraging this supposed tradition in order to recruit the colonized in its campaign against the West.

By the end of the Japanese Occupation, Indonesian youth, unlike Kwee Thiam Tjing, felt they were equipped to guard the cities of Indonesia, which by then had entered the era of Revolution. Their experiences and confidence would affect Indonesian subjectivity during this all-important transitional period.

The Gardu Effects: Pemuda in the Time of Revolution

Following the surrender of the Japanese military government and the declaration of Indonesian independence, much of the country was plunged into a period of bloodshed and violence that claimed many thousands of lives. Neither of the official combatants—the new Republic of Indonesia and the returning Netherlands Indies Colonial Administration (NICA)—was capable of restoring order. They fought against each other, while taking advantage of unofficial militias to foment more political violence. Yet each side was perfectly aware of the importance of order and security as the basis for the consolidation of power. The country was divided and engaged in the discourses of order and disorder as violence continued, especially at the “neutral,” but shifting, boundaries that divided the two forces.

¹⁰⁸ Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya II: Jaringan Asia*, p. 278.

Efforts were nevertheless made to ensure security and order. In Jakarta, for instance, the British Military Police, which served as a temporary, officially neutral, peacekeeping force, soon formed police units to end the political violence in the city.¹⁰⁹ Following the Dutch system of plural governments, each ethnic group was delegated the task of safeguarding its own neighborhood. Meanwhile the Dutch military instituted a system of territorial control by issuing military passes for those who traveled along main roads. It also announced the security zones and listed the boundaries of these protected territories in Indonesian newspapers.¹¹⁰ In a similar move, the Indonesian National Military (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI) established “commando posts” in villages and at the borders to ensure security and order.¹¹¹ Travel documents (often in the form of a reference letter) were marked by dates as one moved across borders. The “commando posts” served as check points as well as markers of the boundaries of the Indonesian state. Outside of these official measures, various communities also took the initiative of forming their own security organizations, especially in the secondary cities and smaller towns, where rampages and killings by unofficial militias continued unchecked. Chinese Indonesians, a traditionally vulnerable group, formed their own security organizations, such as the *Pao An Tui*.¹¹²

The time of revolution was thus marked by patrols and neighborhood watches (*ronda*) in the city and the countryside. It was also the period in which Indonesian political identities and identification, and ways of expressing them in the public space, were critical. “Outward appearances” were crucial, not only for social navigation and a sense of orientation, but also for survival.¹¹³ Signs were inscribed on buildings to mobilize cultural identifications and indicate affiliation. Of particular importance was the right combination of color (red and white symbolizing the national flag of Indonesia, and red, white, and blue symbolizing the Dutch). Out of this struggle for independence and identification, groups of young fighters, who came to be known collectively as *pemuda* (those with youthful spirit, ready to fight for Independence) emerged in the urban centers encompassed by Indonesia’s territory.¹¹⁴ The *pemuda* considered themselves to be the guards of the nation.

In 1951, Pramoedya Ananta Toer wrote *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* (At the Edge of Bekasi River). Pramoedya illustrates the formation of *pemuda* members who, after experiencing the wartime mobilization by Japan, emerged as freedom fighters for the Republic of Indonesia. Young Farid, the protagonist, admires Japan’s military units, called *barisan jibaku*, and especially the *pasukan kamikaze*, special troops willing to carry

¹⁰⁹ Robert Cribb, “Law and Order in Occupied Jakarta, 1946” (paper prepared at the conference on “Decolonization and Daily Life in Asia and Africa,” Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, Amsterdam, December 11-13, 2003).

¹¹⁰ “Penghapusan pas militer sepanjang djalan-raja (hoofdwegen),” *Soeloeh Ra’jat*, November, 13, 1947, p. 2.

¹¹¹ See “Commandopost TNI,” *Soeloeh Ra’jat*, October 20, 1947, p. 1; the article includes a picture of the commando post.

¹¹² “Maksoed satoe-satoenja mendjaga keamanan bersama,” *Soeloeh Ra’jat* (December 15, 1947), p. 3

¹¹³ For a discussion on the importance of appearances, especially clothing in Indonesia across various orders, see Henk Schulte Nordholt, ed., *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1997).

