

Indonesian Opposition in the Colonial Municipality: A Minahasser in Bandung

Jan Michiel OTTO*

Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Development, Leiden Law School, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Abstract

This article discusses politico-legal relations and actual decision-making in urban government in late colonial Indonesia, notably in the municipality of Bandung. On the basis of verbatim reports of council meetings in the early 1920s,¹ the article catches the atmosphere of hot debates touching upon the core problem of colonial rule, namely inequality between racial groups. Decentralization and democratization in the colony had made such discussions unavoidable. The 1923 budgetary debate shows how eloquently elected representatives of the native population used the municipal council as a forum to plea for the interests of Indonesians. The colonial government referred to autonomy of urban *desas* to justify *laissez-faire* approaches to natives' interests. The municipality was in doubt for, at the same time, colonial administration was transitioning from a minimalist to a welfare state model. Hence, notwithstanding their differences, the common ambition to develop Bandung, albeit in a colonial context and led by the mayor, contributed to co-operative attitudes.

Keywords: Indonesia, colonial municipality, local council, Bandung town, decentralization, indigenous population

1. INTRODUCTION

At the start of the twentieth century, Dutch colonial policy in the East Indies underwent its most significant change in history. Exploitation of Indonesia would no longer be the main objective of colonial rule, but instead the welfare and wellbeing of the Indonesian people.² During this era of "Ethical Policy," a number of administrative reforms took place directed at decentralization and democratization. Consequently, the government introduced a municipal model for the larger cities. C. van Vollenhoven looked at these developments rather critically.

* Professor of Law and Governance in Developing Countries; Director of the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Development. This article is based on an earlier publication in Dutch, see Otto (1991). The author thanks Hannah Mason for her support in translating. Correspondence to Jan Michiel Otto, Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Development, Leiden Law School, Leiden University, PO Box 9520, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands. E-mail address: j.m.otto@law.leidenuniv.nl.

1. Notulen (1906–1927). The minutes of the public meetings of the municipal council of Bandoeng are kept on microfiche at the Van Vollenhoven Institute, Leiden University, The Netherlands. The original volumes are available in the library of Bandung Municipality, Balai Kota, Bandung.

2. Ricklefs (1981), p. 143.

In his view, the municipal model was typically Western³; it would not help provide an answer to the colonial question of how to harmoniously bring together Western and Eastern concepts and needs. His characterization of the Netherlands-Indies municipality as a “Western enclave in an Eastern society” became widely known.

Was the colonial municipal government then fully distanced from Indonesian society, and in particular from the native population? This is something we do not know much about, for local government in Indonesia, compared to central government, has always received relatively little attention—both back then as presently.⁴ This contribution focuses on the question of whether, and if so, how, the interests of the native population could be furthered by her own representatives within the colonial municipal framework. To help answer this question in a concrete way, the municipality of Bandung in 1923 will be taken as a case.⁵

In the short period during which Dr G.S.S.J. Ratulangi, who originated from the Minahassa region in North Celebes, was a member of the municipal council of Bandung, from October 1922 until February 1924, he played a remarkable role. He opened a public debate about the neglect of the interests of the native [*inlandse*⁶] population in Bandung without any hint of acquiescence or subordination. This approach contrasted with that of most of his local, Sundanese, fellow council members and their predecessors.

This became particularly manifest in January 1923 during a confrontation with Mayor B. Coops—a strict administrator—during a debate about the municipal budget for the year 1923. The debate lasted four days: January 17, 18, 19, and 22. In an impressive, extensive statement, which was well underpinned by the latest figures, Ratulangi weighed Bandung’s policy towards its local population and found it wanting. Despite the fact that his European fellow members and particularly the mayor did not agree with him, he still earned great respect from them. Hence, this debate formed a milestone in the attitudinal transformation of Indonesian council members in Bandung, from silent subordination to full, critical, participation. Things had started changing in 1918, when for the first time five Indonesians were elected to Bandung’s council. Eventually, in 1926, an Indonesian municipal council member, Damakoesoema, would become the first Indonesian member of Bandung’s Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Ratulangi had always continued to feel a close affiliation with the Minahassa region where he was born in 1890 in Tondano. After completing a technical education in Batavia, he left for the Netherlands in 1912 for further study, which he financed with part of his inheritance. He gained a qualification as a primary school teacher as well as for teaching mathematics at secondary-school level. Soon, he also gained a reputation as a radical journalist and writer, and for a year he presided over the Netherlands-Indies Association [*Indische Vereeniging*], the organization for Indonesian students in the Netherlands. Together with Soewardi Soerjaningrat, and Noto Soeroto, he belonged to the notable core of this small group. He gradually moderated his radical expressions and gained a sharp eye for political reality.

3. Vollenhoven (1931), pp. 414, 519.

4. Nas (1986), p. 13–14.

5. The material for this article was collected through a desk study of sources available at the town hall in Bandung. Detailed minutes of the municipal council meetings that took place in the period 1914–41 were nearly all present in printed form.

6. The terms *inlander* (noun) and *inlandsch* (adjective), which currently carry a negative connotation, were at the time used in both official and daily settings when talking about the native, autochthonous—now Indonesian—population. For reasons of authenticity, the terms *inlander* and *inlands*, translated as “native,” will be used in this article.

Being unable to enter university in the Netherlands because of his educational background, he left for Zurich in 1917. There he gained his PhD in 1918 and became the first Indonesian doctor in mathematics and physics. In April 1919, he returned to the Netherlands-Indies, accompanied by his Dutch wife.⁷ He became a maths and physics teacher at the General Secondary School and the technical school in Yokyakarta. But, as time went on, he found this position unsatisfactory. In 1922, he relocated to Bandung, where he became partner and director in a newly established insurance company.⁸ And it was not long thereafter that he also became active in Bandung's local politics.

This article will first deal with the formation of municipalities in the Netherlands-Indies and in Bandung in particular. After that, the focus will be on the municipal council, the relation between the council and its chairman, and the attitudes of Indonesian council members before and after 1918. As a prelude to the budgetary debate of January 1923, I will discuss the election of Ratulangi in September 1922 and the financial crisis in which the municipality found itself in those years. Then, the debate itself will be addressed. It will become clear that, next to Ratulangi, a second Indonesian council member played an important role: Mas Darnakoesoema, a nationalist journalist, well known throughout Indonesia.⁹ Their teamwork provided an unprecedented and powerful plea for "native interests" [*inlandse belangen*], which would not be without results.

2. THE MUNICIPALITY IN THE NETHERLANDS-INDIES

The term "municipality" [*gemeente*] referring to the lowest of the three administrative levels [*Rijk, provincie, gemeente*] of government in the Netherlands itself became generally accepted with the introduction of the Municipality Act [*Gemeentewet*] in 1851. Dutch constitutional law only knows one type of municipality, which applies to all towns and villages, regardless of their size. The municipality is governed by a municipal council, a mayor, and a board of mayor and aldermen. The council is the highest body, whereas the mayor and the aldermen conduct the day-to-day administration. Citizens elect the council members, whereas the council elects the aldermen. The mayor is appointed by the central government. The municipality is autonomous in the administration and regulation of its own affairs [*huishouding*].

In the Netherlands-Indies, however, the term "municipality" [*gemeente*] was rather ambiguous.¹⁰ The 1854 "Constitution" of the Netherlands-Indies, the so-called "*Regeringsreglement*," mentions in article 71 "native municipalities"—a term which reappears in the name of the Native Municipality Ordinance [*Inlandse Gemeente Ordonnantie*] of 1906 (*Staatsblad* 1906, no. 83). Hereby, the legislator had in mind particularly the villages which as of old formed a

7. Poeze (1986), pp. 104–5, 122, 136.

8. Masjkuri (1985), pp. 27–30.

9. The role of Mas Darnakoesoema in the nationalist and socialist movements in the Netherlands-Indies between 1915 and 1917 is dealt with extensively in Tichelman's (1985) publication of sources. From this work, it becomes clear that he was a member of, amongst others, the Sarekat Islam, Boedi Oetomo, Insulinde, and the Netherlands-Indies Social-Democratic Association [*Indische Sociaal-Democratische Vereeniging*]. He maintained close contact with E.F.E. Douwes Dekker and H. Sneevliet. He gained considerable notoriety as a suspect in two press offences, on account of pieces which he had written in 1914 as nationalist journalist or had placed in the Semarang paper *Goentoer*. It is after this period that he appears in Bandung in 1916, first as the editor of the paper *Pertimbangan* and from December 1918 as member of the municipal council.

