

The Paradox of Post-Colonial Historic Preservation: Implications of Dutch Heritage Preservation in Modern Jakarta

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Abstract

This project explores two projects to preserve the footprint of the colonizing Dutch in post-colonial Jakarta, Indonesia, questioning their implications for contemporary Indonesia. The first, to restore and reinvigorate the historic (Dutch) center of Jakarta, preserves the urban morphology of the colonial period, which at first seems to contradict the post-colonial political situation. The second, the restoration of a Dutch colonial official's former residence into a community center, financed by Dutch businesses active in Indonesia, appears to be a gift to the local community; I interrogate whether this Dutch building is being preserved for Indonesia, or for the Netherlands. I suggest that the complicated motives of these projects are informed by the hybrid contemporary identities that are the legacy of a colonial state, and thus these projects to preserve colonial history retain a resonance in contemporary Indonesian society.

Heritage preservation generally involves the choice of a historic moment that is especially meaningful to the present identity of the group supporting preservation. In this project, I look at two heritage preservation projects that choose a moment seemingly at odds to the identity of the groups involved. In these two projects, Dutch heritage is being preserved in the former Dutch colony of Indonesia. How is this contradiction reconciled in post-colonial Indonesia? I suggest that here, the "post" of post-colonial does not represent a complete rupture with the colonial past, but instead, a state of hybrid identity, combining elements of the colonial past and the post-colonial present.

History of Dutch Involvement in Indonesia

As projects of heritage restoration necessarily involve history, let us turn now to a brief history of the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia. I will begin with the Dutch arrival, as the projects discussed below begin their engagement here. When the Dutch arrived on Java in the late sixteenth century, as part of their exploration to begin a

monopolistic spice trade route, they found many small Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms and Muslim sultanates. When they returned several years later, it was in the ships of the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC, a new type of business venture, a joint-stock company supported by the government, which attained monopoly status over Dutch commercial interests in the East Indies, and soon thereafter, over other European interests in the area.¹ In 1619, Jan Peterszoon Coen, then Governor-General of the VOC, established the VOC's capitol on Java, which he named Batavia, an allusion to the legendary ancestors of the Dutch Republic.²

The location had been a Javanese port since the twelfth century, called first Sunda Kalapa, and later Jayakarta, the origin of today's name, Jakarta. Batavia was not meant to be the capitol of a colonial empire, and the Dutch interests initially did not spread beyond the environs of Batavia. Batavia was intended to be a port, a place for provisioning, and an East Indian administrative center. First, in 1618, Coen built a fort on the northern coast of Java, just east of the opening of the Ciliwung River, and just north of Jayakarta. Jayakarta was then ruled by a local indigenous leader, and in addition to Javanese subjects, Chinese, Portuguese, and British merchants lived in Jayakarta and traded there with each other and the Javanese. In 1619, after about six months of struggle, the VOC gained the upper hand, took over Jayakarta, and razed the old city. The Golden Age of the two restoration projects I discuss below begins at this moment. At first, much of the VOC's resources were retained in the heavily fortified fort, but as the Dutch began to feel less vulnerable on Java, they began to build Batavia.³

¹ Jonathan A. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 320-322.

² *Ibid.*, 323.

³ Susan Abeyasekere, *Jakarta: A History* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), 7-12.

The VOC was wildly profitable in the beginning for its shareholders, but its profitability would decline over the course of the seventeenth century, partly due to a shift in European demand,⁴ and further over the eighteenth century due, as Peter H. van der Brug suggests, to the unhealthiness of Batavia,⁵ and was liquidated in 1795 due to changes in the European territories under the French revolutionary government.⁶ At this point the holdings of the VOC became the property of the Dutch government. In opposition to Napoleonic France, and allied with the British, the Dutch Republic temporarily lost the Netherlands East Indies to the English until after the Napoleonic Wars.⁷

After the Napoleonic Wars, the Dutch again became rulers of the Indonesian archipelago. This is when the colonial period officially begins, although it is certainly possible to argue that the area under the VOC was essentially a private colony. As the colony had been declining in profitability in terms of trade, the Dutch now turned inland, and began to take control of the land, rather than simply using the area of Batavia/Jakarta as a port and administrative center. Here begins what is called the “cultuurstelsel,” or Cultivation System (also translated as Culture System), which would be the Dutch policy towards their colony until 1870. Under this system, the subjects of the colony were obligated to pay exhaustive taxes to the colonial administration, in the form of labor, land, and produce. In practice, this meant that each farmer had to spend half of the year cultivating rice for personal consumption and the local market, and half cultivating sugar

⁴ Ibid., 940.

