Debate: Response by Gerry Van Klinken

van Klinken, G.

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Debate

Gerry van Klinken

The making of Middle Indonesia: Middle classes in Kupang Town, 1930s–1980s.
Leiden: Brill, 2014, xviii+300 pp, full open access.

This book offers a fascinating combination of oral history, official sources, biographies, and vivid descriptions. The theoretical argument is made real by the empirical data, while reality is structured into an argument by the theoretical perspective. *The making of Middle Indonesia* deals with the city of Kupang in Timor, but focuses on how the multi-ethnic Indonesia of thousands of islands is held together. Here the 'middle' becomes crucial. The importance of this middle, intermediate or mediating socio-political space is that this is where the connections between the social classes are formed, based on personalized networks. Accordingly, the integration of Indonesia is based on dense webs of communication integrating the heartland of Java with the peripheries. In the words of Van Klinken (2014:5), 'Central elites alone could not solve this problem. Middle-class actors in provincial towns spread right across the country could.' These 'middle classes' have a double position within the figuration of Indonesia: they integrate rural areas into the urban-based economy, politics, and administration, and the distant, peripheral islands into Indonesia.

Political power in Indonesia is understood as being based on personalized networks, especially after independence, when the centre was left with little with which to administer or control the country. As noted by Van Klinken (2014:10), 'The chief instrument in Jakarta's arsenal was not the means of violence but patronage—mainly the gift of the means of primitive accumulation.' In his analysis, Van Klinken applies the concept of 'associational power'. Such power is embedded in personal relations, based on the ability to form associations and foster solidarity. It is, thereby, not about power over others, but about 'power-differentials'. Thus, it is not institutions that play the crucial role here, but the relationships that are being continuously renegotiated. The importance of Kupang is that it connects the central elites, groups, and cultures with the local groups and cultures. The urban brokers of Kupang combine local knowledge required for local communication and association with national knowledge. An excellent case study illustrating this combination is the biography of Doko (Van Klinken 2014:103–5).

A continuous feature of the Kupang middle classes is their close connection to the administration and the state. The term 'middle class' refers mainly to mid-level civil servants, who are especially prominent in the district towns. Work in the bureaucracy provides status and special privileges, but rather low incomes. Especially after independence and within the New Order, 'white collar crime' (Van Klinken 2014:197) became an important source of revenue for the middle classes. Prior to the Asia crisis of 1997, the 'middle classes' were often considered as forces for democratization. Caution should be taken when following Van Klinken's view, although he points out that '[t]he challenge for them now is to rediscover the larger emancipatory potential that lies hidden in the history of Middle Indonesia's younger years' (2014:281).

With its focus on a small district town, the study addresses a widely ignored issue and general research gap. Small, peripheral cities are obviously significant, but the number of studies is very limited. It seems as if they are too small (and rural) for proper studies of urbanism, and too large to be covered by village studies. Our working group 'Urbanism' at the University of Passau, is currently doing research on 'middle towns' in Vietnam and Thailand. The study of Van Klinken provides a lot of helpful suggestions for our work. Many of the observations are similar to what we found in Vietnam and Thailand, and—as usual—there are some differences, too.

The argument of associational power reminds one of Norbert Elias's concept of figuration. Figurations are networks of interdependencies and power differentials. One variable for power differentials is the degree of social cohesion of a group. The question is: what provides such cohesion and integration? From this perspective we have to look at the institutions and organizational patterns that are applied by groups. The traditional institutions, combined with colonial government, favoured the rajas and forms of comprador middle classes related to trade and the colonial administration. After independence the traditional institutions declined and, with them, the associated groups, while new institutions connected to the promises of development evolved, namely the new administration and political parties, especially the PKI. Interesting is the position of the church. Its rise was, I guess, connected to the tensions between the different factions of the middle classes and the relative weakness of the new organizations in Kupang. The decisive factor in the struggle of the different groups was the linkage to the national level. The consolidating national elites provided the base for the strength of those local groups associated with them. A conclusion that might be drawn, especially on the base of recent experiences in Thailand, is that middle classes tend to prefer alliances with the national elite instead of alliances with other middle-class groups, and even less so with those perceived as lower class. This relates to the question of class formation, or whether vertical or horizontal alliances are more relevant for middle classes.