10. Logemann (1947), p. 8. For the legislative texts discussed in the following paragraphs see Kleintjes (1931).

social and administrative entity and which were governed by a head from their own community. Often the term *desa* was used for this arrangement. In daily speech and literature, the terms *desa* and *kampong* were often used interchangeably, whereby they sometimes referred to an administrative entity and other times a geographical entity. Either way, the *Regeeringsreglement* referred to the term “municipality” purely as this native municipality [*inlandse gemeente*]. However, in the new legislation on decentralization enacted from 1903 to 1905, and particularly in the Decentralization Decree of 1904, the term “municipality” [*gemeente*] was introduced in a sense which resembled to a greater degree the term which we knew and still know in the Netherlands,¹¹ but only for towns, not for villages in rural areas. In the whole of the Netherlands-Indies, only a few dozen of this new type of municipality were introduced. Smaller towns rarely became a separate municipality, but rather remained part of a regency, of which they could be the capital.

3. THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT OF THE EARLY MUNICIPALITY

In 1905 and 1906, the Governor-General gave 15 towns this new status of municipality [*gemeente*], including Batavia, Bandoeng, Buitenzorg, Makassar, Padang, Palembang, Semarang, and Soerabaja. The decentralization legislation which consisted of an act of parliament and several lower regulations, constituted a major policy change for, up until this point, the colonial government had not established any autonomous tiers of subnational administration. The archipelago was governed by the central Netherlands-Indies’ government and its departments and agencies. The Department of Interior Administration [*Binnenlands Bestuur*] was responsible for the administration of the different islands and regions. Java was divided into a number of regions, namely residences [*residenties*], which were in themselves subdivided into departments [*afdelingen*] and subdepartments [*onderafdelingen*]. These were led by European civil servants, residents [sing. *resident*], assistant-residents [*assistent-resident*], and controllers [*controleur*], respectively. This European administration governed the European inhabitants and also supervised a native [*inlandse*] administrative hierarchy which was organized right from departmental level down to the *desa*. The territory of a department of European administration coincided with that of a regency [*regentschap*] in the native administration, and a European subdepartment corresponded with a native “district.” Regencies were led by an indigenous ruler, the regent [*boepati*], and his districts by a *wedana*.

As such, Bandung had been the capital of a residency named “Preanger Regencies” [*Preanger Regentschappen*] since 1864. One of the departments of this residency was called Bandung, and was thus led by an assistant-resident. In the same territory, the regency Bandung had been established and was led by the regent of Bandung. The latter had as of old been regarded by the native population as their head. The town of Bandung itself, a subdepartment and in the native administration a district, was in daily speech often referred to as a *kotta* (town). It was governed by a European *controleur kota* and a native *wedana kota*. Parts of the city were governed as native subdistricts by assistant-*wedana*, who supervised the heads of the *desa*’s situated in Bandung town.

11. Kleintjes (1933), pp. 4–14.

Not only had the Department of Interior Administration posted civil servants all over the country, but so too had other departments and national agencies, such as for example the Departments of Public Works, of Governmental Corporations, of Education and Religion, of Finance, and of Justice. The establishment in 1906 of Bandung town as a municipality meant a significant change for the European and native local administrations and *desa* administrations, as well as for the local branch offices of the central departments and agencies. In order for things to run as smoothly as possible, in the first few years, these administrations and institutions were closely involved in the new municipal administration. First, “the head of the local administration,” namely the assistant-resident of the pre-existing Bandung department, was appointed as the chairman of the municipal council. Similarly, the first director of public works was a national civil servant who carried out the work for the municipality alongside his main job.

In the council, the members of which were initially appointed by the Governor-General, indigenous rulers filled up two seats alongside several national civil servants; initially this was the regent himself, joined by the *wedana kota*, but, after a few years, the regent was replaced by his right hand, the *patih*. The first council meeting took place in the home of the regent of Bandung and, on this occasion, the first civil servant, the municipal secretary [*gemeentesecretaris*], was appointed. The beginnings of the new municipality had to be modest due to limited funds available and limitations in the number of tasks.

4. THE TASKS AND RESOURCES OF THE NEW MUNICIPALITY

The Governor-General allocated the new municipality’s tasks¹² through his Ordinance for the Establishment of Bandung Municipality (*Staatsblad* 1906, no. 121), of which article 3 describes the main four tasks as follows:

1. Maintenance, recovery, renewal, and building of public roads, streets, squares, and parks, with the accompanying greenery, slopes, banks, dikes, ditches, wells, milestones, street names, bridges, culverts, timbering, and other works; gutters, sewage and water pipes for general public use and works in order to gain or distribute drinking, washing, and rinsing water
2. Street cleaning and collection of rubbish alongside or on public roads, streets, squares, and parks
3. Fire brigade
4. Construction of cemeteries.

To carry out these works, the article quintessentially stated, the central government would no longer provide the financial means. Article 5 of the Establishment Ordinance indicates which areas the municipality will “manage.” Next to roads, bridges, and the like, this also includes

12. The Decentralization Act of 1903 made little concrete mention about the tasks of the new municipalities. The Decentralization Decree of 1904, in which the 1903 Act was elaborated, mentioned in the first place the competency of the local councils to enact regulations “in respect of issues which concern the interests of their respective territories” (article 12), including certain tax regulations (articles 13 and 14). In the second place, the right of the local council to determine its own budget was addressed (articles 18–20). The Local Councils Ordinance of 1905, which further elaborated on the above-mentioned act and decree, did not give much information about the tasks of the municipality either. Rather, it provided rules about the municipal governing bodies and their respective competencies.

fire engine bases, the abattoir, and the Chinese cemetery. Regarding the areas of work of the municipal council, article 8 further determines that this includes the need for local regulations, the management of the above-mentioned affairs, the completion of the above-mentioned affairs, and “in general the furtherance of public health and public transport in the municipality, as well as its appearance.”

Funds needed for these works were confirmed in the first municipal budget, which was also determined by ordinance by the Governor-General (*Staatsblad* 1906, no. 127). The budget including its elucidation covered three pages in the official gazette, *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch Indië*, and amounted to f 41,655. More than 90% of this total was assigned to public works, particularly for improving and renewing the road network and maintenance works.

Few in 1906 would have predicted at which considerable pace the number of tasks to be carried out by the municipality would expand, particularly after 1914, and that the municipal budget, 15 years after its establishment, in 1921, would show a total in ordinary expenses of more than two million guilders, and a total of extraordinary expenses of more than 15 million guilders. On a side note, the bold financial policy of the municipality would lead to a crisis in 1921, which will be addressed in this article later.

5. THE ABOLISHMENT OF DESA AUTONOMY

The competence of Bandung municipality to look after the interests of the entire population within her borders was not self-explanatory, because those parts of the city with the largest numbers of natives were governed by the above-mentioned “native municipalities” [*inlandse gemeente*] or *desa*. The residential areas within these *desas* were usually called *kampongs*. Since the establishment of Bandung in 1811, a number of these *desas* had become part of the expanding city. Around 1920, the municipality counted 14 complete *desas* and seven parts of *desas*, of which the other part fell outside the municipal territory.¹³ And whatever clarity the Native Municipality Ordinance of 1906 had introduced, a level of uncertainty arose in respect of newly decentralized bodies such as the municipality of Bandung.

According to the Establishment Ordinance, the transfer of powers to the municipality concerned “the area of the capital Bandoeng,” without any restrictions. As such, the *kampong* inhabitants did indeed fall under the jurisdiction of the municipality. On the other hand, their own *desa* administration was responsible for public works in the *desa*. For that reason, the municipality initially did not want to impose itself.

From 1914, the question of providing municipal services to the *kampongs* often came up in debates. When the council was asked whether certain infrastructure projects would be carried out in the *kampongs*, its formal response often was that this would not be possible until the management of the *desas* would be transferred to the municipality. *Desa* autonomy therefore became an obstacle to the late colonial “*kampong* improvement” [*kampongverbetering*] policy. Remarkably, for some public services, the *kampong* did fall under the responsibility of the municipality, whereas, in the case of others, it did not. For example, the municipality

13. For a detailed overview of the problem of *desa* autonomy in Bandung municipality, see Report of the Advisory Committee on the Abolishment of *Desa* Autonomy in Bandoeng Municipality, 1920 [*Verslag der commissie tot het dienen van advies nopens het opheffen der desa-autonomie in de gemeente Bandoeng, 1920*] (see *Minutes of Municipal Council meeting of 3-11-1920*). Appendix C of this report lists main data about these *desas*.

looked after taxation, civil registration, land use policy, spatial planning, and building control, but initially did not manage road maintenance, streetlights, or rubbish collection and street cleaning services.

