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The Country and the Cities

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THE COUNTRY AND THE CITIES¹

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The movement of workers continues unabated, but has taken different forms in recent decades. As you read this, millions of people are travelling between countries for work, some legally, some illegally. Many of these travellers are women who will become maids for a period of perhaps two years. Those coming from Southeast Asia are increasingly moving to the major cities of their region, especially Singapore and Hong Kong. In tracking the shifting patterns of movement for work, we need to understand the combination of mental and material elements of that movement. We need to see their movement as a type of 'mobility' between related sites and social positions, rather than having the permanency implied in the term 'migration.'

Indonesia provides those who travel with a wealth of historical experience on which to draw. As a major source-country of those who move it has a long rural history. Considered 'rural' throughout the Twentieth Century, by the end of that century the whole of Indonesia's central island of Java had reached a level of population density that demographers usually regard as 'urban.' Those who move can come from rural areas of Java or other islands, and before they leave the country at least once they make an intermediate move to one of Indonesia's principal cities. Some return from these Indonesian cities or the overseas cities to their villages after a period of work, some come back from overseas to remain in Indonesian cities. Thus many are perpetual travellers, moving through threatening or hostile zones.

Those who move to work follow a pattern established in the social changes accompanying the creation of forms of capitalism. An historical approach to labour mobility in Indonesia serves two purposes: it demonstrates continuities in patterns of movement, showing that Indonesian proletarian history has depth and magnitude; and it provides an alternative view of Indonesian history. Instead of histories of colonial rulers, aristocrats and ruling classes, the element of mobility is the starting point of a critical social history of Indonesia.

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A comparative dimension is necessary for any larger scale regional perspective. In this case the most apt comparison is with other places that have undergone such changes. It is Europe that has provided many of the best-documented examples of 'changing historical realities' governing the interrelatedness of country and the city, to use the terms of the eloquent documenter of such change, Raymond Williams (1973, 288).

Williams, as one who had moved from village to city (and back), writes about the power of the ideas of city and country that underlie fundamental social transformations. As he says, we should not regard what happened in his example, England, as definitive of all forms of industrialisation, but 'the English experience remains exceptionally important: not only symptomatic but in some ways diagnostic; in its intensity still memorable...' (Williams, 1973: 2). My intention here is to follow the pattern Williams uses to analyse English understandings of 'country' and 'city', in order to demonstrate how such understandings could illuminate Indonesian experiences of labour mobility. Williams' example is more useful because it allows us to see that movements that Indonesians undergo are movements between moral worlds, and so allows for insights into 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1973: 35).

Williams' book operates around the two-sided natures of both country and city. While the rural may be the subject of nostalgia for a once-lost 'Golden Age', a broken pastoral idyll, it is as much a backwards/backwoods site, a place of yokels. Likewise the city is an 'anti-pastoral', too large to be a 'knowable community' it takes on aspects of darkness and light, as the sink of corruption as well as the futuristic metropolis. The 'bright lights' draw in rural populations with their promise of prosperity and enlightenment, but too often delivering a life of slum poverty.

Williams' examples of the ways that country and city are perceived are from British literature—Dickens, or the poets of English countryside, but he could equally have chosen that great hymn to mobile modernity, Chuck Berry's 'Promised Land', as an expression of the religious sense of anxiety and promise embedded in mobility. Before examining the emotions that Indonesians have invested in mobility, the layers or forms of mobility that have been persistent elements of modern Indonesian history need to be mapped.

These layers can be traced back at least to early modern Indonesia. There are strong traditions of movement amongst most peoples in the archipelago, traditions related to pilgrimage and political upheaval, and which pattern labour mobility. The most famous of these traditions is called *merantau* — travelling to gain experience. The word '*rantau*' originally referred to the coast or shore to which people travelled from the hinterland, but acquired meanings of sailing upriver, studying abroad, wandering, and migration in general (Echols and Shadily 1989, s.v.). This is a long tradition on Sumatra, usually associated with the Minangkabau people, for whom it is part of their *adat* or custom. Men travelled on the *rantau* to make their fortunes. The customary status of

merantau, points us towards a long history of mobility on that island that is matched by almost all the other islands of Indonesia.