¹¹⁴ For an analysis of *pemuda* style, see William Frederick, “The Appearance of Revolution: Cloth, Uniform, and the *Pemuda* Style in East Java, 1945-1949,” in *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia*, pp. 199-248. See also Benedict Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).

out suicidal missions for their cause. He also admires, even though he cannot fully understand, the forces that created such forms of sacrifice. He realizes that “the national consciousness of Indonesians had been awakened by the Japanese ... The Dutch gave only a colonial mentality to Indonesian people ... to the old man in front of him.”¹¹⁵ Farid considers himself a new man. He is the type that the pretty Nanny, another character in the novel, finds attractive: “... the young, strong, and vigorous man. His bravery, perseverance, and sacrifice for the nation are just like those of Amir [her late boy friend, who had died in the Revolution].”¹¹⁶ Describing this young hero through the eyes of Nanny, Pramoedya constructs a new type of man, the *pemuda*, who was born out of the Japanese Occupation into the Indonesian revolution and came to be recognized as a guard.

In one way or another, Indonesians were both fascinated and terrified by their experiences during the Japanese Occupation. This ambivalence powerfully formed their new subjectivity. Almost a year after Japan’s surrender, the *Kedaulatan Rakyat* newspaper recalled one of the last impressions of the Occupation: “All the Japanese detainees, from soldiers to high officers, saluted by bending their bodies in front of our troops standing in the guardhouse at the camp.”¹¹⁷ Such quotes make it clear that Indonesians had taken note of the acts of respect the Japanese military showed to Indonesia’s defensive forces—their native guards. The struggle over the identity of the *pemuda*, who represented themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as the guards of the nation, was shaped by such memories.

The following photograph, taken in the early revolutionary period, tells us something about the *pemuda*, how they were perceived and their perceptions of themselves. In this photograph, “a typical image of the revolutionary era,” we see a group of young men standing in front of the camera (see Figure 24).¹¹⁸

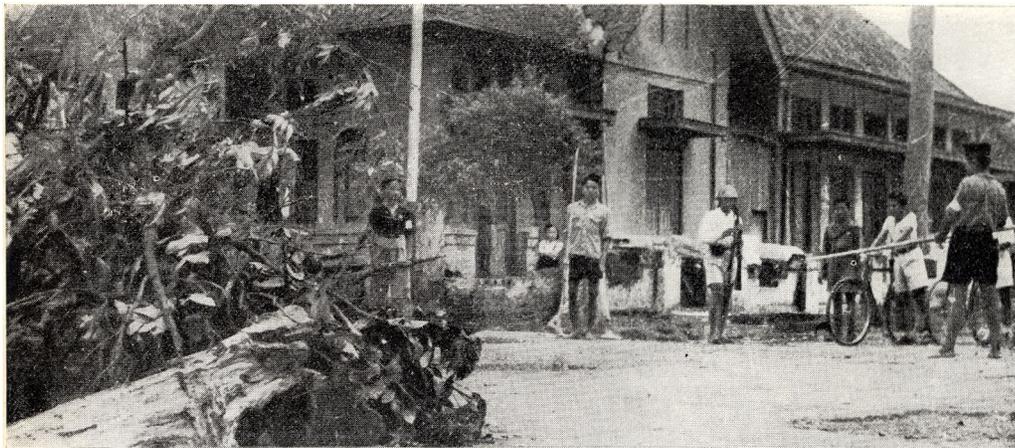


Figure 24: “Where is your letter of reference, *bung?*”: *Pemuda* guarding the city. Source: *Lukisan Revolusi Rakyat Indonesia, 1945-1949* (Yogyakarta: Kementerian Penerangan Republik Indonesia, 1949).

¹¹⁵ Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Di Tepi Kali Bekasi* (Jakarta: Lantera Dipantara, 2003 [1951]), p. 99.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹¹⁷ *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, May 20, 1946. As cited in A. B. Lopian, ed., *Semangat '45 Dalam Rekaman Gambar IPPHOS* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1985), n.p.

¹¹⁸ Soedjarwo, ed., *Lukisan Revolusi Rakyat Indonesia, 1945-1949* (Yogyakarta: Kementerian Penerangan Republik Indonesia, 1949), n.p.