In December 1917, the council, following a suggestion by the mayor, voted unanimously for the abolishment of *desa* autonomy. In the summer of 1918, article 71 of the colonial Constitution [*Regeeringsreglement*] was amended to enable the abolishment, by ordinance of the Governor-General, of native municipalities which were situated within the borders of a city or town having its own municipal administration. In 1919 and 1920, a special Commission undertook a thorough investigation into possible consequences of an abolishment of *desa* autonomy for the municipality of Bandung. However, no abolishment ordinance for Bandung's *desas* ever materialized, possibly because the central government considered the financial burden to be expected of such ordinance too heavy.

6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND ITS CHAIRMAN

Decentralization in the Netherlands-Indies consisted of power distribution in two directions: from the national to the local level, and from the executive branch to the legislative branch. Although Netherlands-Indies decentralization law had not adopted a Dutch provision stating that the council stood "at the head of the municipality," local councils were certainly meant to start playing a serious role both in legislative as well as in administrative affairs. And indeed, from the moment that Bandung was established as a municipality, several council members wanted to make effective use of their assigned powers. Despite the fact that the chairman—initially the assistant-resident—usually treated the council with due respect and most council members contributed to the municipal administration in constructive ways, tensions between the council and its chairman, the future mayor, were not infrequent.

After Mayor Coops, who presided his first council meeting on December 8, 1913, had taken office, there were sharp attacks from the council against him and/or against the top layer of the municipal administration almost every year. Equally, the energetic director of public works, H. Heetjans, and to a lesser extent the assistant-secretary, D.C. Vermazen, and the head of the veterinary hygiene service, Dr W. van de Akker, were frequent targets of heavy criticism.

In a few cases, council members resigned out of dissatisfaction with their position. When in March 1914 it was suggested that council members would no longer receive certain documents for preview at home, but that they would need to consult these in person in the municipal office, the council member F. Sieuwerts complained: "This provision makes the already little appealing membership of the council even less appealing." A few months later, he resigned. In his letter of resignation, he mentioned amongst others article 19 of the Local Council Ordinance, which describes the relationship between the chairman and the council as follows: "The Chairman shall carry out the decisions made by the Council." "From this," according to Sieuwerts, "can be concluded that the Chairman is not to give instructions to the Council, but vice versa." In March 1915, the council member W.C. Mooijen said: "In my view, the Chairman does not understand, as has proven several times, his relation to the Council." Mooijen particularly disapproved of the mayor's behaviour in the council's committees. With regard to the Committee for Public Works, he commented: "The way of working of this Committee [is for me] already very unpleasant. ... [I] much value the

presence of the Chairman, yet cannot agree that the Chairman takes the lead in the meetings of the Committee.” Mooijen resigned from this particular committee, but continued to be a member of the council for another two years and to voice his sharp criticisms. Although several council members continued to criticize the chairman, generally speaking, the council worked well without disruptions. On December 28, 1916, the council even accepted a motion by acclamation and with applause in which the council members approved unanimously of the appointment of Coops as the Mayor of Bandung. The latter event marked the separation between the offices of assistant-resident and chairman of the municipal council, and thereby the appointment of the first “real” mayor. In the summer of 1917, the hoped-for appointment became official.

In the period of 1918–22, once again council members now and then vehemently attacked the mayor, particularly with regard to his supervision of the ever-expanding public works service and its director. This shows that the chairman’s proposals were not always followed slavishly. However, it was always the European members who quarrelled and criticized. But the council counted indigenous members as well. What was their attitude?

7. THE CO-OPERATIVE INDONESIAN COUNCIL MEMBERS, FROM 1906 TO 1918

Article 1, section 1, of the Decentralization Decree of 1904 already mentioned that local councils were composed of: “a) Dutch subjects, b) native non-Dutch subjects and c) non-native non-Dutch subjects.” The number of council members and the distribution of this number across the three population groups would be regulated by ordinance, according to section 3 of the above-mentioned article. Accordingly, article 7 of the Establishment Ordinance of Bandung municipality determined that the Bandung council would count 11 members, of which eight would be Dutch [*Europeaan*], two native Indonesians [*Inlander*], and one non-native Asian [*Vreemde Oosterling*].

According to the Decentralization Decree, council members would in principle be appointed by the Governor-General (article 4, section 1). However, “where, when and to what extent this is possible, elections for the selection of members of the councils shall be introduced by ordinance” (article 4, section 2). In 1908, the Ordinance for Election of Municipal Councils was promulgated. Consequently, the first council members were elected in Bandung in 1909 following the periodical resignation. These were merely European members, elected by Europeans. Suffrage did not yet exist: voters were adult men, who could read and write and earned an income of at least 300 guilders per year. Turnout in Bandung was not particularly high: only 187 out of 392 eligible men cast their vote. A re-election was needed to fill up all available posts. In 1912, 1915, and 1918, elections would take place again.¹⁴

The legal term of office was four years but, in practice, members rarely lasted the entire period—on average two years—usually due to their leaving the municipality, resigning, or passing away.¹⁵ In that case, interim elections had to be held.

The composition of the Bandung council as determined in 1906 would be maintained for 11 years. In 1917, the Indonesian government decided to widen the role of Indonesians at the

14. *Verslag* (1919), p. 8.

15. *Verslag* (1919), p. 9.

local level. In the council meeting of October 22, 1917, Mayor Coops commented on this development as follows:

The near future will also bring many changes. From the documents available for review, the council will have realised that the number of members has increased to 17, and that the non-European element has thereby been given a much more prominent place than has been the case up until now.

The document, which had been presented for review, concerned the decision by the Governor-General no. 47 of September 25, 1917, to introduce elections for non-European members of local councils, to increase their number, and to change the ratio according to the population group (*Staatsblad* 1917, no. 587). Bandung's new council comprised ten Dutch members (Europeans or of similar status), five native Indonesians, and two non-native Asians.

In the period until 1918, during which the council had counted only two seats for native members, these members, according to the minutes taken, remained very much in the background.¹⁶ This applied to both the regent, who was a member from 1906 until 1909, and the *wedana* and *patih*, who were appointed alongside and after him. There were few differences between these heads of the native administration and the chairman of the council, who was also assistant-resident until 1917. The minutes rather point to a sense of unity. This was well illustrated by the congratulating speech held by R.Rg. Kartadikoesoema as the oldest member upon the appointment of Coops as mayor in 1917:

To a greater Bandoeng, that is the road to which he [Coops] will lead us and to which we are thus willing to be led. ... about this one issue, over the past few years there has been a fortunate unity amongst all of us who take a seat at this green table, which gives us power. We wish to strongly pursue a greater Bandoeng.

8. INDONESIAN COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR NATIVE INTERESTS AFTER 1918

With the election of the first Indonesian council member, R. Soeria Amidjaja, on August 14, 1918, the tone sharpened and the emphasis moved to pleas arguing in favour of the interests of the native population and native civil servants. In the two months of his membership—he relocated already in October—Soeria supported a request by the Boemipoetra (indigenous) Municipal Committee to have all printed council documents translated into Malay; furthermore, he argued for council support of a co-operative housing association for natives; and, finally, he approved of a request by the Association of Native Civil Servants for an extra allowance due to high prices. Soeria failed to achieve success in any of these cases.

In December 1918, five new Indonesian elected council members entered office. They all immediately received positions in the council's committees. Amongst them was Mas Darnakoesoema. They frequently exercised a decisive influence on the council's conclusions, whereby they sometimes contravened the explicit wish of the chairman. They were mainly active in two areas: in the first place, for the appointment, promotion, and equal remuneration of native local public servants, and second for an improved position of the native population. With regard to human resources policy, unequal treatment of European and native personnel was increasingly considered as inappropriate. For example, during a debate about the

16. De Groot (1991), pp. 6–8.

salary of the native council archivist R. Sain, the director of public works informed the council in February 1919 that, for the lower-paid positions, the number of suitable Europeans was declining, whereas that of natives was on the rise. "It is, however, required that the Native is remunerated equally to the European in case of an equal achievement." He was immediately criticized by the conservative council member J.C. Hensing, who cynically remarked: "We will never see the end of it," to which Darnakoesoema replied that he would not be discouraged by Hensing's words and continued by saying "Sain's predecessors were paid more than the current titleholder. These were indeed Europeans, but that does not matter." And, in this case, Darnakoesoema was supported by the majority of the council.