In the Eastern part of the archipelago almost every ethnic group documented by anthropologists has tales of origin elsewhere, of travel by boat and ship to the place they are now. In these traditions ancient kingdoms such as Melaka or Majapahit, or even more exotic places, are enshrined as sources of movement in ritual songs (see e.g. Hoskins, 1993: 35). Even supposedly sedentary islands such as Bali have similar genealogies full of movement, stories of clan dispersal from some original village such as the seventeenth century capital of Gèlgèl (see e.g. Boon 1977: 72-76).

War, religion and mobility

In the case of Bali, as with some of the Eastern Indonesian examples, the tales of movement begin with war. Those who move are refugees from political upheavals, a theme that has continued into the Twenty-First Century. Kumar (1979, 1980) has written on the movement of peoples throughout Java in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century — the result of the series of wars by which the Dutch conquered the island. In these wars in the Eastern Littoral of Java they ‘brought the land to stillness’ (1979: 191) through atrocities and scorched-earth policies that entirely wiped out the local population and the Madurese, Balinese, Buginese, Chinese, Balinese and English who had collected there. It was not until the nineteenth-century expansion of the sugar industry that this area was repopulated by peoples from Central Java and the unfertile island of Madura (1979: 192).

Anderson has extended Kumar’s discussion to paint a picture of the lives of the mobile populations of Java, the wandering aristocrats, mercenaries, thieves, performers, teachers of martial arts, religious scholars, magicians, teachers of mystical lore, peddlers, merchants and prostitutes (1990: 276). While some of those who were displaced resettled elsewhere, in many cases permanently mobile bands were created in the Eighteenth Century. Many of these were associated with strongmen, *jago* combining physical and mystical prowess, who could be hired to stave up support for unpopular village headmen, or who operated criminal networks extending across whole regions (Schulte Nordholt, 1991).

If Kumar is right in speculating that the expansion of Dutch control was what set people in motion on Java, then she may also have had an eye to Sulawesi. The story of the Bugis and Makasar diasporas has been well told, from the Seventeenth-Century exile of Arung Palaka when he became Java’s leading *condottiere*, to his defeat of Goa and the sending into exile from Sumbawa to Ayuthaya of the Makasar aristocracy (Andaya, 1981).² Not all movements were necessarily set in motion by the Dutch, however, as Minangkabau mobility

² The old Royal Palace in Bangkok includes in its museum display the weapons of the ‘Makasar’ troupe of palace guards, identifiably Indonesian through their crises and other weapons.

decreased in the nineteenth century when the Dutch came to control the surrounding regions (Gooszen, 1999: 29).

Aristocratic movements have long genealogies. Anderson's discussions of the mobile bands of Java include reference to the wandering knights, *lelana*, who are the frequent subject of Javanese tales. Such tales go back to the Medieval kingdom of Majapahit, when displaced lesser lords could establish their own kingdoms by creating bands of followers and marrying the right women. Similar stories are found throughout Southeast Asia, and are indicative of the movable nature of pre-colonial polities (see Vickers, 1993). In such cases the differences between roaming aristocrats and marauding bandits are of degree rather than kind. Many of these wandering princes also became identified with the later Bugis mercenaries that moved throughout Java, highlighted by the figure of *klana* in the *topeng* masked dance-drama.

Such mobility is general throughout Southeast Asia. Ruling classes have always been very mobile, as illustrated by their mixed ethnicities. Likewise trade has created diverse urban centres, as in the case of Bangkok's formation as a city of Malays, Chinese, Cham, Acehnese, Mons, Portuguese, Vietnamese and others (Askew, 2002: 20-23).

