A marked feature of the economic historiography of Indonesia in the twentieth century is its punctuated nature. While the economics of the Dutch colonial era has been studied in some depth by committed scholars like Boomgaard, Booth, van der Eng, Lindblad, Purwanto, and Thee, it is only with great caution and on very rare occasions that anybody has ventured to connect the Dutch era with the brief Japanese interlude and the subsequent post-independence period. *Bridges to New Business* is an admirable and brave attempt to break this mold and unify in a single cohesive work the analysis of the three different eras, each presenting its own idiosyncracies in terms of available materials, cultural and linguistic traditions, and salient phenomena. In addition to illuminating new and interesting themes in the economic history of Indonesia, it is an important template for those scholars who, in the future, will work to fill this noticeable gap in the economic historiography of Indonesia.

Following the introduction (Chapter I), the book is loosely structured as a two-part work. In the first part, comprising Chapters II and III, the author focuses on the Dutch colonial period, with some references to the independent period. Chapter III pays special attention to the changes brought about by the Japanese colonization of Indonesia. Subsequent chapters (IV–VIII) take on the various themes that are central to the notion of decolonization as conceived by the author, namely nationalization (voluntary and involuntary), Indonesianization, and economic nationalism. Chapter IX concludes the book.

The real strength of this book lies in the chapters that deal with the three intertwined phenomena that characterize the economic decolonization of the Indonesian economy. Clearly, this is the forte of the author, not only in view of his earlier research on the subject, but also because the chapters do not rely heavily on the Japanese interlude and are therefore rich in data that are accessible to the author. While the conceptual trifurcation of decolonization as presented in *Bridges to Business* (i.e., nationalization, Indonesianization, and economic nationalism) may appear obvious in hindsight to the reader, to have it laid out in a clear fashion and then analyzed piece by piece, with abundant evidence to support that analysis, makes this section of the book not only a genuine contribution to our knowledge of Indonesian economic history, but also a framework for how to think about the complex process of decolonization—be it in Indonesia or elsewhere. The author also brings to light some very interesting cases of firms and individuals that illustrate these three phenomena at various points in Indonesian history. Also notable and illuminating is the political and legal context within which economic decolonization occurred (and in some ways continues to occur, especially in the area of “Indonesianization”) in Indonesia, and which provides an effective and necessary ingredient of Lindblad’s analysis.

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As with any mold-breaking work, there are areas of analysis and methodology that
deserve closer attention and will likely be explored in greater depth in a subsequent
edition of this book. The section on the Japanese interlude is notably sparse, especially
in view of the very profound and fundamental impact that Japan played in sparking
and irreversibly accelerating the intertwined processes that resulted in decolonization.
While the author argues that this gap stems from a lack of data from that time period,
there is little evidence in the book of serious research in any of the archives of the
Japanese corporations that were mobilized to decolonize (from the Netherlands) and
recolonize (for Japan) the Indonesian economy, or of research among the variety of
government collections and archives in Japan. While there is mention of the use of
Japanese materials, these are apparently small in number and relatively narrow in
scope. A symptom of this gap is the claim by the author of “wild speculation” by a
fellow economic historian, van der Eng, who revised his estimates of historical
Indonesian GDP during the Japanese period, when in fact there are no data available to
the author to back up any assertions about any characterization, wild or otherwise, of
the van der Eng estimates of Indonesian GDP at the time. I hope that scholars who are
fluent in Japanese will take up the task of scouring Japanese archives more thoroughly
and produce, collaboratively or individually, research that bridges this gap. While the
sparseness of the analysis of the Japanese period need not in itself be problematic, it
does serve to drown out to a degree the very important “voice” of Japan in the process
of decolonization, inevitably giving the interpretation of that period a flavor that is
more representative of a Dutch point of view than a Japanese perspective. Therefore,
Japan gets less credit than it deserves for being the more vigorous of the two colonial
powers in championing decolonization. Japan is, however, accorded responsibility for
Indonesia’s inevitable economic collapse, which ensued after the Japanese invasion,
because of the disruption of trade with Indonesia’s largely Allied partners, and the
Netherlands receives abundant coverage for the period of recovery and relative
prosperity (compared to the WWII period) that followed the Japanese capitulation and
for the restoration of the trade networks with Indonesia’s largely Allied partners, on
the strength of which the Indonesian economy had developed prior to World War II.

A future edition of this book might also address more thoroughly the wide range of
scholarship on the Indonesian economy generated since the 1960s. While it draws
heavily on the work of scholars who explore the Indonesian economy prior to the
twentieth century, the book ends, somewhat abruptly, in the late 1950s, and without
appealing adequately to the literature on the Indonesian economy published after 1960.
Indeed, a number of the processes of decolonization that continued into and after the
Suharto era, in no small part because he employed some of the strategies and
continued to maintain some of the institutions of the Dutch era to develop the New
Order economy. Hence, the process of “Indonesianization” (if defined narrowly, for
example, as increasing the representation of indigenous Indonesians in senior
management positions in industry) continues to this day even while it can be thought
of as having its roots in what Fasseur perceptively called the “Cornerstone and
Stumbling Block” of the late colonial state, namely, its racial classification system. In
short, the implications of the very valuable work of economic history that Lindblad has
created should not be limited to the late 1950s and before, and the next edition of the
book would do very well to make this point forcefully by referring to the works of leading scholars of the New Order economy like Hal Hill.²

In stylistic terms, *Bridges to New Business* makes for slow reading; it is so packed with fresh material and nuggets of information that a single reading will likely not do it justice. To lighten the sometimes cumbersome verbiage that necessarily accompanies many a qualitative study in economic history, the author adds an entertaining touch by referring to works of literature from the time periods under discussion (though Chapter VI does begin with a visible error in translation—"kutjing" is translated as "mouse" instead of "cat").

In sum, *Bridges to New Business* adds a whole new dimension to the literature on economic decolonization in Indonesia. By including coverage of the late colonial Dutch, Japanese, and newly independent Indonesian eras, Lindblad has made a brave and groundbreaking attempt to start what will, I hope, become a tradition in modern scholarship on Indonesian economic history. In this sense, the book does a great service not only to the series of which it is so aptly a part ("Indonesia across Orders"³), but also to the field of Indonesian economic history. Because significant portions of the approach and analysis can be generalized to other contexts, this book should be of interest not only to scholars of the economics and economic history of Indonesia, but also more broadly to scholars of history and political science.

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² See, for example, Hal Hill, *The Indonesian Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).