In March 1920, the matter came to the fore in a more general sense when the Association for Lower Personnel of the Public Services in the Netherlands-Indies (formerly the Union of Native Municipal Civil Servants) submitted a petition. It included three requests. The first was for a wage increase for those earning less than 300 guilders per year. The second request was for the abolishment of wage differences for same level jobs (the so-called racial criterion), "as still recently occurred in a proposal by the mayor when employing population registrars for and from three population groups, whereby the European ones would be paid more than the Native ones." This does not agree, according to the petition, "with the government standpoint on unification, which many branches of the national public service have already introduced, and for which amongst others Semarang municipality can be regarded as a shining example." The third request was for the introduction of a body for arbitration between personnel and their directors in order to secure a just and fair legal process.

After some discussion, as proposed by the new member, R.Ng. Soebroto, a Commission was set up to deliberate the first matter, whilst, as the mayor suggested, the remaining two points in the proposal would "for the time of being" not be considered.

With regard to the interests of the native population, the contributions by the native members focused on the following topics: first, the conditions in the kampongs, in particular housing, infrastructure, hygiene, and health, and the abolishment of desa autonomy; second, the heavy taxation burden upon the native population; third, a municipal reorganization, and in particular the introduction of an alderman and a department for native affairs; fourth, the use of Malay language in council documents and council meetings; fifth, other municipal services, in particular education, land policy, and building control. In these matters, some of the Dutch council members frequently supported the native council members.

9. RATULANGI'S ELECTION: A REVOLUTIONARY IN THE COUNCIL?

On September 26, 1922, an interim election took place for a native council member. The local newspaper, *Preanger Bode*, published the following advertisement about the two candidates for this function shortly before the election:

Why do we vote for the teacher Raden Soerakoesoemah? [He] is Sundanese. As a teacher, has contact with the people. Is moderate. Is NOT against the Dutch. And why do we vote against Dr Ratu Langie? [He] is not Sundanese. Does not have contact with the local population. Is Nationalist and Revolutionary. His political convictions differ from those of the N.I.P. [*Nationaal-Indische Partij*] just in one respect, namely that this party wishes for a unitary Indonesia, whereas he promotes an Indonesian federation. Is therefore anti-Netherlands. [Signed: On behalf of many. Several voters]

Soerakoesoemah, who was member of the nationwide *Volksraad*, was supported by four parties that were loyal to the government. These included the Political-Economic Union [*Politiek-Economische Bond*], of which Mr C.W. Wormser, the director and chief-editor of the *Preanger Bode*, was also a chief executive member. In addition, there were the Bandung branch of the Indo-European Union Party [*Indo-Europeesch Verbond*], the Christian-Ethical Party [*Christelijk-Ethische Partij*], and the Catholic Association for Political Action [*Katholieke Vereeniging voor Politieke Actie*]. The executive boards of these political associations also placed an advertisement in the newspaper against the election of Ratulangi.

In contrast, there were three organizations that supported Ratulangi: the associations Pasoendan, Boedi Oetomo, and the Balance-Committee [*Evenwichts-Comité*]. On the day of the election, their executive boards issued a statement in which they refuted the objections against and insinuations about Ratulangi, for he was “a native member of the Netherlands-Indies Liberal Union [*Nederlandsch-Indischen Vrijzinnigen Bond*], an association of loyal and progressive Dutchmen” and “moderate and liberal. Reasons why we encourage you to vote THIS EVENING for Dr G.S.S.J. Ratu Langie.”

Their action paid off. Ratulangi was elected with 137 votes against 126. On the opinion page in the *Preanger Bode*, Wormser accused the voters who stayed at home of laziness and warned them as follows: “The results will show. And you will have to bear them. *Tua culpa*, Bandoeng voter, *tua maxima culpa*.” And, shortly thereafter, he wrote: “... it would not seem superfluous to us if Dr Ratu Langie would at some point openly declare his political convictions.” About this question, many articles appeared in the newspaper in September and October that year: by the editors, by Darnakoesoema, and by the executive board of the Indo-European Union. On October 7, the *Preanger Bode* printed a political commentary about the Netherlands-Indies, which Ratulangi had published in the Netherlands, in *De Amsterdammer*, on May 6, 1922. In this article, he had discussed the hardening of the relationship between the Dutch authorities and the Indonesian nationalists. The piece continued to haunt him for some time. According to the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, the author was even called in for questioning by the department of the Liberal Union in Bandung. This was again denied by Ratulangi himself at the end of October in the very same newspaper.

In the mean time, the municipal council had approved of the letters of conviction of the new council member on October 18. Just over a month later, on November 22, Ratulangi participated in his first council meeting. During question time, he stated that so-called grand politics did not belong in the municipal council, but rather municipal interests, city interests only. He said that he did not want to use the council meetings as a public display. The meeting’s minutes here read: “Applause.” He then stated that he had to disappoint the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, “who was so eager to hear his first speech, with his political convictions.” Mayor Coops gave his approval as follows: “The Council too has believed so far that grand politics does not belong here. I hope that the Council will aim to maintain this principle in full.”

10. THE FINANCIAL CRISIS OF BANDUNG IN 1921

Since the establishment of the municipality, its policy had focused on growth and expansion in many different areas, and successfully so. To further its ambitious goals, the municipality

had purchased a significant amount of land, but this had required substantial investment, whilst, in the short term, the municipal treasury had not received matching incomings.

When, in August 1920, Mayor Coops left for an extensive leave to the Netherlands and handed over his chairmanship to the former railway official, S.A. Reitsma, for a year, in his departing address, he could still emphasize the achieved successes but on that occasion Reitsma already made mention of the financial problems of the municipality. In March 1921, it turned out that Bandung municipality could no longer secure any credit on the capital markets. In June, discussions took place between Reitsma and the Governor-General, who had come to Bandung in person to receive an update. The council set up an austerity Commission in July, which proposed a dramatic termination and reduction of municipal activities already in August, including forced redundancy of public servants. The council consented to this proposal. When Coops regained leadership on October 5, 1921, he recognized “the peril of these times But as deep as our confidence in the future of our city was, is and will be, the difficulties will be overcome.” And, as the oldest member of the council, Darnakoesoema spoke the following encouraging words on behalf of the council: “Even if a heavy task is awaiting ..., recovery of shocked finances, I say to you that I feel we are approaching a new era, one of confidence and cooperation.” In practice, this was no easy task. In December, two new council members, amongst whom was the accountant H.H. Knolle, voiced their criticism of the municipal civil service in the following clear wording:

The whole of Bandoeng is convinced that within the municipal household, people are robbing and stealing left, right and centre, that the municipality is a mess, which needs to be cleared as soon as possible. Mister Chairman, public confidence in you is, I would not yet say shocked, but is hardly continued I will not say it, I am not allowed to say it, I cannot say it, but if I were allowed, if I wanted and could say it, I would say that the Mayor has been lying to us I cannot assume that the Chairman approves of this mismanagement.

In the mean time, Bandung’s financial condition had started to attract attention from a wide circle. The overly ambitious municipal council, which up until recently had wanted to move the capital of the Netherlands-Indies government from Batavia to Bandung, became the subject of heavy criticism right up to the level of the People’s Council [*Volksraad*] in Batavia and Parliament in The Hague. The municipal council’s only aim now was to regain the confidence which had been lost. In January 1922, the council decided as suggested by Knolle, a member of the financial committee, to hand over the control of the municipal finances to a private accountant, even if this cost roughly 700 guilders per month. The way in which the mayor had prepared the 1922 budget received much praise from the council in March 1922, also from those who had been critical in previous months. In that way, he quickly regained his former strong position. And, when the council member H.J.J. Lamers during a council meeting complained about the complexity of the material, Coops commented that:

... he wished that Mister Lamers had consulted him about this beforehand. That way, Mister Lamers would have been informed on everything he had wanted to know. However, one could not expect the speaker to be lecturing about the ins and outs of financial management that very same evening.

Bandung’s former ambitions now ran up against the financial reality. As such, it was decided that the planned new mayor’s residence, which had been built on the outskirts of Bandung, close to the buildings of the new College of Technology, would not be used

for that purpose, but would become the new town hall for the municipal secretariat and for the council meetings, which at that time still took place in a rental property. The former wish to appoint aldermen in Bandung was rejected by the national government in September 1922.

At the council meeting of December 20, 1922, the financial report of the municipality was reviewed and, once again, Coops received praise. In the mean time, a budgetary committee appointed by the council was busy preparing the council's consideration of the 1923 budget. Because Darnakoesoema fell "rather unpleasantly" ill, the council appointed the new member Ratulangi to replace him in the committee.