The extensive literature of aristocratic mobility on Java, found in such encyclopaedic texts as the *Serat Centini*, merges with tales of religious mobility. The earlier Javanese literature of wandering princes included stories of pilgrimage to temples dotted throughout the Javanese landscape. Such traditions of pilgrimage were readily adapted into the Sufi streams of Islam that came into Indonesia, with their cults of the graves of saints. In Javanese Islam, to be a strong believer or *santri* is to travel to places of knowledge, such as the religious schools or *pondok* to which young men become apprenticed. Islam also brought to Java an extensive literature of travel for enlightenment (e.g. Bonneff, 1987). The ultimate version of such religious travel is the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *hajj*. Some *hajji* stayed there or in other parts of the Middle East (see Laffan, 2003). To the examples of politics creating forced mobility mentioned above we can add those of natural disasters in creating diasporas, Indonesia being subject to frequent volcanic disturbances.

Throughout the Nineteenth Century colonial wars increased in intensity as the Netherlands East Indies was created. Whole populations fled either the colonial advance, or sought refuge under the Dutch. By the first decade of the Twentieth Century the boundaries of the archipelagic colony had been established, and movement within those boundaries became subject to colonial regulation, or at least attempts at regulation. Dutch control abated political movement, but could not stop the famines of the 1840s, 1870s, 1890s and at the turn of the Twentieth Century that moved whole populations around in Java and the other islands (see Davis, 2001). Such famines coincided in a number of cases with major economic crises, notably the great Depressions of the late 1880s and the early 1930s.

New waves of movement were caused by the impact of the Pacific War and subsequent Revolution between 1942 and 1949; the regional revolts and secessionist movements of the 1950s; and the flight of tens of thousands to escape the anti-Communist killings of 1965. In the Suharto era reporting of political movement was stifled, but people fled political violence in Aceh, Papua and East Timor. Many Acehnese have fled to Malaysia, following the pattern set during the Aceh War of the Nineteenth Century, in which 10,000 people fled there (De Jong, 1998: 335-6; see Wong and Afrisal, 2002).³ The renewed conflicts that emerged in the aftermath of the fall of Suharto — in Aceh, Maluku, Kalimantan, East Timor, West Papua and Central Sulawesi — created the most intense movements of recent decades. In the year 2001 at least 1,305,886 refugees had been documented within Indonesia. Add to these those displaced persons who moved across national boundaries to Malaysia, Papua-New Guinea and East Timor, and those who refused to see themselves as ‘refugees’, and the number could probably be doubled. Despite cessation in some of these conflicts, not all have moved back (*The Jakarta Post* 24th August 2001).

Labour Mobility

Political flight and labour mobility are closely related. The movement of refugees creates one class of workers: the cheapest. Those who have no choice in their movement, and who live in the impoverished conditions of refugee camps, will usually take whatever work is on offer (Duncan, 2002). Likewise there are strong links between earlier upheavals and unfree labour: political and ecological disasters in India and China created waves of indentured coolie labour, bringing hundreds of thousands into Indonesia in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. During World War Two waves of forced movement including the sending of hundreds of thousands of forced labourers, *romusha*, both to other islands in the archipelago, and to other parts of Southeast Asia, especially Singapore. Nearly three million Javanese were involved in some form of forced labour under the Japanese at any one time, but up to half the able-bodied males of Java and Madura were affected by what Sato calls ‘total mobilisation’, with 200,000 sent beyond Java (Sato 1994; Dick *et al.* 2002, 166). Some of those who were forced to move never came back, and while the death rates were high, many people had simply lost contact with their earlier lives and established new ones.

Coolie labour in the Netherlands East Indies was only in part Chinese and Indian. In 1931 those on the dreaded ‘coolie contracts’ in the outer islands of Indonesia numbered 203,366, consisting of 30,426 Chinese, 172,181 Javanese and 759 ‘Others’. A further 156,267 worked as ‘free labour’, again predominantly Javanese (133,848), although including 8,429 ‘Others’ (Furnivall, 1939: 356). The number of ‘free’ labourers had increased in the early decades of the Twentieth Century as the harsh ‘Coolie Ordinances’ came under increased scrutiny both in the Netherlands and abroad, although in the 1930s

³ I have also met people on Bali who were Javanese refugees from the ‘Mysterious Shootings’ (*Petrus*) of the 1980s.

some workers preferred to remain under contract because there was some security in the government scrutiny of those contracts, and also free labourers were liable to local taxes from which the contract workers were exempt (Furnivall, 1939: 355).