Having secured rifles and weapons, *pemuda* posed as the guards of the city. This image suggests that the practice of *gardu* adapted during the Japanese Occupation had spilled over into the revolution. The *pemuda* marked their presence in the city with the same spirit that animated the guards under the Japanese Occupation. They might belong to the Indonesian national army, and/or the unofficial militias (the fighting groups called *laskar*), but their stylistic formation (at least in this photograph) recalls the image of the security guards standing at the *gardu*. It is an image Indonesians would expect to confront as they approached the entrance to a guarded neighborhood. These youth represent the city (in ruins) behind them. They consider the city as being under their guard and see themselves as its protectors, as well as the destroyers of things associated with the enemy. Patrolling in self-styled uniforms, they considered themselves to be the vanguard of the newly liberated world of the Indonesian masses (the *rakyat*). They took the urban space as a gigantic canvas on which they inscribed writings, slogans, and flags associated with this new time and new identity. They saw themselves as the embodiment of order and security, even though many of them participated in political violence and acts of destruction.

In the early outburst of revolutionary fervor, there was at least a half-dozen or more of these different fighting groups constituted of so-called *pemuda*. Clothed in different styles, they did not identify themselves with any particular political or ideological position. While sharing a vision of a unified struggle for independence, they were also involved in competitive, intricate, and shifting alliances. Political identity was at stake during this period. The uniforms, as William Frederick indicates, allowed for differentiation, identification, and group formation.¹¹⁹ Those who lived in the city or in areas under the influence of the *pemuda* had to be careful not to excite the suspicions of these guards. It was important that passers-by give the right response to the frequently asked question: "Where is your *surat keterangan* [letter of reference], *bung* [brother]?"¹²⁰ Like the guard in the *gardu*, the *pemuda*, too, checked the political identity of the people they met and decided whether the person was an ally or an enemy.

The vigilant *permuda* member differed from the usual guard stationed in a *gardu* and from a policeman controlled by the state, however, because he did not recognize boundaries established by the Dutch or the Indonesian military.¹²¹ *Pemuda* militia forces were often seen, fully or partially armed, patrolling across the city and the countryside. They blurred boundaries by moving around, claiming territories, prowling from the outskirts of the city into the villages, and checking neighborhoods throughout a large area to discover the political affiliations of the inhabitants. Imagining themselves as the guards of the new revolutionary society, the *pemuda* spread their political influence from the cities into the villages, even though the villagers were mostly afraid of them.

¹¹⁹ Frederick, "The Appearance of Revolution."

¹²⁰ Sudjarwo, ed., *Lukisan Revolusi Rakyat Indonesia, 1945-1949*, n.p.

¹²¹ This area remained a war zone for most of the revolutionary period. Newspapers were filled with reports claiming that "civilians living close to the demarcation line have been continuously harassed" and "patrollers and posts of the Dutch army were fired on twenty times." See "Keadaan militer," *Soeloeh Ra'jat*, June 19, 1947, p. 2.

Securing the State and Becoming a Tradition

The *pemuda*, the returning Dutch colonial administration, and the Republic of Indonesia struggled to consolidate power by offering different safety measures to the people. We do not know if the *gardu* during the late revolutionary period were inscribed with markers of group identity and political party, like those *poskos* of the PDI-P, but each of these constituencies was certainly involved in the maintenance and expansion of its sphere of influence. These struggles for territory and the establishment of political identities intensified toward the end of the revolution, after Indonesia gained its sovereignty and the Dutch gave up the fight. In 1949, the TNI announced that "in matters of security, a person should not act on his own but should follow the law initiated by the authority of our nation."¹²² Yet, as the new Republic of Indonesia gained in authority, some of the *laskar* militia groups continued to see themselves as the guardians, not merely of a city or a *kampung*, but of the country as a whole. Inspired by this image of themselves, they felt responsibility towards the future of the country and acted on its behalf by fighting even the newly formed Republic of Indonesia. One such group was the Darul Islam, which sought to lead the new Republic under the banner of Islam. To achieve this end, it identified the Republic as its enemy. In turn, the Republic labeled the Darul Islam forces as *gerombolan* (wandering rebels). Now that the revolution had ended and the young state was being forged, particular political and ideological positions became an issue among Indonesians. Within the force field of order and security, so crucial to the legitimation of power of the new Republic, the *gardu* made its appearance. Perhaps the best way to indicate this is by looking at an image shown in the official photo album, *Thirty Years of Indonesian Independence*.