11. THE BUDGETARY DEBATE

As per usual, the members of the municipal council were invited to the meeting on January 17, 1923, "for the hour of 6 o'clock in the afternoon" in writing by Mayor Coops. The agenda for the meeting mentioned: "One single point. Consideration of the topic of the general and corporate budgets for the year 1923."

At the very meeting, 13 members were present and four members were absent. The meeting was quite special, as it was the first one held in the new town hall. However, the atmosphere was hardly festive due to the financial situation. The mayor's New Year's address was therefore also modest in tone.

He informed the council members that jointly with the budgetary committee a written preparation for the 1923 budget had taken place:

Due to a number of coinciding circumstances, this time there is no joint report by the Committee, but rather individual recommendations of each of the Committee members. Even if this is disappointing and unsatisfactory, we can still without doubt be grateful and appreciative of the useful work undertaken by the members of the Committee.

The committee members' recommendations and the corresponding answers by the mayor had already been sent to the council members under the name "Reports of the Members of the Committee for the Investigation into the 1923 Budget and Memorandum of Response" [*Rapporten van de Leden der Commissie tot Onderzoek der Begroting 1923 en Memorie van Antwoord*]. The document consisted of 54 pages, each typed in two columns with, in the right-hand column, the comments of the members of the committee and, in the left-hand column, the response of Mayor Coops. The first, most extensive and financially well-wrought report was written by the committee member H.J.J. Schneider and included 44 comments. The second report, by the committee member J.G. Milius, was a lot more concise. The third report by Darnakoesoema would play a central role in the debate.

12. DUTCH VIEWS IN THE GENERAL DEBATE

In his verbal explanation, the mayor himself did not seem particularly satisfied with the content of the proposed budget:

You Councillors will understand that this year again drafting the provisional budget was hardly an uplifting task for me. Whilst we are still bound by financial constraints that cannot yet be extended, it has not been possible to assign the means to promote many desirable and necessary

matters in the municipality in the way that I would have wanted. The proposed budget can therefore not provide much of a perspective. We aim at a further consolidation of the finances of the municipality. As long as this consolidation has not been completed, one should be careful not to expand municipal duties too hastily. But this does not at all mean that a better handling of kampong interests should be postponed indefinitely. Within the scope of the city's financial means, there is still much that can be achieved particularly in the future, which is the more so if financial support from the national government is not denied.

After the mayor, the council member Schneider was the first to speak. He too emphasized that in this budget:

... almost all expenses are strictly bound by regulations introduced by the municipal council at an earlier date; after the absolutely necessary funds for wages and the projects already initiated by the municipality have been deducted, there is hardly anything left, not for the important improvement of our roads at the desired speed, nor for our contribution to the sewage works, nor for an intense tackling of the primitive and unhygienic kampong conditions.

He also insisted that “the municipality does not pay less attention to South Bandoeng, where there are mainly native kampongs than to the almost entirely European neighbourhoods in the north of the city.” But he continued by saying:

However, on the basis of the considerations of Mr Darnakoesoema as member of the Budgetary Committee as well as from the debate during one of these day's meetings I have to conclude that a certain party is trying to abuse the lesser services for the native neighbourhoods as a way to cause agitation. I may be wrong, but the facts point to this. I wish to mention here once again, that I will always stand up against a one-sided and wrong depiction of affairs, as hatred and envy do not seem to be the right starting points for cooperation in order to achieve healthy conditions.

Schneider explained that not the municipality, but the national government should be held responsible for the impasse with regard to the kampongs. In fact, Bandung had, in contrast to Batavia or Semarang, taken the required steps on their own account, which had led to the report by the committee recommending the abolishment of desa autonomy in September 1920. In the mean time, according to Schneider, a few measures had been reluctantly initiated: water drains, water provision, building control, a veterinary and health service, street cleaning, and native cemeteries. One of the reasons for initiating these services was that the kampong residents within the municipal borders actually made a significant contribution to the income of the municipality.

He therefore called the plea by the reporter Darnakoesoema, which will be dealt with below, “rather one-sided, we could say leaning too much to the extreme left-hand side.”

Schneider also indicated that, from a tactical point of view in respect of Batavia-Buitenzorg, as little attention as possible had been paid to the kampongs, so that it would remain a sufficiently urgent concern for the government “to hand over the pennies.” In the current era of austerity, however, this latter tactical motivation had become obsolete. He therefore concluded that the municipality had to set up and self-fund an emergency programme in order to alleviate the most troublesome and unhygienic conditions. In order to formulate the details of such an emergency plan as soon as possible, the council would need to establish a committee.

After the member E. Smith had addressed the necessity for a reduction in public wages, frequently referring to recent developments in the Netherlands, the next to speak were subsequently Darnakoesoema, Sastradipoera, and Ratulangi.

13. THE REPORT AND THE SPEECH BY DARNAKOESOEMA AND THE RESPONSES

For a better understanding of the speech by Darnakoesoema, it is important to take a look at his report about the budget, which began as follows:

The proposal still breathes the air of the attempt to turn Bandoeng into a pleasure paradise for the well-off in Netherlands-Indies society. For the sake of the poorer people, there still seems to be very little municipal concern. To my regret, I have often heard in the Council that the reason for this is that native municipal citizens contribute little or almost nothing to the municipal treasury. ... But as often as I have heard that reproach, I have felt it was unfair. To start with, it is unfair because the native society forms the very foundation of our entire society. Eliminate the native society and the whole upper layer of society collapses as a house of cards, economically and socially. Apart from this general consideration about our society, even the figures show that the reproach cannot be justified The myth that we as natives are merely parasites of the municipal treasury has to be rooted out once and for all.

Next, Darnakoesoema stated that of the municipal income out of the entertainment tax of *f*150,000, 75% was paid for by the native population, of the *pasar* (market) receipts of a total of *f*60,000 80%, of the *f*26,000 from the abattoir at least half, and of the transport tax of *f*85,000 at least 40%. This already added up to a total of *f*207,000:

If one compares this with what has been set aside in the budget for specifically native purposes, particularly the *f*5,000 for small-scale sanitation projects, then it becomes apparent that native interests are grossly neglected. ... For this reason, I cannot do anything but suggest withdrawal of the 1923 budget proposal, and amending it in such a way that the demands I have suggested are met, namely moving the emphasis of the budget further from North and East to South and West Bandoeng, in proportion with the clearly proven level of contribution of the native population to Bandoeng's budget. This is a demand based on considerations of fairness.

Finally, Darnakoesoema proposed to use the profits from the municipal *pasar* company and the abattoir, adding up to roughly *f*85,000, to improve the conditions in the kampongs.

The mayor had addressed this report extensively in the Memorandum of Response. First of all, he argued that the stated percentages of tax contributions by the native population could merely be rough estimates. Next, he stated that, in addition to the sum of *f*5,000 for small-scale sanitation projects, there were many more expenses for purely native interests. He summed up a few of these. First of all, he mentioned the technical school, established for native youngsters only, costing approximately *f*30,000; second, subsidies for the afternoon teaching programme at the Dutch-Native School [*Hollands-Inlandsche School*] of *f*4,800; third, sewage works for South-Bandoeng of *f*40,000; and, finally, spending to improve the roads in South-Bandoeng of *f*18,700. Next, the mayor refuted the accusation that the native cemeteries were neglected. Furthermore, he mentioned the free-of-charge outpatient clinics for health and midwifery services for poor citizens in different parts of the city, including South-Bandoeng, which were well attended. For the greatest part, these benefited the native population, according to the Memorandum of Response. In addition, the negative balance of the future exploitation of the municipal hospital was mainly accepted for the sake of low-income citizens.¹⁷ The mayor also pointed out the free-of-charge provision of drinking and

17. During the council meeting of March 6, 1918, it was announced that the national government would provide a subsidy for a municipal hospital on the basis of a plan based on 32 patients who could pay considerable amounts and 184–188 patients who were financially weak.

bath water by public water connection points and public bathhouses in the kampong neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the smallest connections to the water network were provided below the cost price, and finally the mayor mentioned the building and housing control, the fire brigade, the rental Commission, and the smaller housing programme [*kleinwoningbouw*].

He was herewith believed to have shown that the financial burden was compensated for by many tangible benefits, and that:

... there was no intended privilege of some population groups over others in the same municipal context. ... In as far as Bandung's new neighbourhoods have become a pleasure paradise, this has been paid for by the municipal land development company, and therefore by the buyers of these plots.

