

Peter J. M. Nas, ed., *Issues in Urban Development: Case Studies from Indonesia*. Leiden, the Netherlands: Research School CNWS, 1995. 293 pp.

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As explained in its Introduction, this book developed out of a workshop on "The Indonesian City Revisited" held in Leiden in 1993, and is placed by the editor, Peter Nas, as the third in a series on Indonesia's urban environment and society. The first book of this series is *The Indonesian Town: Studies in Urban Sociology*, edited by W. F. Wertheim et al. in 1958 and the second, *The Indonesian City: Studies in Urban Development and Planning*, edited by Nas himself in 1986. All of these works offer useful and important sociological and historical studies of Indonesia's urban world, as seen from a Dutch perspective. They are particularly valuable for presenting the results of this kind of scholarship in English, since the urban history of colonial and post-colonial Indonesia is often bypassed in current English-language scholarship because of the difficulties in dealing with the Dutch- or Indonesian-language sources.

Whether or not these three books make up a "series" per se, however, is a more debatable point, since the books were not overtly planned with this purpose in mind, and so lack any fundamental or overarching cohesion in their views on the dynamics of Indonesian urban development. The analyses found in this latest work, for example, as in the other two previous books, tend to be scattered about the map, both geographically and theoretically, and are sometimes more responsive, as Nas acknowledges, to "changes in the research climate," than to an adherence to any fundamental theory or approach to current dilemmas in Indonesia's urbanization process and the historical development of its urban spaces. With this caveat in mind, however, it remains true that this volume offers a great deal to the careful reader, particularly those interested in colonial cities, urban symbolism, and modern urban planning, and could spark further research on some of the topics sketched out within its pages.

The bulk of the book deals with topics and themes concerned with urban life during Indonesia's colonial period, which generally means life under Dutch rule, although Nicole Niessen offers a tantalizing glimpse at what could be learned from a study of Indonesia's urban administration during the Japanese occupation in her article "Indonesian municipalities under Japanese rules." The other articles relating to colonial urban development and planning, although focusing on the Dutch period, are noteworthy as well for not always being about Jakarta (Batavia), the common exemplar of a colonial metropole, and present intriguing vignettes of other colonial cities in Indonesia, mainly Padang, Medan, and Palembang on Sumatra, that have not always received a significant amount of attention in other studies and discussions of the colonial impact on the archipelago's urban environment.

The rather unprecedented inclusion of two articles on Palembang, in particular, is most welcome, since both Peter Nas's "Palembang: The Venice of the East," and Jeroen Peeters's "Space, religion and conflict: The urban ecology of Islamic institutions in Palembang," provide new insights into the growth and spatial organization of this city and offer new perspectives on how urban history during the colonial era may be reconstructed, with more attention to indigenous, or at least non-European, voices. Peeters's article is most important here as he chooses to look, not at the influence of the Dutch

administrative influence on the planning of Palembang, but at the role of the Arab traders who settled in the city during the nineteenth century. Nas, as well, manages to present a picture of Palembang as a mosaic of different influences, both indigenous and foreign, and so underscores the need to see patterns of urban development and use of space from varying perspectives and not always as resulting solely from the needs or criteria of any one group. Nas also makes the point that, while the organization of colonial Palembang was not necessarily very different from that found in pre-colonial days, it changed quite dramatically in the post-colonial era after a bridge built across the Musi in the 1960s reoriented the town away from the riverbanks. Urban change, then, may not always arise as a result of colonial intervention, but can happen from within a strictly indigenous context.

The other article written by Nas in this volume, on modern Denpasar, also has some bearing on these same points as he examines traditional Balinese ideals of spatial arrangement in the context of modern development and the impact of tourism in Bali. Here he looks at how the Balinese themselves currently “construct” Denpasar and how they judge the relative importance of certain key features in the placement of intersections, statues, and government offices. Puzzled tourists may also derive some benefit from his analysis of the meanings behind Bali’s many and usually rather aesthetically unappealing roadside statues.

Most of the book’s other articles are concerned with Jakarta or Indonesia in general, either historically or in terms of modern developments in planning. A particularly interesting piece by Luc Nagtegaal about pollution in Jakarta from 1600 to 1850 is suggestive for the parallels it draws between life in Batavia and in the modern capital. His commentary will prompt readers familiar with Jakarta today to be eerily reminded of how little seems to have changed between then and now, with much of the blame for modern-day problems potentially lying with the Dutch colonial administrators who chose not to address these same public health issues on any sustained basis at an earlier point in time.

Other articles, such as Ronald Gill’s on the urban heritage of Jakarta’s Kota area, Wim Stolte’s on the JABOTABEK concept, and Fons Rietmeijer’s on urban housing production, are more technical in nature and designed less for the lay reader. These articles are also less critical in approach than most of the other articles in this volume. Stolte’s piece, for example, in its reliance on macro strategies and plans, rarely refers to some of the more tendentious issues related to metropolitan development around Jakarta such as the likely environmental impact of continued annexation of wetlands and mangrove clearing, and the debates over road systems and public transport. Although Gill’s piece provides some insight into how the rejuvenation of Kota is being planned and researched, he also seems to see this project primarily from a planning perspective, as constructing a Singaporean-type outpost for cultural tourism, even though this model has not always been successful at injecting new dynamism into the urban space appropriated.

In general though, this volume is a very welcome addition to the somewhat limited English-language literature available on the urban environment in Indonesia, both in its colonial and modern forms. The book contains a few typographical errors, and it is a shame that the production standards of Nas’s earlier 1986 edited book, the so-called second part of this urban series, could not be continued here, with more photos and

maps. A glossary of Indonesian terms used would have been helpful since many articles do not translate the Indonesian or Dutch terms used. Such "foreign" words are also not differentiated in the text with italics or bold print, so it may be hard for readers with little knowledge of these languages to penetrate the exact meaning of some passages. The book does conclude, however, by offering the particularly valuable service of an updated bibliography on the Indonesian city, of works published between 1985 and 1995 in Indonesian, English, Dutch, German and French, following on as a companion piece to the earlier bibliography included in the 1986 Nas volume. The cross-disciplinary nature of this topic often seems to make it hard to research through standard archival methods, and so this bibliography should be of great use to students and researchers working in this field.