In a study of Korat, a provincial centre in Thailand, in the mid 1990s different middle-class groups, among them intellectuals, business professionals, and civil servants, cooperated to maintain their control over regional resources against Bangkok-based strategic groups. As a result of the Asia crisis of 1997, and the conflicts since 2006, this alliance broke up. Some groups and persons expected more status security by returning to vertical relations with the Bangkok elite, while others formed the so-called 'Red Shirts'. Horizontal or vertical alliances of middle-class groups have implications for patronage relations. In the vertical structure these are crucial, while they play a minor role for horizontal integration. As a result, we have a conflict between networks of clientelism and class formation. In Thailand this is expressed by an ideology of 'Thai-ness' on one hand, and demands for democracy and justice on the other.

Obviously there is a dialectical relation between state and middle-class formation. Interestingly, here we have surprising similarities between state and elite formation in Indonesia and the states of the mainland. The first phase (independence to the 1960s) was characterized by charismatic leaders. Obviously no dominant elite was able to establish itself, and diverse groups struggled against each other with fluid alliances, held together by the charisma of leaders like Sukarno, Ho Chi Minh, Siong, and the like. The second phase started when all over Southeast Asia charismatic leaders were substituted by bureaucrats or the military. From a sociological perspective one could explain this as the routinization of charisma ('*Veralltäglichung des Charisma*') through bureaucratization. It implies a process of elite formation. The bureaucracy and/or the military were already a rising power that became dominant. After the 1960s a bureaucratic/military, tycoon elite could establish itself. One base for its dominance was the vertical arrangements with the middle classes, although under the label of 'decentralization' a process of middle-class formation began. With the outbreak of the Asia crisis this arrangement dissolved. The demand of the elites to be bailed out was fulfilled, while the middle classes faced bankruptcy. Since then the elite is under pressure, and the middle classes split into those still supporting the old elite, who appreciated the apparent security and order of the old arrangement, and those who demand changes. The question is, to what extent will this lead to new 'middles' in Southeast Asia?

Rüdiger Korff
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Passau
Ruediger.Korff@Uni-Passau.de

The making of Middle Indonesia: Middle classes in Kupang Town, 1930s–1980s is a wonderfully informative book. This evaluation is personal: as an observer of Indonesian politics whose interests have always focused on national politics and in describing 'Indonesians on average', I do not have a specialist's expertise in the histories and particularities of specific places. In *The making of Middle Indonesia*, Gerry van Klinken introduced me to Kupang, a city that I have never visited, with a history and politics that I had no previous capacity to appreciate. As a reader, I come away with what I take to be a nuanced understanding of how Kupang has changed from the colonial era and throughout the New Order period, of how this peripheral eastern village became a thriving urban centre, and of how big events in Indonesian history such as independence and the 1965–66 killings were experienced there. The book is also refreshingly open about the challenges, both personal and professional, of writing a social and political history of Kupang.

But Van Klinken's goal is not just to describe Kupang. It is to reach beyond Kupang, to describe a general process with many specific instantiations: the emergence of a Middle Indonesia in large, urban areas across the archipelago. In Kupang we find one example, but there are many more Middle Indonesias, as the edited volume published in parallel by Van Klinken and Berenschot (2014) argues. The main theoretical argument is that Middle Indonesia—'middle classes in provincial towns'—is the glue that holds Indonesia together. In Kupang, we learn about how these middle classes emerged through a close examination of the Dutch colonial presence, the independence struggle, and the tumultuous 1950s and 1960s. Personal accounts feature prominently here, as documentary evidence is fragmentary and incomplete.

Class lies at the heart of this analysis. But even though Van Klinken draws inspiration from Kalecki (1972), his typology of classes in Kupang is never specified exactly; it must be inferred from the text. The object of interest is the 'middle class', who are in the middle in the sense that they are neither wealthy on a national scale nor poor on a local scale. In the local class structure they are at the top, but viewed against Jakarta's rich, they are not. Still, relative wealth alone does not suffice to identify Middle Indonesia. The middle classes that Van Klinken identifies in Kupang are actually the 'lower-middle classes' (2014:16) of indigenous backgrounds, in contrast to the 'small but vibrant Chinese commercial middle class' (2014:267) and the local 'rajas' (Chapter 4).