The mayor concluded with the recommendation not to accept the proposal by the *rapporteur* to use the profits from the *pasar* and abattoir for the kampongs, on the grounds of both his refutation as well as the budget restraints.

These written documents were to be discussed, when it was Darnakoesoema's turn to speak on that particular Wednesday evening. First he defended himself against the imputations of Schneider. He was "no agitator who only destructs and does not build. For that reason, with regard to the kampongs he would like to cooperate with whoever promotes the improvement of their conditions." Next, Darnakoesoema looked back upon the previous four years in which he had been member of the council, and said he was not satisfied with what had been achieved for the sake of native public servants. "My voice,—I acknowledge, Honourable Chairman, a weak voice—often equals one which calls in the desert. This fact is discouraging." On the other hand, he thanked the municipal administration and the public servants for the pleasant co-operation he had experienced throughout this period. Hereafter, he arrived at the core of his argument:

For years, and particularly recently, it has been claimed both within and outside the council that the "native" in Bandoeng municipality hardly contributes to the municipal household We recognize that we are still apprentices in municipal politics, but we are doing our best at this political school. The homework given is studied diligently. We have done our maths. The results of these calculations, Honourable Chairman, make us feel sad, or sometimes even bitter. ... In whichever way the reasons behind rejecting my—I believe—reasonable request, are formulated, or from whichever side they may come, my standpoint on these issues, which I hold on behalf of the people that I represent in this council, will not change, unless the Council can point to ways which will help meet our demands.

... The kampong can be compared to a foundling but who can proudly claim to have a healthy father and a non-sickly mother. For daddy Government and mummy Municipality, the child may, no, must work. But when the child asks his father for clothes and care, the answer is: "I have no money." When he sulks with his mother with the same request, the answer is: "Well well, daddy's child has to ask his dad."

After this frank statement, Darnakoesoema quickly moved on to provide a rejoinder to the Memorandum of Response. He said that he had not aimed to provide a complete picture in his plea. He immediately recognized the importance of the subsidy for the Dutch-Native School. On the other hand, regarding the mayor's list of expenses for native interests, he wanted to make some remarks. He particularly opposed what had been said about the technical college, the sewage system, the road-building project, and the fire brigade:

When reading about what was mentioned about the fire brigade in the Memorandum of Response, I almost thought our mayor was making a joke. That particularly the native population

would benefit from the fire brigade should be understood in the following way: when fire spreads across the kampong, the council's steam fire engine, which is not a steam fire engine, usually appears at the scene, when the houses have already turned into ash.

And, again, Darnakoesoema concluded that this budget was not acceptable for the native population. In concrete terms, referring to the austerity measures adding up to *f* 33,000 as recommended in Schneider's report, he proposed to use these savings to increase the spending on small-scale sanitation projects by *f* 30,000.

Sastradipoera was next to speak. He called into memory that the mayor had earlier encouraged native members to try and free up more money for the kampongs during budget negotiations. Now that they heard that, instead of support, the *desas* had not yet been transferred to the municipality, they were disappointed. Sastradipoera deemed it therefore quite understandable that Darnakoesoema "agitated by strong emotions" made a drastic recommendation in his report, for which he confirmed his full support. Next, it was Ratulangi's turn to speak.

14. RATULANGI'S INTRODUCTION

Ratulangi's plea, which covers a considerable 18 pages in the printed minutes, can be divided into six sections. In the first section, he provided a social-psychological analysis of the colonial, Netherlands-Indies society. Second, he confirmed his support for Darnakoesoema on behalf of all native members. Third, he dealt with 11 types of financial contribution by the native population to the municipal treasury on account of Darnakoesoema's report. Fourth, he addressed, on the basis of the memorandum of Mayor Coops, 11 types of municipal services undertaken in the interest of the native population. Fifth, he addressed the ethical principles behind the land development policy which was carried out. Finally, referring to the analysis made, he reconfirmed his standpoint and support of Darnakoesoema's recommendation. His argument was clearly formulated, for the largest part well documented and nuanced, humorous, and sometimes merciless in respect of the mayor.

In the introduction, he mentioned that the difficult task of municipal policy in the colonial, Netherlands-Indies society consisted of a balanced, careful appraisal of the interests of two population groups, which he on purpose simplified as Eastern and Western races.

Each community, he believed, had a psychological basis, and the Netherlands-Indies—as opposed to Western Europe—was characterized by the cohabitation of two races, which:

... is reflected in the municipal psyche in such a way that it constitutes two mass-psychologies, each independent and free, and therefore independent of the other Here collaborating, there competing and fighting each other, they remain two social forces which in all rational municipal politics needs to be properly balanced out. If the balancing scales lean down too far to one side, this results in social tension, which should be prevented, because if it shifts too far, it only takes a small provocation to cause an unwanted disruption of public life. ... *Gouverner, c'est prévoir!* I would like to conclude this short introduction with an appeal to you, honourable gentlemen of the Council, and according to the Western classical tradition of rhetoric: Wise judges, *virī clarissimi*, you who watch over us all from your seat of honour: judge sharply, correctly and fairly!

The address must have been received strangely by some of the members of the council. Up until this point, it had been mainly the mayor who had displayed his erudition in the council and had thereby gained authority from its members. But the mayor's literary knowledge

mainly concerned legal and political writing, such as Oppenheim's reference work *Het Nederlandsch Gemeenterecht* [Dutch Municipal Law]. And, see here, a native citizen who speaks about a society's psychological basis and Western classics.

In the second part of his argument, Ratulangi first mentioned "a meeting of native council members," during which there had been unanimous approval of Darnakoesoema's report. He informed the council that he spoke on behalf of all of them. Next, Ratulangi argued that not only Darnakoesoema had stated that too little attention was paid to the native population; the mayor believed this too, according to his written response. For, in this response, he had written that "kampong interests deserve an ever increasing promotion." And he continued by saying: "So, this is actually really no longer a topic for debate. We can state that it is generally accepted that kampong interests are not in that way or to that extent looked after as may be expected." Going one step further, Ratulangi argued that, if, as was suggested, the native population had to base their expectations on the amount of native contributions to the council's treasury, they could:

... further specify the earlier mentioned total, and that they could say that the extent to which native interests were looked after was not in line with the native share of payments to the municipal treasury. This total is logically linked to the first and can therefore also be excluded from the discussion.

Moreover, Ratulangi pointed out that he was thankful for noticing the mayor's reassurance in the same note that:

... there [is] no intended privilege of some population groups over others in the same municipal context. ... This statement, Honourable Chairman, makes us feel more at ease, even if a cynic would maybe note: "that is the only thing which is yet missing, deliberate exclusion." The difference in opinion merely exists in the numerical appreciation of what may or may not be spent on interests of the native population.

In this way, Ratulangi let the council know that the debate about figures was indeed the core issue.

15. RATULANGI: HOW MUCH DOES THE NATIVE POPULATION CONTRIBUTE TO THE MUNICIPALITY?

According to Ratulangi, a sense of laughter had overcome him after reading the comments by Darnakoesoema and Coops, since Darna had consistently measured out the burdens of the native population, whilst Coops "depicts in the most pleasant and uplifting colours the benefits which Bandung municipality offers to the native community." Because Darna's plea was quite concise, Ratulangi had set out to collect more data. During this process, it had become clear that Darnakoesoema's arguments were not only correct, but were even rather incomplete and far too modest.

Subsequently, Ratulangi addressed the municipal receipts to which the native population made significant contributions in a more extensive way than Darnakoesoema's report. He arrived at a total of over f 257,000, almost 25% more than Darnakoesoema's total of f 207,000. The difference was due to the fact that he included some receipts which the latter had failed to mention, such as municipal earnings from income and personal taxes, drinking water fees, building permit levies, and fees for the use of government land.

Ratulangi explained meticulously how he had retrieved the figures. In the case that council documents did not provide sufficient information, he had contacted the offices concerned. With regard to the total sum of financial charges, he concluded as follows: “I will be the first to admit that the produced figures need correction, but I am convinced that any corrections will rather benefit than disadvantage [the native population].” Having read his argument, I am inclined to agree.

16. RATULANGI: HOW MUCH THE MUNICIPALITY GIVES TO THE NATIVE POPULATION

Next, Ratulangi addressed the matter of what was received in exchange:

This task is made easy for me through the bombardment of counter arguments in the MvR [Memorandum of Response] against the report of Darnakoesoema. This bombardment is so complete that I have nothing to add. ... I will therefore take the freedom to examine more closely the projectiles, which the mayor has hurled at the feet of mister Darnakoesoema with a magisterial virility, one by one, in the hope that in my profane hands they will not explode.