In Figure 25 (below), we see "the troops [*pasukan*] of the New Republic marching down the field to conduct operations [against the Darul Islam] in January 1951."¹²³

A guardhouse stands in the background, marking the safe territory of the Republic. In this *gardu* are children and women looking at the camera and at the troops marching to an unknown destination, presumably into the untamed areas where they might find the "*gerombolan* Darul Islam." The camera makes the *gardu* appear as a point of origin from which the troops depart and to which they are supposed to return. This construction appears to anchor the Indonesian home, which is inhabited by children and women waiting for their soldiers to return. As the "home" of the Republic, the *gardu* not only represents the territorial identity of the Republic, but is also an index of security, as several guards can be seen standing around it. Unlike the marching troops, these local guards appear relaxed and at home. Thus, the *gardu* and the troops, together, delineate a territorial identity, demarcating the areas of the known and the unknown.

The caption that accompanies this image does not make any reference to the *gardu*. Instead it only calls our attention to the forces of the Republic. The *gardu* is a familiar structure, so familiar that no comment is needed. We do not know whether this guardhouse was built under the order of the new Republic of Indonesia or if it was part of the structure of community defense harnessed by the *pasukan* republic during

¹²² "Awasi Intimidasi dan Provokasi," *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, December 12, 1949.

¹²³ *30 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka, 1945-1955* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 1997), p. 353, figure 416.

the Occupation. We do know, however, that it represents order and security, as well as a potential threat. In the picture, at least, it “belongs” to the Republic of Indonesia. Could we say that the *gardu* animates subjectivity? Could it be seen as not only acting for people, but also acting upon them? In what ways does the *gardu* affect the formation of culture and tradition?



Figure 25: Troops departing from the *gardu*. Source: *30 Tahun Indonesia Merdeka, 1945-1955* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 1997), p. 353, no. 416.

Thirty years after the Darul Islam uprising, Edi S. Ekadjati, a Sundanese intellectual, recalled the security system of the *gardu* (*garduh*, in Sundanese) as belonging to a system of traditional defense characteristic of the Sunda land. Ekadjati remembers the village of Karangtawang, in West Java, during the war with Darul Islam. Knowing that the *pasukan* republic was still incapable of fully protecting the village, several initiatives were taken by the inhabitants of the *desa*. Ekadjati describes how members of the community fenced their whole village with bamboo stakes two meters high. They also organized a *ronda* and built several *gardus*, each of which was equipped with *khokol* (the *kentongan*).¹²⁴ In addition, the village also conducted periodic mass prayers and even mobilized the magical spirits of the village (in the forms of “jin” and “tiger”) to safeguard the neighborhood.¹²⁵ Since all these activities were supposed to be part of the village’s “tradition,” no difficulties in implementing these measures were recorded. Every member of the “village community” seemed to know this “traditional defense system.” Like so many cultural practices understood as tradition, the *gardu* and its rituals had been internalized and naturalized regardless of the fact

¹²⁴ Edi S. Ekadjati, “Tulak Bala: Sistim Pertahanan Tradisional Kasus Desa Karangtawang, Kabupaten Kuningan, Jawa Barat,” in *Tulak Bala: Sistim Pertahanan Tradisional Masyarakat Sunda dan Kajian Lainnya mengenai Budaya Sunda* (Bandung: Pusat Studi Sunda, 2003), p. 20.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

that they were constructed out of a variety of contexts, many of which were political and circumstantial.