⁵ Peter H. van der Brug, “Unhealthy Batavia and the decline of the VOC in the eighteenth century,” in *Jakarta/Batavia: Socio-cultural essays*, ed. Kees Grijns and Peter J. M. Nas, 43-74 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000).

⁶ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 1122.

⁷ Ibid., 1127.

cane for the Dutch. These two crops require very different techniques, and the cane cultivation majorly disrupted farming practice. Abuses of the system by Dutch overseers led to further exploitation.⁸

In 1870, because of mounting pressure against the Cultivation System by Dutch liberals, many of whom knew of the exploitations having read *Max Havelaar*, there was a shift to what is called the Liberal Period.⁹ This system gave more rights to local village-level governments, who theoretically, though not in practice, had the right to refuse the constrictive taxation.¹⁰ Realizing the continuing abuses, and claiming to be more enlightened, in 1900, the Dutch began pursuing the Ethical Policy, which intended to right the wrongs of Dutch colonial exploitation through welfare programs, Dutch-language education, and an intent to share governance with the locals, once they were educated enough.¹¹ The Dutch were able to feel better about themselves as a result, though this system again was not very different from the previous.

Real change finally came with the Japanese occupation of island Southeast Asia during World War II. The Japanese essentially took over from the Dutch as colonists, but their policy of rousing the political interests of the locals, and their training and arming of locals, would contribute to the movement for Indonesian independence once Japan lost the war.¹² On August 17th, 1945, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence. The Dutch, however, had no intention of giving up their colonial empire, so until 1949, the Dutch and Indonesians fought over the archipelago. Once Indonesia

⁸ David Joel Steinberg, ed., *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 157-8.

⁹ Multatuli (pseudonym for Eduard Douwes Dekker), *Max Havelaar, or The Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*, trans. Roy Edwards (New York: Maxwell, 1967).

¹⁰ Steinberg, *In Search of Southeast Asia*, 158.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹² *Ibid.*, 418-419.

gained independence, the Dutch retained the right to carry on economically in Indonesia. In 1957, however, the Indonesian government took over the Dutch and other foreign business ventures, handing them over to the military. These included Dutch oil and rubber interests, so it was a huge financial gain for the Indonesian government.¹³

In 1965, Indonesian politics were again to undergo a huge change. A coup, attributed officially to the Indonesian communist party (PKI), against President Sukarno led to a counter-coup by General Suharto. This was followed by the mass slaughter of an estimated one to two million suspected communists, led by Suharto. Suharto became the leader of Indonesia, appointed by Sukarno in 1966.¹⁴ Suharto's regime, called the "New Order," ran Indonesia like a corporation, historian David Joel Steinberg suggests.¹⁵ He returned the Dutch and other foreign assets to the foreign interests, opening up the economy. He won the election in 1968 and became president, and won the next three elections as well, though his democracy was dubious. Suharto's was a dictatorial military regime. Abidin Kusno suggests that it was not much different from the colonial regime, except that it was run by an indigenous leader.¹⁶ In 1998, Suharto was forced to step down because of popular pressure and corruption charges. Indonesia is currently a parliamentary democracy and is rebuilding its economy in the wake of the New Order and a financial collapse in 1997-1998.

Dutch Heritage Preservation Under General Suharto

¹³ Ibid., 418-424.

¹⁴ Ibid., 424-425.

¹⁵ Ibid., 425.

¹⁶ Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, urban space and political cultures in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2000), xii, 8, 72.