And, as such, he continued with a discussion of 11 “projectiles,” of which I will present the most salient points. In respect of the earlier-mentioned technical school, Ratulangi noted that not the interests of the native population, but “the interests of the land developer of greater Bandoeng, who complained about a lack of skilled labour” were at stake. Nevertheless, he was prepared to recognize a native interest.¹⁸ He was also acknowledging this in the case of the educational subsidy to the Association for People’s National Education [*Vereeniging Volksonderwijs*].¹⁹ He was, however, more critical of the f 40,000 for public sanitation projects. After further research, it had turned out that this amount concerned expenses in 1920, 1921, and 1922, of which moreover a quarter consisted of salaries. And f 30,000 was spent on projects, which he scornfully summed up as “that therefore, for example, over the past few years randomly here and there a little culvert [*duikertje*] had been installed.”

The f 18,700 spent on road building in South-Bandoeng Ratulangi also considered a joke. This sum had been included also in the 1922 budget, but no expenses towards this goal had actually been made. Moreover, Ratulangi pointed out that quite some Europeans also lived on the roads for which improvement works were planned. The policy with regard to the native cemeteries was, as he continued, frequently being “prepared” and “considered”; “in any case, in the proposed 1923 budget no trace can be found of all these good plans.”

With regard to the medical care, Ratulangi commented first that the f 30,000 was nearly fully spent on salaries to subsequently moderate potential pretences of this care with several statistics of mortality rates and causes of death by population group. In 1921 and 1922, the death rate amongst the native population was three times higher than that amongst Europeans and, amongst Chinese, it was four times as high. The main causes of death turned out to be

18. At the council meeting of September 1, 1920, council member R.Ng. Soebroto had thanked the municipality on behalf of the native community for the establishment of this technical school, which had just opened its doors. On the other hand, it can be assumed that the school had also been established at the request of local land and property developers.

19. Darnakoesoema was amongst the members of the daily board of this association, as was R.Ng. Soebroto, as appeared from the application for subsidy sent to the council on November 17, 1920.

dysentery and catarrhal enteritis, and Ratulangi immediately drew the link with the poor hygienic conditions in the kampongs. He commented bitterly: “It is the boundless negligence of the kampungs, Honourable Chairman, which will likely make the native cemeteries, currently being ‘considered and prepared’ by the mayor, rather profitable.”

With regard to the drinking water taxes, Ratulangi provided a detailed, technical calculation, which showed that, due to a complication in tariff calculations, the poor man did not pay less than the cost price of drinking water, as the mayor suggested, but more. A mere f5,500 had up until that point been spent on the earlier-mentioned bathhouses, and the 81 fire engine bases were few in relation to the approximately 90,000 natives.

In respect of building control, Ratulangi pointed in the first place to an incident discussed earlier by the council whereby this service had acted injudiciously in the *desas*.²⁰ He suggested that this had probably happened more often. Next, he cited from the 1920 report of this service the following section:

“The supervision of the native buildings is of a very different nature. The main concern is the supervision of the adherence to plague prevention guidelines, for which the staff does not require any special extensive technical training. Whilst for the supervision of living spaces, i.e. the cleanliness of home and yard, staff with an even lower level of technical training, can be used.” Honourable Chairman, with second and third tier personnel, one can achieve little, and one does achieve little. The fact that the kampung is not a collection of rickety shacks and rubbish belts is mainly thanks to the inherent sense of tidiness of the Sundanese.

After all this criticism, Ratulangi’s recognition of the importance of the native rental Commission sounded positive.²¹ The eleventh and last “projectile,” the smaller housing programme, was however again criticized. It concerned a type of social housing project by Bandung municipality, which included building projects in two locations and of different classes.²² Ratulangi presented a calculation which showed that the natives mainly lived in housing which had cost the municipality little, but which provided substantial rental income: he calculated that, of the sum invested in native housing—not even a third of the total—the municipality in fact saw an income of 13% in interest.

Ratulangi’s final balance showed f 250,000 in municipal income provided for by natives versus f 39,800 of municipal spending on native interests.

With regard to the comment by the mayor that the embellishment of Bandung was paid for by the municipal land company, Ratulangi just wanted to note that this company was in fact also funded by natives: partially because the interest payments were made by the municipality as a whole—and therefore also by the natives—but mainly because the council had acquired the land by buying the land off native smallholders, who subsequently “admire the price increase from a distance and mutter to themselves: ‘Pinter sekali pembasar gemeente’

20. This incident concerned the head of a *desa* situated within the municipality, the *lurah* of Tjijendo, to whom the municipality had offered compensation, after a building had been demolished wrongly. Right up to the People’s Council [*Volksraad*], there was mention of the “tyranny of the Bandoeng building control.”

21. According to the Rental Commission Ordinance of 1918 (*Staatsblad* 1918, no. 288), local councils could establish rental Commissions to organize housing. The Bandung council established such Commission in June 1918 in order to determine appropriate rental prices. The Commission reported monthly to the council. After it turned out that the Commission was frequently dealing with native cases, a “native rental Commission” was formed by appointing deputy native members in May 1920, with Darnakoesoema as its (deputy) chairman.

22. In 1919, to support those worse off in need of a home, the council decided that the municipality would build a number of blocks of smaller flats in the neighbourhoods of Astana Anjer and Tjihapit in West- and East-Bandoeng, respectively, and rent these out.

[the gentlemen of the municipality are pretty smart]. Is that a contribution by the native community to the land company, or is that not?" He cynically remarked that:

... it is merely a contribution of stupidity to the pleasure ground of Indonesia. And is it not merely, Honourable Chairman, one of the common phenomena of the brutal law of *survival of the fittest* as it applies to the nature surrounding us?

17. VOTE ABOUT DARNAKOESOEMA'S PROPOSAL

In his concluding remarks, Ratulangi cited with approval the exhortation to the council by Coops to conduct the deliberations in a prudent and reflective fashion: "We are living in serious times in many respects. The rise in awareness poses questions to the government and the local councils, which in the past would not even have been thought of." He also agreed with Schneider's warning against agitation by revolutionaries and said: "Precisely because I disapprove of social excess, precisely because I advocate evolutionary progress in the state of affairs, do I fully and sternly wish to support the proposal of Mister Darna."

Ratulangi's speech was followed by a somewhat chaotic procedural debate. The chairman preferred to close the meeting immediately to continue the next day with questions and answers, but was prepared, if so desired, to start with the consideration of the first chapter in the budget. Schneider, however, remarked that Darnakoesoema had suggested refraining from considering the budget in its entirety. Ratulangi preferred waiting for the response of the mayor. Smith, on the other hand, did want to discuss Darnakoesoema's proposal directly and immediately motivated his wish as follows:

According to the Establishment Ordinance, the municipality is not obliged to look after the kampungs. If therefore the services to the kampungs are in some way insufficient, this is a matter which in any case does not concern us directly. I could deplore this fact, but I do not think it is right to reject the budget on this ground.

The chairman, who apparently wanted to prevent a vote about the proposal particularly at this stage, suggested that Darnakoesoema could also propose increases in the budget during the consideration of the individual articles. He said that, if Darnakoesoema wanted a vote himself, he would have no objections. The latter said that he "somewhat agreed" with the concerns of the mayor. But most European members appeared to be in favour of an immediate vote about the proposal; only Mr Lamers argued for a week-long extension for further consultation, motivating his standpoint as follows: "... we have to crush any criticism by the natives that we have not given them an opportunity." Schneider, however, remarked, that this would make little difference.

Darnakoesoema's proposal was put to vote. Nine votes, eight European and one Chinese, were against; four votes, of the natives, were in favour. Next, Lamers's proposal was put to vote. Eight were against, only Lamers and the native members were in favour. After a few final remarks, the chairman closed the meeting at nine o'clock in the evening.

18. MAYOR COOPS RESPONDS

The next evening, on Thursday January 18, at six o'clock, the consultations started with Mayor Coops's responding to the general debate. With regard to Darnakoesoema's contribution, he said:

Mister Darnakoesoema has been discouraged ..., even if he thankfully remembers the cooperation with the Municipal Administration and the public servants. Come, Mister Darna,

why this gloom! Your ‘‘weak’’ voice—as you phrase it—has often pleaded here for the needs of the least well off and often, Mister Darna, your voice has not been lost in the desert. Besides, I believe that in this Council there is indeed an atmosphere of meeting the demands expressed by the Native members where possible and when need be That in terms of improving the kampungs much, very much is still to be achieved, I fully concur.