So what exactly is Van Klinken's model of class? For most Americans, class is a phenomenon associated with personal wealth or income. In the British context, the relationship between class and income is less straightforward, complicated by position, education, and family history. Van Klinken's portrayal of class in Kupang departs from both positions. In Kupang, the middle class

that constitutes 'Middle Indonesia' is defined by three factors: its indigeneity, its dependent relationship to the postcolonial state, and its relative political and economic power. That dependence on the postcolonial state is what separates Middle Indonesia from the rajas betted upon by the colonial state, and it is notable that in this formulation, the state is ontologically prior to class, at least in the regions. (Such a perspective departs from many Marxian analyses of class and the state, in Indonesia and elsewhere.) Middle Indonesia's relative political and economic power, in turn, is what separates Kupang's middle class from its working classes, who may participate in the formal economy (and hence are also in a dependent position on the postcolonial state) but who have none of the power resources necessary to dominate local politics.

There is a convenient causal hypothesis embedded into this conceptualization of the middle class in Kupang. The dependent relationship between the indigenous middle class in Kupang and the state not only constitutes Middle Indonesia, it incentivizes Middle Indonesians to orient themselves towards the national state in order to reproduce that dependence. It presumably also encourages class aspirants and class antagonists to do the same, as the killings of 1965–66 sadly illustrate. That is how Middle Indonesia holds the Indonesian state together.

There is also, however, a provocative counterfactual that might be drawn from this conceptualization of the middle class in Kupang. Ignoring the dimension of indigeneity, consider the following two-by-two class schema, noting that this applies to provincial towns and cities rather than to Jakarta or to Indonesia as a whole.

Relationship to the postcolonial state

		Dependent	*Independent*
		Cash farmers	Subsistence farmers
	Low		
Power resources		Formal labour	Informal labour
	High	Middle class	???

Who might be located in the empty box, the class which has relatively high power resources and which is independent of the postcolonial state? Traditional elites might have occupied that conceptual space were it not for their relative irrelevance after independence. On the other half of the island of

Timor, a somewhat comparable independent elite—those owing their position to Portuguese colonial rule rather than Indonesian postcolonial rule—did occupy that space, and prevented any effective incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia. If Middle Indonesia holds Indonesia together, then the emergence of an independent middle class might predict pressures for fragmentation or disintegration.

A second hypothesis follows, in turn, from this counterfactual. An Indonesian state that anticipated the emergence of an independent middle class might fear the consequences of that independence, and take steps to ensure that powerful provincial elites never were able to escape their dependence on the postcolonial state. That would reproduce the subordinate relationship between the provincial town and the national state, leading that relationship to persist even in the context of decentralization and democratization.

We do not learn much about Jakarta's relationship to Kupang after the 1970s or so. Indeed, the narrative ends rather abruptly after discussing the effects of the killings, with only a half-dozen pages or so to discuss what has followed after the momentous changes that occupied the preceding pages. Claims here are murkier, harder to parse, and less readily substantiated with the kind of process-based evidence that is the strength of the book: 'Mechanisms that increased social "graininess" rather than reduce it through political means gained strength' (Van Klinken 2014:280); 'Middle Indonesia experiences neoliberal reform and globalization as a threat' (Van Klinken 2014:281). These claims, I should emphasize, could be true. But until these are treated with the same attention given to the emergence of Middle Indonesia, our understanding of how that matters in the contemporary era remains incomplete.

Thomas Pepinsky
Department of Government, Cornell University
pepinsky@cornell.edu

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The main argument in *The making of Middle Indonesia* is both important and overdue: 'the rapid spread of provincial towns in the periphery since late colo-

nial times had everything to do with the establishment of a modern state [...]'
(Van Klinken 2014:7). The model emphasizes class, soft power, and coalitions,
referring to the wider question of 'what holds Indonesia together'. Power was
created and exercised through personalized networks, as rent-seeking local
elites sealed a Faustian bargain with the state, feeding off centre-generated
money flows while providing in exchange access to local resources, votes, and
influence.

As Van Klinken makes clear, a sharp distinction between 'state' and 'society'
is senseless; the intertwining of the two is what matters. But to a lesser and
fluctuating extent the same applies to 'local' and 'central'. The comment 'only a
tiny indigenous elite [was] interested in issues beyond the town' (2014:21) is true
only in terms of modern politics. Towns are always nodes in networks, embed-
ded in relationships with hinterlands and other centres, and characterized by
migration. Locals resident in the capital played important roles, as did cen-
tral officials or officers who retired to their overseas postings. Such migrants
strengthened linkages and ethnic politics. My comments concern the choices
which shape this book: the preference for a bilateral (capital/provincial town)
rather than a systemic approach; the focus on the 1930s and 1950s–1960s rather
than a longer time frame; and the selection of Kupang itself. The model offers
interesting possibilities for comparative use across both space and time,[1] but
a wider contextualizing of the Kupang story would have added to the value of
both the specific history and the model itself.