There was a constant form of 'voluntary' movement throughout the archipelago, although most involved were faced with the choice of moving or starving. At the beginning of the Twentieth Century the colonial government of the Netherlands East Indies commissioned a number of welfare studies of the people of Java. The 1904 survey asked the hundreds of thousands of 'little people' travelling on trains why they were doing so; 69.5% gave their reasons as economic: 'market, search for work' (cited in Mrázek, 2002: 11). Those who could afford to move to find work should be considered as relatively better off than the refugees or 'contract coolies', in that at least they had the assets or ability to borrow in order to pay fares.

The colonial census information reveals the major centres towards which movement took place in the first part of the Twentieth Century, and these were indeed places of employment, such as the *batik* factories of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Urbanisation was important to the Netherlands East Indies, but by 1930 only 5.2% of the population of Java, the most populous island, lived in cities. Urbanisation is a phenomenon of the most recent one or two generations for most Indonesians. As Dick *et al.* note, the giant cities of Java, Jakarta and Surabaya, were swollen by refugees by the end of World War Two, but even then their populations were only 850,000 and 600,000 respectively (2002, 167). They were to grow to over ten times that number in the latter part of the Twentieth Century.

The major destination during the colonial period was still agricultural or semi-agricultural areas based around the large capitalist estates (Gooszen, 1999: 52, 67, 85-7). Even in the colonial period migration was not confined to the colony, Malacca was a major recipient of labour migrants from the East Indies, taking in 153,758 people between 1900 and 1930 (Gooszen, 1999: table 2.2a). In colonial times Java was the major source of intra- and inter-colonial movement. Given the nature of the estate labour involved, we might expect that labour mobility in this period was dominated by men, but in Javanese urbanisation at least, the majority was women (Gooszen, 1999: 81).

Raharto (2001) has described how the lines of voluntary and involuntary movement in earlier times formed the basis of more recent labour migrations. The roads between Indonesian and Singapore and Malaysia, for example follow old routes. The religious roads were the basis of labour migration, as in the case of the *haj* brokers who organised *haj* labour movements. Singapore was the regional centre for *haj* brokering (see also Laffan, 2003: 48-49). She omits the darker side of this, how wealthy Indonesian *haji* such as Mohamad Kasim of Selayar, near Sulawesi, were suspected of using pilgrimage ties to Mecca to export slaves in the late Nineteenth Century (Heersink, 1995: 115).

Such patterns are not so different from the stories of captivity and suffering endured by maids in Saudi Arabia (see Ford, 2002).

The statistics that were produced during the New Order period, especially for the best-documented period of 1975-1995, show Indonesia as a country constantly on the move. Some provinces were more mobile than others, with North Sumatra, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java and South Sulawesi all showing out migration of greater than 100,000 people in each five-year sub-period. Of these, overcrowded Central Java shows the greatest movement, with out-migration of over 1,150,000 for the period 1985-1990. Some of the Indonesians were moving internally, with South Sumatra, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, East Kalimantan, and South Sulawesi all recording in-migration of greater than 100,000 in each five-year sub-period, however many of those who moved began to leave the country, in numbers that officially increased to 89,300 in the sub-period 1990-1995 (Muhidin, 2002: especially table 1).⁴ By 2000 457,876 Indonesians were recorded as leaving the country to work overseas. 71.2% of these went to Southeast Asia, including the 191,700 who went to work in Malaysia. The next most significant destination was Saudi Arabia, where 114,067 people went, but that was almost 20,000 less than the previous year (Haris, 2002b: 28-29).

