

forum for online discussions about the weights, hosted by Galerie Michael Herrfurth, of Essen, Germany, is also available. Two further references are Joachim Gabel, 'Lao weights and the luang symbol', *Journal of the Siam Society* 97 (2009), and Hartmut Mollat, 'A model chronology of the animal weights of Burma (Myanmar)', *Anthropos* 104 (2009).

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Indonesia

Nurturing Indonesia: Medicine and decolonisation in the Dutch East Indies

By HANS POLS

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Medical doctors play a prominent role in the narrative of Indonesian nationalism, as physicians were among the first to receive an education at a higher level in the Netherlands East Indies as part of Dutch colonial programmes to create a society in which public health would play a role in promoting science and technology in the far-flung archipelago. As they gathered in Batavia and Surabaya these students began to envision a modern nation, one that went beyond this initial project, making them important early leaders in the creation of a new, independent society. In *Nurturing Indonesia* Hans Pols focuses on the stories of these physicians as he weaves a tapestry of the many competing ideas and approaches that came together in twentieth-century Indonesian history. Through a consideration of how students, scientists and doctors embraced the common task of helping care for a colony, he explores how their commitment to the idea of progress and modernity through science and technology ultimately laid the groundwork for a future Indonesia.

Pols accomplishes these goals across nine relatively short chapters as well as an introduction and conclusion. Each chapter is self-contained, but builds toward the larger narrative of twentieth-century Indonesian history. He frames this work as one that is not simply about medicine, but how ideas of the nation formed and the process of decolonisation was conceived. This is mainly done through multiple biographical asides of various physicians alongside considerations of organisations that united them in their nationalistic and medical interests. It is the story of Indonesian nationalism writ small, or at least smaller, allowing for individual stories and currents of the development of medicine in the archipelago to be highlighted, revealing the vibrancy of the period, and connecting them to larger social and political issues.

Much of this began at school, as young men were taken away from their families and ethnic enclaves for long periods of time, resulting in the forging of new outlooks and understandings of how a vast array of islands ruled as a colony could be united as a modern, independent nation. While there had been some Indies-trained physicians before the twentieth century, as symbolised by Abdul Rivai in the book, most of these

developments took place following the implementation of the Ethical Policy, an attempt to improve the welfare of the residents of the Indies, which began in 1904. With the formal creation of medical schools, physicians were posted throughout the colony where they witnessed extreme poverty and poor health, while not being accepted as elite members of society, making them question the goals of the colonial policies of progress, modernisation and science. These contradictions spurred their involvement in formulating a new outlook that went beyond their specific ethnic groups. When Dutch conservatives began to push back against their early political awakening, many of these medical doctors responded through support of societies and organisations that developed into political parties alongside the implementation of public health programmes, many of which were under the Rockefeller Foundation. After the Japanese Occupation exacerbated poverty and health issues, many of these medical practitioners then supported the revolution against the return to Dutch colonialism, and those who did not were often forgotten or written out of the nationalistic narrative. Once independence was achieved, some physicians transitioned to business or politics while those who remained committed to medicine became part of an increasingly bureaucratised and under-funded system that emphasised the development of public health care facilities that spread throughout the country, most importantly into rural, underserved areas.

This work is an impressive account of the past century of Indonesian history through the lens of medicine and its practitioners. Hans Pols intertwines the tales of various physicians into the national narrative, and is particularly adept at describing the influences and developments in the period up to 1949, making this an excellent survey of the intricacies of decolonisation and a complicated nationalist movement. Unfortunately, the 60 years after the Indonesian Revolution — covering the Sukarno, New Order and *Reformasi* eras — are pushed into one, final chapter. While this does not allow for the complex stories and developments that occurred post-independence to be considered on a similar scale and, perhaps, could have been left for a second volume, it does not detract from the potential influence of *Nurturing Indonesia* to our studies of the nation, medicine and modernity. This is the work of a master of the topic, and reflects his ability to apply the history of medicine to larger social and political developments in a nation, making it an important contribution in new approaches to the past in the region.

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Indonesia

Indonesia: State and society in transition

By JEMMA PURDEY, ANTJE MISSBACH and DAVE MCRAE

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In public commentary as well as academic research, Indonesia is often portrayed as an overlooked, or an ‘underrated’ country. One of the largest countries in the