I will discuss two heritage preservation projects that aimed to restore parts of the legacy of Indonesia's Dutch colonial past, and the implications for modern Indonesia at the time of their restorations. The first project I will discuss, begun in 1970, was to restore Jakarta's Dutch historic urban center, the first part of Batavia that was built by the Dutch in the 1620s. This area has remained the commercial center of Jakarta up to the modern era. This project was initiated by the director of Jakarta's Department of Development and Jakarta's governor, and would come to be supported by a coalition of government bodies, the Departments of City Planning, Public Works, Sanitation, Parks, Traffic, Tourism, and Industry, as well as the mayor of West Jakarta and Jakarta's vice-governor. The four-year run of the project cost US \$4 million. The project was only partially completed, partly due to lack of funds and lack, perhaps, of interest in its completion. James L. Cobban, who has researched this project extensively, determined the project to be a failure, with only a few minor successes.¹⁷

The original goal of this project was to preserve the morphology of the seventeenth century urban center of Batavia, also called Kota, which would be especially interesting to the Western audience, as a Dutch planned city.¹⁸ The plan was modified to preserve the area as close as possible to its appearance in the 1940s at the end of colonial rule, which was considered a more feasible goal, considering the area's current land-use.¹⁹ As the area continued to be heavily used by commercial functions, a plan of minimal intervention was proposed.²⁰ The project had three principles, one, to change

¹⁷ James L. Cobban, "The Ephemeral Historic District in Jakarta," *Geographical Review* 75, no.3 (July 1985): 300-318.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 312.

the use of the area to low-intensity land-use; two, to beautify streets, canals, and open spaces; and three, to restore specific historic buildings and reuse them less intensely and for an Indonesian and tourist public. The project was expected to nurture the tourism industry, nationalism, and intellectual appeal.²¹ The immediate catalyst was a proposed road project, which would have cut through the area and destroyed the historic appeal.²²

Components of the plan were the restoration of the Dutch city hall (Stadhuis) and its square; the reuse of a vacant building on this same square as a center for performing arts; the reuse of an old army barracks as a museum of the history of Jakarta, with each room named after a famous person from the colonial period; the cleaning of the canal, which was silted and full of weeds; the cleaning of the harbor and the anchoring there of three model boats, a VOC ship, a sixteenth century Portuguese boat, and a modern Chinese junk; the rerouting of streets; the removing of shacks and lean-tos; a maritime museum; a spice museum; the restoration of a sea aquarium; the restoration and landscaping of an eighteenth century mosque; and the building of an arcade with shops and restaurants.²³ This plan seems to be inclusive of the diverse groups in Jakarta. For example, the model ships would represent European naval history as well as Chinese, though not indigenous, though none of these ships would end up being built.²⁴ The museum of Jakarta's history would represent Dutch colonial history, as it is a VOC building and the rooms would be named after Dutch colonial figures, and the collection would include Dutch decorative arts, as well as Javanese artifacts.²⁵ However, the result of this unfinished portion of the project is a museum with a jumbled collection of Dutch

²¹ Ibid., 310.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 312-316.

²⁴ Ibid., 314-315.

²⁵ Ibid., 313.

furniture, and not much else.²⁶ Part of the plan of beautifying and reordering the streets was to mount plaques with the former Dutch street names, but this was not accomplished due to nationalist opposition.²⁷ The main accomplishment of this project is the renovation and beautification of the Stadhuis and its square, an isolated monument preservation, rather than a district preservation.²⁸ While lip service was given to including Indonesian interests and culture in the project, very little was accomplished to this end.

The ultimate failure of this project can be seen in the research project of Ronald Gill in the early 1990s, which again takes up the project of the district preservation of downtown Batavia/Jakarta. Again, in 1993, there was a proposal for a road to be constructed across the district.²⁹ Gill does not mention the 1970 project, suggesting that there was no community memory of the project when he was doing his research. He was motivated to preserve the area because he was concerned about Kota “recover[ing] from its present loss of memory,”³⁰ so it seems to be primarily an intellectual endeavor, void of interest in tourist worth or nationalism on Gill’s part.