In Ekadjati's account, the power of *gardu* stemmed from the continuous reenactment of these self-defensive initiatives as practices of everyday life, practices supported by a narrative associating them with timeless tradition. As a recognized "tradition," the *gardu* has gained a life of its own, one that does not necessarily require a documented history but is capable of retrieving various memories, even though one may not know where these memories originated. Like all "traditions" once they have been initiated, the *gardu* simultaneously mark all-time and no-time. For instance, in 1999, after the fall of Suharto, Mangara Siahaan, the Vice Secretary General of PDI-P, said that "*posko* was a symbol that could move people [*massa*] at any time. It is a symbol of power ... [and] when we set up the idea of *posko*, people [*masyarakat*] were enthusiastic."¹²⁶ Perhaps precisely because of the ahistorical nature of "tradition," the *gardu* is seen as possessing a power of its own. For Ekadjati and Siahaan, the potency of *gardu* as a symbol could be easily retrieved. It might be invested with various meanings, but it continues to retain its "power." And as a "traditional" practice, it seems to be capable of performing multiple social roles and moving easily across time and space. Yet, as we have seen, the Indonesian *gardu* moves not only across orders, but also touches various grounds, including the realm of the state and the domain of daily life. It is not only an outward sign of a social and political phenomenon; it is also an institution of everyday life that actively constitutes the social norms and behavior of people who live in and around it.

Dispersed Receptions

The collective experience of guarding a neighborhood and the nation has been transmitted from one generation to another and carried into the postcolonial era. The beating of the *kentongan* during nightwatch continues to this day. The *gardu*, the *ronda*, and the codes of the *kentongan* have been carried over from other times and have become part of the structure of everyday life in both the cities and the villages of Indonesia (see Figure 26, below).¹²⁷

The *gardu* remains instrumental in the symbolic spectacle of the state's (as well as individuals') power, even as its appearance often evokes, in the minds of the public, the decline of the state's authority. It continues to register class status, prestige, and, of course, "manpower." Yet for some ethnic groups—notably the ethnic Chinese—it can also trigger memories of anti-ethnic riots. It keeps alive the culture of rumors, the practices of the nightwatch, and the surveillance of the streets. For most men in Java, it remains an enjoyable place for drinking, chatting, and gazing at women who are walking along the street.

For many women, the *gardu* is highly gendered and based practically and historically (if not also theoretically) on the exclusion of women. For them, it continues

¹²⁶ As cited in "Ancaman dari posko-posko PDIP," *Demokrasi dan Reformasi*, August 9-14, 1999, p. 28 (emphasis added).

¹²⁷ For an account of a neighborhood watch in a Javanese city during the New Order, see James T. Siegel, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), chap. 2 and 3.

to be an unsettling place that is dominated by men. For other members of the society, it awakens memories of urban militarism, Sukarno's street-based populist politics, and "communist threats." The *gardu* integrates these different memories into the consciousness of the city.



Figure 26: Like *kota*, like *desa*: Pak Dirman and his *gardu* in Jakarta, 2003. Photo: F. Prihadi.

Yet, like many other urban forms in the contemporary world, the Indonesian *gardu* can also be seen as part of the gated-community phenomenon, in which private security, middle-class prestige, community surveillance, and corporate power intermingle (see Figure 27).



Figure 27: Selling property, selling *gardu*: The "Taman Paris" of Lippo Karawaci. Source: Brochure of Lippo Karawaci, obtained 2002.

In this context, the *gardu* absorbs into its sphere images of other times and spaces, while isolating them in the dreamworld of Disney-like cosmopolitanism. In this isolated world, it stands as a reminder to the developers and consumers of expensive housing that urban threats surround them. In urban Indonesia, this global impulse to erect *gardu* has intertwined, often unnoticeably, with particular trajectories of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial histories. In this crosscut, it seems that older modes of representation have returned to the present as cultural resources, while new trajectories have been opened up.

During the 1998 student uprising across Indonesia, many *gardus* of the state (the *pos hansips*) were taken over by students and became important gathering points nationwide for forces that helped bring about the fall of Suharto. In 2001, in Papua, the emergence of the pro-independence protest movement against the Indonesian state was marked by the construction of *poskos* that displayed the movement's Morning Star flag. In response, the provincial authorities launched a series of coordinated raids on the *poskos*.¹²⁸