Perceptions of space and the relevance of the past are contingent. The
theme of spatiality (Van Klinken 2014:5, 11, 207, 278) is relatively underdevel-
oped. Geographical distance is not just a product of kilometres and technology,
but also of desire. If the economic and political incentives are great enough,
a place a thousand miles away is closer, in terms of interaction, than a neg-
ligible neighbour. Social and political distance, which must be overcome to
form coalitions, depends on social hierarchy as well as interests and ideol-
ogy.

Kupang has a very long, but shallow history. Economic, political, and reli-
gious factors combined to make it more marginal than many provincial cap-
itals, and encouraged class-based divisions (over religion or ethnicity). By the
late nineteenth century sandalwood supplies had collapsed, and Kupang
seemed more remote than in the early seventeenth century. But Chinese, pres-
ent since the late 1600s, were trading in the interior alongside the rajas by

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1   For contemporary examples, see Van Klinken and Berenschot's edited volume *In search of
    Middle Indonesia* (2014).

the 1830s. Although it is rarely apparent in the book, Kupang was a regional port, with its own Chinese-dominated networks. East Nusa Tenggara commerce differed from that of neighbouring West Nusa Tenggara. There Muslim Sulawesians and Arabs, not Chinese, dominated inter-insular traffic (Parimartha 1995:101–14, 153–60). Moreover, there were elaborate states in the west (Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa), but not in the Christian east. Timor's political system was highly fragmented, and external governments had no clear hierarchy with which they could engage. Post-war Kupang may have been a 'meeting point between a declining traditional order and an ascendant modernity' (Van Klinken 2014:88) but the traditional order was too unstructured to be useful, while the new intellectuals were disconnected from any popular constituency (Van Klinken 2014:111).

Kupang was always an enclave apart, its character shaped by the diverse but provincial character of its population. In the mid nineteenth century, the seven or eight thousand inhabitants under Dutch rule were 'descendents of Europeans, Chinese, Native Christians, Slaves, Rotinese, Savunese, Solorese and Foreign Orientals' (*Ikhtisar keadaan politik* 1973:406). Late colonial government and commerce in the small 'motley' town was shaped by immigrants (Van Klinken 2014:86),[2] but ethnicity was not, concludes Van Klinken, a particularly sensitive issue, despite colonial policy (2014:41). Van Klinken refers to 'ethnicized' class divisions (2014:139), granting primacy to class. I am inclined to agree, but the interaction between the two is complex; the causal nexus goes both ways, while relative strength is contingent. Kupang's 'middle class' was both very diverse in its origins and very region-oriented. Many civil servants were drawn from adjacent regions (Roti, Savu), and Christianity was highly localized, as was indigenous social hierarchy.

'Anti-feudalism' was a powerful rallying cry in post-independence Kupang (Van Klinken 2014:158–68), but the narrowness of the power bases of Timor's many rajas made them less resilient and hence a less coherent political force than, for example, the much more widely entrenched nobility of Sulawesi. Burhan Magenda (1989) has described how Java-dominated state institutions (bureaucracy, army, later Golkar), reached accommodations with local elites sharing their anti-Islamic reform and anti-Communist agendas in three other East Indonesian provinces before the mid 1980s. Aristocracies used state and

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2   In 1905 its total population (3,773), ranked eighth out of nine East Indonesian administrative/economic centres. The Chinese community (12%) was proportionally smaller than those of the major commercial centres of Makassar (18%), Menado (26%), and Banjarmasin (15%), while Kupang (2.8% European) had fewer creole Europeans than other old settlements like Ambon (11%) and Banda Neira (16%).

military protection to defend their privileges. In Sumbawa, a common Islamic identity united old elites and new reformists in an alliance which was strong enough to ensure a minor political role in Jakarta. Army officers with local aristocratic backgrounds played a key role in South Sulawesi from the early 1950s.

Kupang's most widely connected inhabitants had always been the Chinese, who controlled trade (more exclusively so than in most East Indonesian ports). They also played such an important part in town life before the war (compare with Tjiong Koen Siong, Van Klinken 2014:90), but seem irrelevant thereafter. In Van Klinken's narrative (2014:266–72) they appear as pioneers of 1930s 'cultural hybridity', and later as objects of political discrimination. Their role in the economy (for example, the cattle business) remained crucial, but their political and regional networks and roles remain unexplored.