The second restoration project I focus on is the restoration and repurposing of the Former National Archives Building of Jakarta, formerly the villa of VOC Governor-General Reiner de Klerk, which was the recipient of the 2001 Award of Excellence from

²⁶ Ibid., 316.

²⁷ Ibid., 315.

²⁸ Ibid., 318.

²⁹ Ronald Gill, “Jakarta’s Urban Heritage: Restoration of the Urban Memory of Kota,” in *Issues in Urban Development*, ed. Peter J. M. Nas (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1995), 65-66.

³⁰ Ibid., 73.

UNESCO.³¹ This restoration project was completed in 1998, at a cost of US\$2 million. It was initiated by a Dutch lawyer working in Jakarta, who brought together a coalition (Stichting National Cadeau, or National Gift Foundation) of over 60 locally based Dutch companies to finance the project, which was to be a gift from the Dutch business community to Indonesia on its fiftieth anniversary of independence. As the Former National Archives Building, it was owned by the Indonesian government, and was one of the few remaining colonial-era villas in an area predominantly built up with modern buildings. When the National Archives moved from this location in the 1980s, to a more modern and climate-controlled building, the villa was left to deteriorate, presumably because the Indonesian government chose not to or could not afford to keep it up.

The building was an attractive project for the Dutch business coalition because, according to the project profile, “it was an architecturally valuable building with an interesting Indo-Dutch history.”³² As far as I can tell, the only interesting Indonesian history of this building is that it continued to house the National Archives after Indonesian independence, a function it had had since 1925. The project intended to give insight into the colonial past of Jakarta, as it would be restored to its eighteenth century VOC style. Originally, the project’s focus was on restoration merely for educational value, but because of Indonesian government and public input, the project refocused on reuse of the structure for social and cultural activities, such as exhibitions and wedding receptions. To make sure that the local community was involved in the project, the

³¹ All information regarding the National Archives Project come from: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO Bangkok, Asia Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation, Project Profile, 2001 Award of Excellence, updated 2007, <http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=2135>, 22 March 2007. For views of the renovated building, see Wedding Ku, <http://www.weddingku.com/collections/partnerdetail.asp?partnerID=365&ProductCategoryID=2>, 22 March 2007.

³² UNESCO Bangkok website (above).

restoration team hired Balinese painters to work on the crew. A committee was formed to continue to protect this monument, made up of both Indonesians and foreign expatriates. The conclusion of the UNESCO project profile is that the impact of the project has been to “generate greater appreciation of heritage both in the public and in the government.”³³

Whose Golden Age?

Both of these projects chose a Dutch colonial moment to preserve: in the case of the National Archives Building, the moment is eighteenth-century VOC Batavia and in the case of the Dutch Historic Urban Center project, the moment is the city center as it was before the area’s colonial status was disturbed by WWII, preserving diverse historical moments all encompassed by VOC and colonial history. It is ironic that the colonial period is considered the Golden Age of Jakarta, for both the Dutch and the Indonesians, because Indonesia is now post-colonial, but also because Batavia was a failure in colonial times, prompting European residents to move further inland to where the National Archives Building was and further south, because of the century-long malaria epidemic.³⁴ Colonial Batavia should be antithetical to modern Indonesia, for one because of its practice of segregation, including excluding all Javanese from living in Batavia, even as slaves or servants, which was built into the organization of the city into segregated neighborhoods. As Brenda Yeoh says in her discussion of colonial Singapore, “Colonial landscapes ideally reflected the power and prestige of the colonialists, were ordered, sanitized, and amenable to regulation, and structured to enhance the flow of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Brug, “Unhealthy Batavia.”

economic activities such as trade and communications which were crucial to the entire colonial community.”³⁵ Why preserve this in the post-colony? Naming the Golden Age of Jakarta as the colonial age glosses over the many negatives of the colonial past, and may even map some of these negatives onto the modern city. This issue of choosing the colonial past, as a Golden Age for modern Indonesia, will be taken up again later in my discussion of contemporary Indonesian identity.