He explained that the municipality had up until this point waited for the support which the government was obliged to give, but then released some news about this:

However, it has just become clear that the Government is not particularly aware of this obligation. For indeed, a Government announcement about this matter to the municipality of Semarang, printed in the *Locomotief* of 12 of this year, includes a number of rather remarkable statements about this.

On the basis of the citations which Coops read out loud during the meeting, he drew the conclusion that the government for the first time clearly opened the doors to the municipality to intervene in the kampongs. Desa works ‘‘which do not exclusively and only concern the interests of the kampung inhabitants’’ are of concern to the municipal household. ‘‘This opinion,’’ Coops said, ‘‘could, I believe, lead to our municipality no longer waiting diffidently ... but starting to take things in hand.’’

The mayor then agreed with Schneider’s suggestion to appoint a committee for kampung matters, which:

... as far as I am concerned, consists of just three members, namely a technical member, a native member, a Chinese member and for example a technical municipal public servant (the Director of Public Works) as secretary. This then should be set up.

Next, he responded to Ratulangi:

It is indeed no easy task to closely follow Mister Ratu Langi and ... where needed, counteract. ... First of all, I wish to emphasise that this balancing act—particularly this balancing act on golden scales, as was done by the Gentlemen Native members—is less suitable in the Municipal household.

But, on the other hand, the mayor applauded:

... that this year the native members have defended so strongly the claims of the less well off on better service provision In this respect, much honour should be bestowed upon what Mister Darna and not in the least the youngest Native council member Dr Ratu Langi have brought up. Indeed, such heartfelt speech as given by Mister Ratu Langi—even if this is in many aspects disputable—serves the cause of the poor man.

After these introductory words, the tone hardened once again. He reduced Ratulangi’s ‘‘fixed’’ total to ‘‘fiction.’’ When Ratulangi had estimated certain tax revenues per population group, the mayor said that these could hardly be confirmed:

... why then all this talk about numbers, which are all susceptible to refutation. Mine as much as yours. However, I set mine forth in order to clarify with one single example that the assertion by Mr Darna was no more than an assertion. You, Dr Ratu Langie, wish your figures to have a different value, however much we would like to trust your authority in the area of figures, we can no longer follow where you are going, because the produced is no longer exact. You wanted to prove too much. I will therefore not follow each single fired projectile. They went too fast and some of them will have probably burst like a bubble.

After that, he replied extensively about the calculations with regard to the water company, the smaller housing programme, and the land company. The native landowners, according to

him, were given a generous sum and “usually those landowners know how to gain what there is to gain.” After considering the technical college, the cemeteries, and the building control, Coops concluded that he did not at all accept Ratulangi’s calculations.

Overall, this response was rather moderate, and both Ratulangi and Darnakoesoema found it better than expected:

Mister Ratu Langie says to have left for this meeting shivering with fear. The speaker believed he would undergo the same fate as Mister Darna during the reply. In any case, he had expected a heavier bombardment. As far as the matter of balancing is concerned, sometimes it is said: Present some figures, but now this also seems insufficient and it is said that figures do not say very much As an aside, the speaker would like to thank the Chairman for his mild attitude towards native interests and his promise with regard to the kampung. [Signs of agreement, according to the minutes.]

Darnakoesoema too feels the need to express his gratitude for the interest in the kampung’s problems, as is apparent from the answers of the chairman in the general debate. He would, however, have preferred that the interest was also expressed in figures in the budget.

Finally, the latter urged for a renewed attempt with the government to abolish desa autonomy as soon as possible.

19. THE CONCLUSION OF THE BUDGET DEBATE

After a short debate about cutting public salaries, halfway through that Thursday evening, the meeting finally moved to the consideration of each individual article of the municipal budget. Darnakoesoema’s plea for a native alderman was rejected by the mayor because, he said, no distinction should be made according to background: “Suitability is the only basis.” But a suggestion by Ratulangi to set aside *f* 15,000 for a separate Bureau for Native Affairs in order to establish an institution that would specifically look after native interests was accepted with six against five votes despite resistance by the chairman: two European members appeared to agree with the native fraction. Maybe the pleas of Darnakoesoema and Ratulangi had not failed to have some effect. After the chairman had, however, said that this expense was not feasible due to a lack in funds, Ratulangi courteously offered to lower the sum if need be.

As such, the fierce budget debate that evening ended in an atmosphere of giving and taking, of harmonious co-operation. The next evening, on January 19, this line was continued. Urged by the council, Ratulangi even withdrew his proposal of a separate bureau and agreed with the suggestion to incorporate “native affairs” in the finance department of the secretariat. In turn, the mayor stated, when the concerning article was discussed, that the rubbish collection services in the kampongs needed to be improved. At a later point, he also suggested setting aside more funds for the building of three bridges in the desas than was originally planned. The council agreed.

Finally, on January 22, after another long day of negotiations about the last of the more than 100 articles, the municipal council of Bandung confirmed the 1923 budget.

20. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has shown that, since 1918, representatives of the Indonesian—or native—population used the municipal council of Bandung as a forum to plea for the interests of their

followers, and did so many times with great eloquence and fervour. The municipal administration model turned out to be quite effective in showing European administrators what the local social realities were. The native proposals could be simply voted against by the legally fixed majority of European council members, unless there was a divide amongst the European members—something which was quite often the case. The rise in the native council members coincided politically with the rise of the nationalist movement and policy-wise with the transition from a *laissez-faire* state to a welfare state. The Bandung budgetary debate of 1923 paints a picture of the political relations of the time, which also became apparent in the People’s Council [*Volksraad*] and the municipal councils of other cities.²³ The native contribution, however, which may have been inspired by nationalism, still upheld the idea that, within the status quo, improvements for the local population had to be and could still be achieved. Both native foremen, Darnakoesoema and Ratulangi, who had a reputation of being radical,²⁴ defended themselves against the stigma of revolutionary or agitator, and in principle maintained a co-operative attitude. This was fostered by a mayor who strongly favoured harmony, even if he never doubted the righteousness of the colonial governance system as such.

What happened next with the protagonists? In the weeks after the budgetary debate, Dr G.S.S.J. Ratulangi became member and chairman of the newly instituted Committee for Native and Chinese Affairs, the new body for connecting the municipality with the kampongs. In that position, he presided over meetings in different locations in the city. He would, however, say farewell to Bandung’s municipal politics less than a year later when leaving the city, and at a later point in time become an important nationalist politician, whose services to independent Indonesia were honoured with the honorary title *pahlawan nasional* (national hero).

In April 1924, Darnakoesoema took over Ratulangi’s position as chairman of the Committee for Native and Chinese Affairs. When, on September 29, 1926, three aldermen were elected, out of whom one was a native, it was a certain Idih Prawiradipoetra instead of Darnakoesoema who was elected. When half a year later, the often sickly Idih resigned as council member and alderman, also moving out from the municipality, it was finally Darnakoesoema’s turn. On May 25, 1927, he became Alderman for Native Affairs and, on October 27 of the same year, he defended his first budget as member of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. For Mayor Coops, this was the final budget which he defended before retiring.

In the years after the budgetary debate in 1923, the kampong improvement went ahead. Thus, the council member Oto Soebrata said on October 29, 1925, during the consideration of the 1926 budget, to be “thankful and satisfied” about the results of the kampong improvement programmes. The abolishment of *desa* autonomy would from the 1920s onwards be discussed time and again, but was postponed repeatedly until, long after independence, in 1964, the decision on this was without much fuss finally made.²⁵ According to the current legislation, what was formally called the municipality of Bandung, is now officially Kota Bandung, and the position of mayor is now called *walikota*. The position of alderman no longer exists in the current Indonesian governance system. The municipal

23. For a comparison with Batavian municipal politics, see Abeyasekera (1984).

24. In the case of Ratulangi, this appears from the perils around his election. Darnakoesoema belongs to the most-often-mentioned left-nationalist Indonesians, in Tichelman (1985).

25. According to spoken information, which I retrieved in the autumn of 1989 from Prof Dr Ateng Syafrudin S.H., former municipal secretary of Bandung.

council has become the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD). The Mayor Coopsweg (Mayor Coops Road) is now called Jalan Pajajaran. But in Kota Bandung of today, one would look in vain for a Jalan [street named] Ratulangi or a Jalan Darnakoesoema. Is it just the task of socio-legal scholars to keep alive the memory of such pioneers of Indonesia's local government?

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