The overwhelmingly 'alien' nature of Kupang's established business networks and the hyper-local quality of the 'traditional' elite ensured their relatively easy displacement by a rising bureaucratic middle class. One result is that the pre-1930 history of Kupang seems irrelevant. It is a great pity that the crucial 1940s and early 1950s are so poorly documented. The Middle Indonesia model, emphasizing urban arenas, class, and coalitions, offers intriguing possibilities for comparative analysis, also in (pre-) colonial settings. Every town is different, but Faustian agreements were common. Pre-colonial political systems and commercial networks, for example, were apparently marginal in modern Kupang, but were more enduring elsewhere, creating wider spatial and temporal horizons. The challenge is to integrate the particularities into the model, using it to illuminate both individual histories and shared trajectories.

Heather Sutherland
Professor Emeritus, VU University Amsterdam
heather.a.sutherland@gmail.com

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Response by Gerry van Klinken

These three reviews of *The making of Middle Indonesia* make a most enjoyable mini-seminar on Indonesian middle classes in middle-size towns. We are discovering a new research challenge. When reviewers as good as these agree it is one worth pursuing, I think we are in for some exciting work ahead. The Southeast Asian provincial town might be grubby rather than exotic to look at, but a lot more happens there than first meets the eye. Out of the reviewers' richly stimulating remarks, let me distil three themes that seem to offer the most interesting puzzles. I am under no illusion that the book under discussion offers many answers to these puzzles. Indeed, if its inadequacies stimulate someone else to pick up the idea, then this little seminar will have more than served its purpose.

The first theme is quite simply the rewards to be reaped from fieldwork-based research on middle classes in Southeast Asian provincial towns. Crucial mediating roles play out in this social zone that we have called Middle Indonesia, especially in those vast areas away from the centres of money and politics. Yet, as Korff points out, the region's thousands of towns have seen almost no research over the years, while both megacities and villages have seen a great deal of it (villages less so these days). Korff's project of looking at Thai provincial towns rather than Bangkok for an explanation for the deepening class divide between Red and Yellow Shirts looks as promising as it is unusual. Might research on this social zone not also throw light on the ethnic and religious localisms that beset Myanmar (the Rohingya) and the Philippines (Mindanao)? A nice little surprise at some upcoming Southeast Asian studies conference could be a panel entitled 'Provincial towns and the future of the nation-state'.

Sutherland and Pepinsky both make the case for doing this work historically. Sutherland's warning against easy generalizations based on a single, perhaps unrepresentative, town like Kupang is well taken and only underlines the extent of our ignorance. My main reason for picking Kupang was as illogical as the one Mullah Nasreddin gave when asked why he was searching for his keys under the street lamp—'because it is light here!'. Kupang was home to some colleagues of ours, and it is one of the few provincial towns outside Java with even a partial newspaper archive in the period that interested me. Sutherland is quite right to say that Kupang is not representative because its traditional aristocracy was always of little significance. Provided it had a historical record, some other town would no doubt have illustrated more clearly than Kupang the magnitude of the transformation brought about by a rising, non-aristocratic bureaucratic class.

My choice of the 1950s and 1960s as the central period in question was less arbitrary, however. These years gave birth to the noisy indigenous middle class tied to the state that has so dominated Indonesian regional politics ever since. A longer historical sweep might, it is true, have made the book look more magisterial. But today's project-based funding does not encourage expansiveness, and a better contextualized book might never have been finished. Moreover, Mullah Nasreddin might have quite taken over this particular project. The reason why most of the (very few) provincial town histories we do have remain so vague about this fascinating immediately post-war period is precisely that the historical light glows so dim there. Colonial archives are relatively abundant for the 1930s, while from the 1970s onwards the New Order started generating mountains of 'grey material'. It would have been tempting to dwell on those other periods just because there is stuff to read rather than because the most interesting things happened then. And to be honest, the challenge of making sense of a crucial period that was at the same time so poorly documented was for me a (slightly perverse) added attraction. A story could emerge only from the imaginative extrapolation between fragmentary memories and scraps of yellowing paper.