Implications for the Present

While both of these projects focus on the past, as historical preservations, they have interesting implications for the present, though this is left out of both project reports. The Dutch Historic Urban Center project began at the beginning of Suharto’s regime, shortly after his massacre of suspected communists. The National Archives preservation project took place at the very end of Suharto’s regime. I find it odd that neither project report addresses the contemporary moment, aside from fearing that modernity’s buildings and roads may over-run the historical structures, especially considering that the government was involved in, at least in approving, both projects. While it is clear from both of these projects what historical moment they are preserving, what is it about this moment that is so important to contemporary history and identity?

As James Loewen suggests in his book about historical markers in the United States, a historical site evokes both the era it purports to memorialize, and also the era in which it was memorialized.³⁶ David Lowenthal makes a similar point about how the

³⁵ Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1996), 16.

³⁶ James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 36.

preservation of heritage is important for contemporary identity. “In domesticating the past, we enlist it for present causes.”³⁷ Lowenthal differentiates between history and heritage, writing “History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts to as to infuse them with present purposes.”³⁸ The projects of the Batavia historic district and the National Archives Building reach into the past, and, in becoming Jakarta’s heritage, are a part of creating a contemporary identity for the inhabitants of the city.

Lowenthal has also suggested that heritage “is the chief focus of patriotism and a prime lure of tourism.”³⁹ This allies with the stated motivations of the Dutch Historic Urban Center project: tourism, nationalism, and intellectual interest.⁴⁰ The first of these, tourism, speaks to the interest of outside groups, in order to provide an economic boost for the people of Indonesia. The nationalism promoted by these projects is presumably an Indonesian nationalism, though a Dutch nationalism, or a hybrid, also seems possible. Intellectual interest, while seemingly apolitical, is closely allied to the category of nationalism.

Tourism

This first motivation is clearly economic – the city wants to attract tourist money by appealing to the heritage and intellectual interests of tourists, which may or may not reflect the cultural identity of the tourist. Tourists may be interested in the restored Dutch Historic Urban Center and the National Archives Building because of a general interest in

³⁷ Ibid., ix.

³⁸ Ibid., xi.

³⁹ Ibid., ix.

⁴⁰ Cobban, “Ephemeral Historic District,” 310.

the past, or in the heritage of others, or tourists may be interested as this heritage preserves their own culture, such as Dutch, Indonesian, or Chinese tourists.

The example of Singapore, which has undergone various restoration projects specifically in response to tourist interests, is a useful comparison here. Based on government survey forms, Singapore's Tourist Promotion Board realized that tourists were losing interest in the city because of a perception that the city was becoming too modern and Western, not historical enough or Asian enough for their expectations.⁴¹ It is not clear whether these tourists are Western or relatively local, if they have a particular interest in Singapore such as British citizens seeing their former colony or merely out of a Western interest in the East. One of the appeals of Singapore was its multicultural population, which was being subsumed by modern (Western-style) buildings.⁴² The solution was determined to be heritage preservation: "Conservation does generate money, and tourists will come."⁴³ The preservation projects in Singapore included Chinese shophouses, British colonial buildings, and the historical remains of other groups, though it seemed that the Malaysian areas were not going to be preserved.⁴⁴ This article spends more time talking about the restoration of colonial British buildings, and explains this away by stating that in Singapore, there is no anti-colonial impulse, that the residents have no problems with the remnants of colonialism.⁴⁵ This example shows the importance to international tourism of heritage, whether it is the history of the tourist that is visiting or not, and poses a counter-example to Jakarta, where there is an anti-colonial

⁴¹ Thomas W. Sweeney, "Reclaiming Old Singapore," *Historical Preservation* 42 (May/June 1990): 44.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Brother Joseph McNally, quoted in Sweeney, "Reclaiming," 49.