Breaking Affective Ties

All this tells us little about how it felt to move, but there are some sources that give insights into the processes of labour mobility as experienced by those who moved. The earliest such document is a poem that describes the experiences of leaving villages in Aceh to go to work on the pepper plantations of the West Coast of Sumatra. This work, the *Hikayat Ranto* (Drewes, 1980) by Leube' Isa of Pidië, dates from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the dawn of colonial capitalism. It is:

A discourse intended for men, old and young, who are leaving the country,
Leaving the country and their parents, and bound for the woods,
men of all ages.
The Lord has created the desolate West Coast (*ranto*); there man goes wrong (line 50ff).

The text is an Islamic moral work, attempting to map out a realm of experience for those who involved in a new form of work. The pepper plantations were mostly Chinese run. In Sumatra, as with the sugar industry in Java, Chinese entrepreneurs were forerunners in areas later opened up to European capital. The poet writes from experience, as he provides a cautionary tale about the implications of being involved in market relations in which one sells one's labour for cash. This poem of moral resistance to commodification is

⁴ These statistics have to be interpreted with scepticism, particularly since they are based on identity cards (KTP), and most Indonesians obtain multiple identity cards during their lives.

unremittingly pessimistic about the social implications of entering into paid work, and having to travel to do so. As the poet describes it, each worker undertakes a journey through the wildness, when the devil (*Iblis*) enters his heart:

First of all he directs you to commit pederasty; secondly to partake of opium;
Thirdly to gamble, and this eventually makes you a thief.
Fourthly to organise cock-fights, by holding out the prospect of considerable profit...
Fifthly to go out plundering... (l. 58ff)

We know that later forms of coolie labour involved gambling, drugs and prostitution (including pederasty in these nearly all-male worlds) as means to keep workers permanently in debt through manipulating their only forms of entertainment. Although it was the overseers or foremen, rather than the managers themselves who profited from such activities, permanent indebtedness meant renewal of contracts.

The poem goes on to catalogue the other sins into which those who leave home can be drawn, and moves on to the grief of the wives who are left, conjuring images of deserted and bereft communities. But the women too are admonished, told not to be too demanding lest they drive away their men (line 230), and warned that they too could fall into a sinful state by going off with other men while their husbands are away, and could eventually end up as widows.

In this poem the village is an ideal community shattered by processes of commodification. In the succeeding centuries the image of the lost home community has continued. The moral anxiety in the poem is one documented in other accounts of labour. Catharina Purwani-Williams' (2001) work on women who travel from Flores to work reveals similar trends. In this case the moral threat is perceived by fathers, who are anxious about the perils that their daughters have to undergo when they travel. By the latter part of the Twentieth Century, as labour migration became even more heavily feminised, anxiety about moral surveillance became a prime motif in public discourse about these travelling women. There are no legal protections for such women, and an abundance of those in the labour chains who are ready to abuse women under their authority, knowing that poverty gives little power to object (Primawati and Haris 2002; Yuarsi 2002). However there are crucial differences between the attempts by women workers or women's group to advocate their cases, genuine fear of the unknown by those left at home, attempts by male family members to assert control over women, and patriarchal disquiet by various state and religious power-holders who realise that their power bases are threatened by female mobility. Yuarsi's study of the problems facing women workers is aptly subtitled: 'from domestic violence to general violence.'

For some women the experience of travelling to work is unrewarding, materially or spiritually. Of women tea-pickers of West Java interviewed by Wattie, some

simply gave up and returned to their villages because the inadequate wages. One reported being more content within the confines of village life because she had experienced solidarity with the other workers at the bottom of the plantation hierarchy. However another who had also experienced work as a servant felt more restless and unsatisfied with her life, and thus was more likely to want to go overseas to find a better life than to go back to the village (Wattie, 2002: 54).