Pepinsky now urges a focus on the 1970s as the new lost decade. In one sense that would be regrettable, because it would suggest that we now know enough about those formative 1950s and 1960s and can move on to the sequel. In reality, we still know almost nothing about the early post-independence years in the towns. In another sense, however, it is true that today's provincial middle classes were shaped more directly by the authoritarian developmentalism of the early New Order than by the free-wheeling and contentious politics that preceded it. That peculiar mix of poverty and naïve optimism will always remain typical of the 1950s, and the choices made in 1965 are not likely to be reversed.

The 1970s in the Indonesian provinces is certainly a project waiting to be done. Now is the time to do this. Almost nobody has looked at the mountains of decaying material mentioned above, and the people who can tell the stories are dying. As I write, the excellent provincial newspaper archives in the National Library in Jakarta are crumbling into dust, unused and undigitized.

The second theme is the complicated issue of class and the state. Pepinsky correctly points out that I have had to resort to some unusual intellectual manoeuvres to bring Marx to bear on the political action of people who derive their wealth not from owning the means of production, but mainly from the state. Yet class language of some kind seems indispensable when describing the systematic exploitation of poorer citizens by members of provincial middle classes who control state rents. A theoretical game-changer for me in this

regard was Aage Sørensen's (2000) redefinition of exploitation class as 'structural locations that provide rights to rent-producing assets.' My middle-class provincial bureaucrats certainly seemed to occupy such locations in relation to the poorer denizens in and around the town.

The state is not the only problem that conventional Marxist analysis has here. The whole idea of exploitation taking place somewhere in a middle, rather than between two social extremes, is deeply puzzling. Others who have been there have struggled with this puzzle, too. Lenin realized the rural petit bourgeoisie were not the harbingers of capitalism, but he did call them 'masters of the countryside'.

Moreover, middles can both connect and divide. The first part of the book highlights middle-class actors who build modernizing cross-class alliances. This struck me as a wonderful example of what Hannah Arendt called 'associational power' (see Allen 2003). It is only in the second half of the book, as the rents available through the state grew and communist agit-prop found fertile ground among an increasingly politicized mass of the poor, that those alliances broke down. I have no doubt that the resulting social tensions should be recognized mainly as class conflict of a local kind. Korff's discoveries about middle-class members in one Thai town whose choices similarly vary over the space of several decades are highly significant in this regard. Upward relations by middle-class 'Yellow Shirt' adherents, on the one hand, foster clientelism based on state patronage from national elites. The localist solidarity of the 'Red Shirts', on the other hand, fosters horizontal class consciousness within the town. Nobody seems too interested in the poor, however, and I suppose both are equally ready to squeeze them as long as the poor do not organize themselves. In short, while I acknowledge the theoretical problems posed by clientelism, lack of class consciousness, the centrality of state resources, and the ambiguities of the middle, I think something vital is lost if the undercurrent of tension in the town between the middling rich and the poor is not recognized as caused by a form of structural exploitation.

Third, the counterfactual that Pepinsky raises strikes me as a promising research question. What would happen if the state no longer provided the patronage that binds provincial middle classes to the national capital? Under pressure from globalization, from neo-liberal market reform, from democratization and decentralization, central states everywhere are losing prestige and downscaling ambitions. Middle-class anger against corruption actually exacerbates the pressure on central states, since the patronage that holds postcolonial nations like Indonesia together is inevitably corrupt. If, at the same time, a middle class were to emerge whose 'rent-producing assets' were not derived from the state but from the market, the nation's very integrity could come under threat.

Two groups who, according to Sutherland's astute observation, are rather under-reported in *The making of Middle Indonesia*, namely the Chinese and 'traditional' elites, might once more come to play more prominent roles in the nation's towns. Cosmopolitan ethnic Chinese without strong local blood ties virtually ran the economy in late colonial times, and it is interesting that they are today once more enjoying growing levels of cultural, economic, and even political elbow room (Ahok!). Localist forces, meanwhile, might also come to enjoy a growing role. Korff's middle-class provincial Red Shirts build local dominance because they no longer trust the centre. In Indonesia, politicians with essentially local constituencies already look for legitimacy to the kinds of neo-traditional elites that Sutherland has long been writing about: people who look to the past, to custom and blood. This latter scenario, with its implied threat of ethnic cleansing against 'non-natives' amidst stagnating provincial economies, looks decidedly dark. This makes it all the more important to learn more about the workings of this social zone, which touches such a large proportion of Southeast Asia's population.

Gerry van Klinken
KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies
klinken@kitlv.nl

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