⁴⁴ Sweeney, "Reclaiming," 49.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

impulse, seen for example in the nationalist desire not to mark the streets in downtown Jakarta with the original Dutch street names, as had been planned by the project leaders.⁴⁶

If we take a classic guide to Jakarta as an example of the tourist interests in the city, Adolf Heuken's *Historical Sites of Jakarta*, we see that most of the historical sites expected to appeal to tourists are Dutch colonial sites, and there are also examples of Chinese, Portuguese, and some indigenous sites as well, all dating from the colonial period.⁴⁷ This assumes that the only history of interest is the colonial history – while Heuken mentions the possibility of writing a second volume to cover the period from 1850-1965, this too, would likely focus on colonial history.⁴⁸ Heuken introduces his guide with startlingly harsh statements about Indonesians' lack of interest in history: “Since 1982 [when this guide was first published], several historical sites have vanished for different reasons, but mostly because of a desinterested [sic] and careless attitude...Even though the governors of Jakarta have appealed to take good care of the still existing heritage, the attitude mentioned above and the greediness to obtain material gain by pulling down an old house in order to put up a new building, will always threaten the remains of the past and the historical heritage.”⁴⁹ This, for one, shows the failure of the Dutch Historic Urban Center project to have a long-term (not even three decades!) affect, and second, contrasts with his description of the National Archives building, whose renovation makes it shine, thanks to the Dutch companies that initiated it.⁵⁰ I am not certain that Heuken's attitude can speak for all guides to Jakarta, but this guide at least speaks to the attitude that historic sites are an important part of the tourist attraction.

⁴⁶ Cobban, “Ephemeral Historic District,” 315.

⁴⁷ A. Heuken, SJ, *Historical Sites of Jakarta*, 6th ed., (Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka Foundation, 2000).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 139-145.

Contemporary Identity

How do these heritage projects work internally to create or shore up national identity? We can look both at the identity of the Dutch, who retain an interest in Indonesia's colonial heritage because it is also their heritage, and also at the identity of the Indonesians, whose colonized past is still part of contemporary identity. Is Indonesian identity anti-colonialist, or is it a hybrid identity, incorporating Indonesian nationalism and a colonial history? The project of heritage preservation is inherently a nationalist project – as Lowenthal says, “To neglect heritage is a cardinal sin, to invoke it a national duty.”⁵¹ However, in the post-colonial setting, nationalism can be anti-colonial, so how in the case of these two preservation projects are nationalism and the colonial past reconciled?

Dutch Identity

The National Archives project demonstrates that there is a continuing Dutch identity in Indonesia that has an interest in the material remains of the Dutch colony. The Dutch business interests that operate in Indonesia are run by Dutch citizens, who have enough of an interest in their colonial legacy to contribute funds and effort to preserving it. It might even be possible to speak of a continuing Dutch economic colonialism that supports the presence of over sixty Dutch businesses in Indonesia. The National Archives Building was restored by the Dutch businesses not for themselves, however, but as a gift to the Indonesians. At least this was the stated goal – we have to assume some specifically Dutch interest in retaining the appearance of the property, since if their only

⁵¹ Lowenthal, *Possessed*, ix.

interest was in the Indonesian community, they could have simply built a new cultural center, rather than making an Indonesian cultural center that is housed in a Dutch colonial building. Thus, I feel that this project benefits both the Dutch identity, as represented by Dutch continuing to live in Indonesia, and Indonesians, the recipients of this gift. It is important to qualify, however, which Indonesians are able to make use of the gift – the former National Archives Building is now a site for exhibitions and wedding receptions, both of which are exclusive presumably to the upper class that can afford exhibition admission and lavish wedding receptions.⁵² The attention to local inclusion in the project, such as the Balinese painters and the consideration of public opinion, seems overblown considering the final result.

A Dutch interest and identity can also be suspected in the project to renovate the Dutch Historic Urban Center, at least by looking at Ronald Gill's research supporting a renewed effort in this direction in the 1990s. His research was financed by both Dutch and Indonesian institutions, and another restoration project he mentions, the North Jakarta Development Project, is jointly supported again by Dutch and Indonesian governmental entities.⁵³ It might be argued that these issues of development are being aided by the Dutch government as a residue of the Ethical Policy of the last stage of their colonial project in Indonesia. As Anne McClintock suggests, the descriptor "post-colonial" inappropriately suggests a rupture with the colonial period, which may indeed not be completely past.⁵⁴

⁵² Wedding Ku website.