Both Purwani-Williams and Haris (2002a), working in Lombok, show that although the travellers return, their lives have not been made easier by their work. In some cases, these are young women who will go back to working as maids in Hong Kong, the money they have sent to save their families' dwindling land holdings having been spent, or perhaps gambled by unemployed husbands. In the cases of Sasaks who work illegally, 73% are married (Haris, 2002a: 81). They rarely have anything to come back to, as indicated by one man:

When my son married he was fourteen years old, while his wife was twelve. After they married, then we looked to borrow some money with a Taikong (labour broker) to pay for the cost of travel to Malaysia. Now Tola [my son] has been in Malaysia for three years. Alhamdulillah [thanks be to God] he can already send money to his wife, although only twice. But what's important is that he can be responsible, rather than be unemployed, not working, at home, not even owning any rice-fields (Haris 2002a, 82).

In this and many other accounts, ties to the land are a prime element of identity. The rural is the real basis of being, and loss of land means a cutting off of bonds to place. For Balinese who have transmigrated to Sumbawa, Sulawesi, Timor and Sumatra, most who moved between the 1950s and 1980s did so because of the promise of land, and they stayed because they were successful as wet-rice pioneers. They felt 'ashamed' (*jengah*) at not owning land, the source of sustenance for their family (Sutjaja 1997: 214).

The rural landscape revealed in accounts of labour mobility is not a smooth one. In the Javanese and Balinese aristocratic tales of wandering from pre-colonial times the landscape is a place of the beauties of nature, where one can find revelations of the divine. But it is also a place needing to be given order by divine or royal will (Day 1994). The really positive images of landscapes in both ancient and modern Indonesian art are those of ricefields (see Vickers 1999).

In modern proletarian accounts there is a different landscape between village and place of work, a threatening jungle, although sometimes that 'jungle' is more like a scrub or waste land. In the *Hikayat Ranto* the journey to work is through a place of danger, it is safer to stay in the village. Likewise in a recent

Balinese autobiographical account of the processes of transmigration, the journal from the migrants village to Sumbawa is described as a terrible ordeal, one of travel sickness and long waiting to arrive first at a parched landscape from hell, and then to be left to make their way through a steaming jungle full of wild pigs until at last they were greeted by those who had gone before (Lanus n.d.).

This negative vision of the landscape outside the village is one that finds many variations, especially in paintings and stories depicting conditions during the Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and the Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949). In Pramoedya Ananta Toer's stories of his region of eastern Java, Blora, during the 1940s the countryside is a shadowy and dangerous world populated by itinerants, mostly beggars, and patrolled by those who work on behalf of the occupying forces (Pramoedya 1990). Sudjojono, Indonesia's founder of modern art, depicts similar blighted landscapes of the Revolution, bare lands of burnt trees and ruined buildings, with hunched and frightened figures moving furtively between the rocks and ruins. Only those who carry weapons can move confidently (see illustration in Vickers, 1999: 16 & 41).

Rural to Urban

In such images of the rural as these any it is the roads leading out of the village that point to a world of danger and ruin. Such a 'road without end' is the eponymous subject of a novel by Mochtar Lubis (1952) that paints a picture of the urban and semi-urban worlds in which his protagonists wander like lost souls caught up in the violence of the Revolution.

For those travelling on such a road, the city is a transitory place, a stopping-off point rather than a 'home'. Even now, when Jakarta's population has reached a level estimated at twelve million⁵, the sense of transitory nature of this population can be gained by observing the most massive of traffic-stopping events: Lebaran. During this celebration of the end of the Fasting Month virtuous Muslims are compelled to visit 'home' bearing gifts. The result is days of traffic deadlock and a deserted city as millions go on the move. Journalist Ajar Aedi gives 2002 figures for Java, Bali and Sumatra indicating some 20-30 million people on the move on public transport, pointing out that there is strong social pressure to drive one's own car home for Lebaran, to indicate success. If you do not own a car, it is better to at least rent. One family interviewed had spent around Rupiah 9 million (approx A\$1,8000) on travel and gifts (Aedi, 2003).

Impermanence as 'circular migration' is rarely captured in the statistics. The seasonal workers who moved to the city for a few months to supplement farming income in the slow seasons were noted to have all gone home especially for the Dutch government's 1930 census, thus denying demographers any sense of their presence (Gooszen 1998: 81 & n. 25).

