

Alicia Schrikker and Jeroen Touwen, eds. *Promises and Predicaments: Trade and Entrepreneurship in Colonial and Independent Indonesia in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Singapore: University of Singapore Press, 2015. 334 pp.

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The well-drawn Introduction by Alicia Schrikker and Jeroen Touwen gives two reasons for bringing together the seventeen essays that make up this anthology. The first gives recognition to the economic historian J. Thomas Lindblad, to whom the collection is dedicated. His work on Indonesian economic history is widely accepted as an important contribution to Indonesian studies. Second, the volume was intended to present material on Indonesian economic development by contemporary scholars who would follow the path already described by Howard Dick et al.¹ Their critical study on national Indonesian economic history defined the important periods of that history and detailed the main characteristics of each period.

Nearly every article in the anthology mentions or pays tribute to Lindblad. The Introduction, of course, succinctly outlines his work on the emergence of an Indonesian national economy, starting with globalization in early history, but failing until the early twentieth century to coalesce into an overall economy because of parochial demands within the archipelago. Beyond this introduction, however, the only other author going beyond simple laudatory remarks is Freek Colombijn. In a fine piece of research using legal cases in Medan, Colombijn shows participation in the Medan workplaces by race and ethnicity. The research reveals that there was a brief period in the 1940s and 1950s when the Dutch, the Chinese, and Indonesians shared many workplaces in a complementary manner—termed *complementarisasi* by Colombijn—but that this stage passed away relatively quickly for full Indonesianization, which was Lindblad's contention.

All the chapters fit with the second goal, that is, contributing to a fuller understanding of Indonesian economic history *a la* Dick et al. Specifically, some articles outline the major issues and challenges of the past two hundred years. The Introduction certainly does, and the opening article by Anne Booth does so as well, as she describes the entire epoch in a lean, straightforward essay. Particular periods are covered equally well by several authors. Dick provides considerable detail on the development of statistics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the Dutch colonial administration, which later served as a baseline for Indonesian efforts in the field. Robert Cribb contributes a nicely crafted essay on the role of rice in the early days of the Indonesian republic in the late 1940s, when ideology was often set aside for practical results in feeding urban populations. Thee Kian Wie revisits failed

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¹ Howard Dick, Vincent J. H. Houten, J. Thomas Lindblad, and Thee Kian Wie, *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia 1800–2000*. (Crow's Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin; and Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). Dick and Thee are contributors to this current anthology, along with Anne Booth, Hal Hill, Pim de Zwart, Daan Marks, Alexandra de Pleijt, Jan Luiten van Zanden, Alexander Claver, Leonard Blusse, Freek Colombijn, Roger Knight, Bambang Purwanto, David Henley, Robert Cribb, Farabi Fakh, Pham Van Thuy, and Pierre van der Eng, Ewout Frankema.

US policies toward Indonesian development in the 1950s and early 1960s, concluding that those policies had no chance against the economic nationalism of President Sukarno. Ewout Frankeema explores the astounding “green revolution” in Indonesian agriculture during the New Order years in the last quarter of the twentieth century and assesses the remarkable convergence of factors that made it possible.

While all of the essays in this volume have academic worth, several of them fail to fit the editors’ premise to provide the historic overview they sought. For example, one article, by Leonard Blusse, related a neat case study of a single—and minor—historic event about employment of Chinese sailors aboard a Dutch ship in the late-colonial era. The study had almost no relevance to long-term economic developments and might have been a footnote, at best. Another article, by Alexander Claver, marked by solid description and insight, outlined money usage in the precolonial and colonial periods, noting bifurcated use by the internationalized economy and by the local economy. But the postcolonial era, where the same phenomenon of different money usage, albeit with different currencies than earlier, but with profoundly different outcomes, was not covered by Claver or by any complementary article. A significant failing. Roger Knight’s chapter tracks the early twentieth century competition initiated by Japan to pit Formosan and Javanese growers against one another to supply the Japanese home islands’ need for rice and other foodstuffs. While a good case study in itself, it was insular in its scope and references, so as to fail to relate meaningfully to the book’s other studies. Finally, there is no chapter dealing with economics since the fall of the New Order, leaving a significant decade uncovered. Overall, there is an unevenness in the coverage that prevents the reader from obtaining a clear overview of the economic history of the Indonesian nation. Neither is there a summary to provide a conclusion or consolidate major findings, although the Introduction does that in part.

At the same time, some articles are worth reading for the particular insights they contain, without reference to overall trends. Hal Hill examines labor shares, employment shares, and intersectoral labor productivity for the past thirty years to build a comparative model for six Southeast Asia countries. He shows that Indonesia, with very large land and natural resource advantages, has a strong agricultural base that acts as an economic stabilizer. That advantage allows the government to focus on raising industrial production and to deal with a services sector that is not yet solidly constructed. David Henley resurrects the views of Alice Dewey on Javanese markets and Franklin Barton on Luzon entrepreneurship, noting that both present the means for replacing parochial loyalties with overarching loyalties in the development of sophisticated regional economies. Henley draws parallels to the UN’s efforts to bring emerging nations into the international marketplace in the last half of the twentieth century. Frankeema’s article on Indonesian agricultural gains (mentioned above) contrasts Indonesia with Africa south of the Sahara and attempts to assess whether the Indonesian case can be replicated there. He concludes with an ambiguous “maybe,” but the evidence is well argued.

Readers wanting a solid reading of Indonesian economic development would do well to go to the Dick et al. book already mentioned. That study is the true marker for Indonesian economic history at the present time. There is, as well, Hill’s reliable text,

The Indonesian Economy,² which covers contemporary economics during the era since 1965 and is richer in detail than this study. Booth's *Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*³ covers the same time frame as this study does, and provides much more factual detail. However, Booth's study lacks the judgments this book presents about overall performance and attainments. Thee's collection of essays in *Indonesian Economy since Independence*⁴ is limited to the final period, i.e., since 1965, but neatly analyzes the particular turns of economic policy from an Indonesian national perspective.

To the credit of the editors, the assemblage of writers—European, Australian, and Indonesian—is impressive, the writing is articulate, and the organization of the articles is rational. Some scholars will want to read the volume merely to see what lines of thought are used by economic historians in making sense of a diverse and often muddled economic picture provided by two hundred years of Indonesian history. Others will want to concentrate on the case studies of particular problems that offer insights into how Indonesians dealt with some serious problems of economic survival and national development. Despite some shortcomings, the anthology has much to offer the reader interested in things Indonesian.

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

³ Anne Booth, *Indonesian Economy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A History of Missed Opportunities* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1998).

⁴ Thee Kian Wie, *Indonesian Economy since Independence* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012).