⁵³ Gill, "Jakarta's Urban Heritage," 66.

⁵⁴ Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonial'," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 87.

Indonesian Nationalism

If, as Lowenthal says, heritage preservation is about nationalism, does this work in a post-colonial state? A project contemporary to the Dutch Historic Urban Center project offers a useful comparison. Mrs. Suharto's "Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park," begun in 1971, was more overtly nationalistic. The project was inspired by Disneyland, and would be a microcosm of the Indonesian archipelago, both a theme park and a museum, which Abidin Kusno likens to a colonial ethnography museum.⁵⁵ The diverse cultures and regions of Indonesia were represented with a lake that reproduced the country's islands, collections of Indonesian indigenous art, and a series of houses representing each province. The park was meant to confer authenticity on the past and thus to the present nation. All non-indigenous elements were excluded which, in a way, makes this project an opposite of the concurrent historic preservation project. As Kusno describes, "...Beautiful Indonesia represents the insecurity of the New Order and the anxiety of the ruling regime that its authority is lacking "authenticity" in comparison with previous governments."⁵⁶ At the same time, the Dutch Historic Urban Center project, which was conferring legitimacy on the colonial past, named nationalism as one of its aims, by "contribut[ing] to a sense of national identity."⁵⁷ How do these opposing projects both support nationalism? Indeed, elements of the Dutch Historic Urban Center project were antithetical to Indonesian nationalism, as in the example of nationalists objecting to Dutch street signs being posted. The Dutch Historic Urban Center project thus cannot be seen as completely nationalistic or anti-nationalistic, as it had features of

⁵⁵ Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial*, 74-75.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵⁷ Cobban, "The Ephemeral Historic District," 309.

both. It is interesting to note that the Miniature Indonesia project, though criticized from its inception, was completed, whereas the historic district preservation project remained unfinished.

Colonial Elements in Post-Colonial Indonesian Identity

Finally, let us consider the possibility that Indonesian national identity retains elements of the colonial, thus explaining why these historic preservation projects seem to straddle the colonial past and the post-colonial present. As P. J. Marshall discusses, colonial elements remain in the colony after imperialism, so for example, English is a “virtually universal language” because of the British Empire.⁵⁸ The post-colonial nation retains elements of its colonial past as part of its contemporary culture, such as the colonial buildings that remain in Jakarta, and they become part of Indonesian history and identity. The role of the built environment in promoting this Indonesian identity is the subject of Abidin Kusno’s book, *Behind the Postcolonial*. Kusno suggests that architecture and urban design form a collective identity.⁵⁹ In the post-colony, the post-colonial culture dialogues with the colonial past in the way in which they relate to the colony spatially.⁶⁰ The project to preserve the morphology of the colonial core of the city of Jakarta suggests a desire to shape the urban space colonially, retaining a semblance of colonial identity in the new nation. This connection leaves us with ambiguities about the modern Indonesian identity. Kusno goes further, suggesting that the colonial past made present is appropriate because of the nature of Suharto’s military

⁵⁸ P.J. Marshall, “Introduction: The World Shaped by Empire,” in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8.

⁵⁹ Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial*, 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

regime, in which the governing elite had more in common with the colonial oppressors than seemed appropriate.⁶¹ This suggests that indeed the colonial environment was relevant to modern Indonesia under Suharto, and that an Indonesian identity was forged that could remain mapped into the city's colonial spaces, that still fit with Indonesian nationalism.

This exploration of two heritage restoration projects shows that Indonesia of the 1970s and 1990s had a distinct relationship with the colonial past. Interest in preserving the remaining elements of that colonial past suggests both that there is a continuing Dutch semi-colonial presence which desires that its own monuments be preserved, and also that the colonial past remained relevant to modern Indonesian identity under Suharto's regime. The success of the award-winning project to renovate the Former National Archives suggests that the Dutch interest is strong and financially powerful, while the failure of the project to preserve the colonial morphology of downtown Jakarta suggests that the concept of a national identity incorporating colonial elements is less stable as the nation discovers its post-colonial identity.

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⁶¹ Ibid., xii, 8, 72.

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