⁵ The transitory and undocumented part of the city is huge — Jakarta's population expands by at least three million each working day.

Jellinek's evocative historical picture of Kebon Kacang, the 'peanut garden' that became a 'slum' suburb of Jakarta, describes the ease with which circular migrants in the 1930s fitted into the households of relatives, a pattern that continues to the present day (Jellinek 1991: ch. 1).

One group that draws attention to this sense of impermanence in the city are those associated with the sea, the sailors, fishermen and dock-workers whose lives revolve around a sense of stopping over. One Indonesian who depicts this is Arena Wati (Muhammad Dahlan bin Abdul Biang), a Makassarese author who lives in Malaysia. His short story 'Syonan To 2604', depicts Singapore under Japanese occupation (Syonan To was its Japanese name). Singapore is a city lived on the street in this story, a point from which people travel to Burma, Java or Thailand. Then, as now, Singapore was the key city to which many mobile Indonesians oriented themselves.

There are many factors that contribute to a lack of attachment to the city. In colonial times cities were firmly bifurcated. The city proper, the *Gemeente*, was Dutch, ordered and quiet. The rest was *kampung*, a term which also means 'village', separate quarters (sometimes ethnically distinct) with little or no infrastructure (see e.g. Frederick 1989). Such *kampung* are usually depicted as sites of misery and poverty, places where one tries to make a living, but where one may die unnoticed (Jellinek, 1991; Pramoedya, 2000).

The sense of the city as degradation is captured in the 1924 short story by the radical activist journalist, Mas Marco Kartodikromo, 'Images of Extravagance' (Marco 1981). In Mas Marco's story the city of Semarang, the third largest on Java, is a site of pleasure. The modernity of the bustle of vehicles on crowded asphalt roads, of people crammed together as they head towards places of pleasure, intoxicates the young protagonist.

The driver whipped the horse on so that it ran fast. Because of the delman's (carriage's) rubber wheels, there was hardly any noise. Only the 'clip-clop' of the horse's hooves on the asphalt road could be heard.

Sodirga, for that was the young man's name, knew that this was a really fine delman, besides he seemed rather pleased with himself. Soon he sat back, pushed out his chest and took a Melacrino cigareete from his pocket. A short time later, about fifteen minutes, Soedirgo arrived at the *alun-alun* (town square) and told the driver to stop in front of the *Opera Bimajoe* building, where the story *Juli-Juli Bintang Tiga* was having its first night.

With newly cut hair, laundered white shirt and trousers, silver watch chain and shiny shoes, Soedirga's extravagances are many. As a clerk in a trading company he cannot afford these things, but borrows to increase his style, carrying a rain coat, paying for a carriage so he does not get his shoes dirty, then lavishing more than his monthly wage on a glamorous young woman, who

takes his money along with his attentions, and leaves him with syphilis. The Arab from Kampung Melayu comes for his rain-coat at the end of Soedirgo's two days of pleasure, while the landlady confiscates his clothes and pawns them to pay the back rent and loans. Soedirgo then loses his job, his one remaining set of clothes get filthy, and eventually he signs a 'coolie contract' to go to Deli, the port for the Sumatran plantations.

'Don't be fooled by the bright lights', Mas Marco tells us, but the cities grow and grow. A more recent version of Mas Marco's images of the city are Dede Eri Supriya's paintings. In these the city is an alienating world of the poor, a place of enclosure and capture. His images of the city are dominated by grid lines, made up of girders or laneways that hedge in people, where horizons have disappeared and isolated figures wander aimlessly. The liminal state of movement is disorienting leaving one open to exploitation, but even those who cannot afford to live in the city struggle on, surviving on its margins, succeeding for a while in the so-called 'informal' world of un-noted, un-taxed work on the streets, before slipping back (Jellinek, 1991). Although not all literature and painting is uniformly bleak in depicting of the city, it is hard to find works in which the city emerges as a place of light and hope, but it still remains the only opportunity for many Indonesians, because 'movement' is part of a striving for social mobility—seen on the side of a truck in Central Java during the post-1997 economic crisis: '*Mangan ora mangan, ayo ke Ibu Kota*' (Eat or Starve, Let's go to the Capital).⁶