Closer to home, the appointment of a new head of the administered neighborhood (RT) where my parents are staying was marked by the construction of yet another *gardu* at another corner of the street, thus increasing the collection of *gardus* in the area. Written on the wall of the *gardu* is a new term, "*posko-hansip*," which bridges the New Order and post-New Order periods. The newly elected *Pak RT* (head of the *Rukun Tetangga*), who is a civilian of ethnic Chinese background, quite spontaneously felt that "the election of a new RT should be marked by the building of a new *gardu*," regardless of the fact that there are already six guardhouses within a radius of thirty meters. One of the residents of the neighborhood told me, humorously, that "it is through the *gardu* that the *Pak RT* will be remembered." What then has happened to the "old" *gardu*? Some of them have become the houses of the guards (*Pak hansip*), in which one can find a pantry and a bed. One particular *gardu* I saw had been enlarged and equipped outside with an old sofa. As this *gardu* grows deeper and becomes more like a tiny house, the interior has gotten darker. From inside that darkness, eyes see without being seen.

The *gardu* as a community institution has figured in the work of contemporary writers. In 2004, Anwar Hudijono, a newspaper commentator, published his commentaries in a small book titled *Gardu*. In the introduction, Anwar explained why he chose this title.

[My] writings are light and relaxed, just like chatting in the *gardu*. Talking in the *gardu* has no order and direction, unlike discussion on TV or in a seminar. Everything can be talked about with ease [*'ngomong ngalor-ngidul'*]. What is important is participation ... spontaneous ... and egalitarian.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Joe Saunders, "Indonesia: Violence and Political Impasse in Papua," *Human Rights Watch Report* 13,2 (July 2001): IV, "The Wamena Violence."

¹²⁹ Anwar Hudijono, *Gardu: Refleksi Sosial Menuju Kehidupan yang Demokratis* (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2004), pp. ix-x.

While its social atmosphere can be relaxing, the *gardu* of Anwar is also meant to be a catalyst for “social change towards a more democratic life ... With *Gardu*, we will be able to reflect on various events and ultimately act on them for social change.”¹³⁰



Figure 28: The gendered civic space of *gardu*: “The free speech that goes bla, bla, bla.”
Source: Benny Rachmnadi and Muh. Misrad, *Lagak Jakarta: Reformasi* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Popular Gramedia, 1998), p. 47.

The appearance of the *gardu* in this context is less important than its function. In Anwar’s mind, it is a monument by virtue of its capacity to evoke conversation and even social change. It is a modest institution for transforming the nation. His *gardu*, like those of Megawati, Suharto, Kwee Thiam Tjing, the Dutch, the Chinese, the Japanese, the *pemuda*, and *Pak RT*, has become a medium for the projection of aspirations, values, power, fear, desires, and, of course, “tradition.”

Conclusion

Guardhouses (*gardu/posko/pos-hansip*) have complex roots in Indonesia. I have shown how these structures survived in many different forms, operating as artifacts for memorialization, as well as for constructing spatial identity. I have traced the *gardu*’s “origins” in the spatial politics of Dutch colonialism and the experience of the ethnic Chinese and shown how it was eventually institutionalized under the Japanese military administration and mobilized in the postcolonial era as an autochthonous tradition. Over time, the *gardu* has found its place in the collective memory of Indonesians, a memory that could be retrieved at any time and under any condition.

I have followed a long circle, from the present into the past and back, suggesting the interdependence of various sites and the historic roles of the ethnic Chinese, Dutch colonialism, and the Japanese Occupation. I have also integrated different memories

¹³⁰ Hudijono, *Gardu*, cover.

and the many modes of representations that affect the meaning of the *gardu*. I have shown that each experience of the *gardu* is to some degree affected by the historical experiences of other times, which have been transmitted across generations through the recurrence of the *gardu* itself. This interweaving of experiences across time and space is crucial for an understanding of the persistence, as well as the proliferation, of *gardus* in contemporary urban Indonesia. As I have sought to illustrate the importance of interwoven collective memories in understanding the reiteration of *gardus*, I have also sought to make *gardus* visible, to conceptualize their public nature, to interpret their power, and to investigate the formation of subjectivity in urban Indonesia. Yet, as with other attempts to trace social memories and the evolution of subjectivities, there is no end to the story. The life history of the *gardu* remains discursive, fragmented, and incomplete, but it seems to me the spatial and temporal circle offered in this paper has been completed.