Indonesian cities then are impermanent sites of modernity. Cities contain nodes of liminality, of which *kampung*s are the main focus for movement. Those who can raise the fares to travel move with contact names and addresses of people they will link up to in an urban *kampung* made up, one hopes, of people from one's village of origin. People do not think of themselves as 'migrants' necessarily, because the village is always 'home', and in the process of travel you try to keep up those village links.

Village-City in Corridors

One of the problems of living in Twenty-First Century Java is that the boundaries between rural and urban have collapsed. One might say that such boundaries were never clearly there anyway, as the rural term for an urban unit, *kampung*, shows. Now factories can as often be located in small villages outside urban areas as in the unplanned and unstructured big cities, pockets of ricefields can still be found amidst office buildings. McGee and other theorists analysed this as the creation of 'rural-urban', *desakota*, regions (see Nas and Boender, 2002).

This blurring of these urban-rural distinctions has altered the spatial sense of previous eras, and has political implications for the way that Indonesians exist in society (see Young, 1994). The phenomenon feeds into broader, trans-

⁶ My thanks to Zamira Loebis.

national patterns of population consolidation and movement, the development of super or Megacities, and their linkage into urban corridors. Megacities have become vast reservoirs drawing on what might otherwise be rural hinterlands, that is zones of agricultural production and sources of cheap labour, but through increased infrastructure these zones have started to merge together into corridors (McGee 1997).

The urban corridors can most clearly be observed in satellite photographs of the world at night, when the urban concentrations show up as areas of light. In this case the Southeast Asian set of urban corridors can be seen to join together, in a line of lights that stretches from Bali, all through Java, breaking in Sumatra, then flaring up again at Singapore and snaking up through Malaysia to Bangkok and the hinterland on which it draws, an octopus with tentacles to Laos and Burma (NASA). It is from this corridor that movement occurs to a second corridor, one that runs from Hong Kong and Guandong, up the coast of China, linking to Taiwan and the blinding developed brightness of Japan.

In these corridors Indonesians meet other equally mobile populations. Thailand, for example, less disturbed by colonial history, is as much a site of people who have been moving for centuries. From provinces which only offer starvation or debt, or where village life is a nostalgic memory blurred by ecological disaster (see Ekachai 1990), or from the neighbouring countries which are some of the poorest in the world, people follow chains of movement that might take them to Bangkok, or to a building site in Singapore or to work in someone else's kitchen in Hong Kong. Young women are often the most mobile, the most modern, shaping new selves out of necessity (Mills, 1999).

Such corridors are zones of movement, or that enable movement. Ships, aeroplanes and road transport provide the lines in the corridor, and people as well as goods constantly shift along them. As Raymond Williams has taught us, we need to be able to do more than interpret these movements as disembodied statistics. Those who move throughout the corridors are not an undifferentiated mass. The class divisions are strongly marked, between the mobile wealth of the expatriate managers providing higher skills to keep the corridors running, to the people who spend their lives selling food on the streets, to the construction workers who build the structures, to the maids who live in the housing complexes.

All classes bring different imaginative maps to the corridors. Purwani-Williams gives us a literal example of this in the drawings of maids whose sense of space is dominated by the terrible holding camps in Surabaya and the parks where they spend their Sundays, the extremes of cruel exploitation and the brief moments of leisure that mark out the journeys between Flores and Hong Kong. The journeys of these women are daring ventures into the moral danger of another type of jungle outside their villages. They are rightly proud of their achievements, to have taken responsibility for their lives and the lives and fates of their family, and to have succeeded in an alienating zone. In attending to the

ways that Indonesians perceive country and city we can give such women the respect they deserve.

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