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DOI

[10.1163/22134379-17004002](https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17004002)

Publication date

2014

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde

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Citation for published version (APA):

Sastramidjaja, Y. (2014). "This is Not a Trivialization of the Past": Youthful Re-Mediations of Colonial Memory in Jakarta. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 170(4), 443-472. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17004002>

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BIJDRAGEN TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN
VOLKENKUNDE 170 (2014) 443–472



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'This is Not a Trivialization of the Past'

Youthful Re-Mediations of Colonial Memory in Jakarta

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Abstract

This article examines the revitalization of Jakarta's colonial district, Kota Tua, as tourist site and *lieux de mémoire*. After long neglect due to postcolonial silencing of colonial history, Kota Tua's metamorphosis into a place of leisure represents a burgeoning *tempo doeloe* trend in post-New Order Indonesia. Yet Kota Tua is also a locus of clashing modalities of memory. While government tourism promotions produce a consumable spectacle of colonial aesthetics, a new generation of history enthusiasts intervenes with alternative, playful memory practices, in which the suppressed memories of the colonial past become a resource for critical awareness.

Keywords

Jakarta – colonial nostalgia – local memory – trendsetting – critical awareness

Introduction

Jij moesti ikoet ini plezier!!

(‘You must join the fun!!’—A call for participants in a colonial heritage trail, in mixed old-Indonesian/Dutch)

* This article is based on research conducted between 2005 and 2009 in the context of the NWO-funded research project ‘Globalization and Cultural Heritage’ at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers of the *BKI* for their highly insightful suggestions.

A young woman in her early twenties stands proudly at the entrance of the Jakarta History Museum. In her daily life she is a typical metropolitan student, who wears T-shirts and jeans and frequents malls. Now she is dressed in fine traditional *batik* and *kebaya* (embroidered blouse) befitting a Javanese princess, to greet the participants in today's heritage event in style. Outside, night has fallen over Taman Fatahillah—the central square in Jakarta's old colonial district, Kota Tua (Old Town), which is the city's main international tourist draw—and all foreign tourists have long gone. Inside, the museum is bustling with activity and filled with excitement, as a crowd of mainly young Jakartans gather to relive a bygone colonial era—popularly referred to as *tempo doeloe* (the old times)—in an event combining history lectures with tempo doeloe films and food and a Kota Tua tour by night. This kind of heritage event has become all the rage in Jakarta and other Indonesian cities, where youthful communities of history enthusiasts have mushroomed in recent years. Relocating their leisure space from air-conditioned malls to historic streetscapes, they follow heritage trails to explore the hidden stories of the past, sometimes dressed up in carnivalesque fashion in the costume of a 'Javanese princess', 'Dutch colonial master', or other tempo doeloe characters.

Since this remarkable trend mainly involves cosmopolitan young people, recognizable by their trendy outfits, Blackberries, and fancy camera-gear, who clearly have fun 'doing the colonial', critics dismiss it as 'just a fad'. But the 'fad' has been going strong for over a decade and shows no signs of passing. Moreover, it is not an isolated trend but one that parallels broader developments in heritage re-interpretation in Indonesia (Sastramidjaja 2015), and these young people are not the only ones re-collecting the colonial in Jakarta. Their playful events coincide with conservationists' efforts to 'save' Kota Tua from decay through restoration and reuse, as well as with government projects to redevelop Kota Tua as a tourist destination. Indeed, conservationists, tourism promoters, and young history enthusiasts seem to be entangled in a common project. Together they transform Kota Tua, long considered a grim place that should be avoided, into a lively place of public desire, where one can experience the romanticism of tempo doeloe as a tangible reminder of the city's grand past and potential. Together they break the pattern of neglect of colonial heritage under previous regimes, making it an intrinsic part of the nationscape. Yet, they represent very different approaches to heritage. While conservationists draw on global paradigms of professional heritage practice (Smith 2006), and tourism promoters draw on global models of heritage marketing (Boniface and Fowler 1993; AlSayyad 2001), young history enthusiasts challenge these approaches by drawing on an organic sense of place, grounded in personal and local experiences. In their practices, specific localities are

re-mediated as *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989)—sites where lost memories are retrieved from obliteration by official history.

In this article I discuss how one long-neglected colonial district, Kota Tua, has become a locus for different heritage practices. I will examine how youthful heritage events break into conventional modes of heritage conservation and marketing, and to what extent they represent new modalities of memory that disrupt official narratives of national history. If rediscovered colonial sites mark new arenas for competing narratives of history, what alternative narrative does the youthful approach bring to bear? As I will argue, the youthful approach signifies an expanded, more inclusive interpretation of the urban past, in which new connections are drawn with suppressed memories—including those of local communities and ethnic minorities—as a basis for critical awareness and social engagement in the present.

Tempo Doeloe in the Postcolonial Present

First, it is useful to point out the recurrence of the trope of 'tempo doeloe' in heritage discourses, as well as in recent food, fashion, and popular culture trends in Indonesia. From the comeback of the 'rice table' (*rijsttafel*, once a symbol of colonial cuisine) in high cuisine, to the rising popularity of quasi-colonial styles in haute couture, architecture, and interior design, exemplified by 'tempo doeloe vintage' furniture auctions, Indonesians are eagerly flirting with tempo doeloe. This Indonesian romance with tempo doeloe seems paradoxical, given that tempo doeloe is essentially the object of a nostalgic mode of reminiscing the 'good old days' of colonial life in the Indies. As such it has been a property of Dutch-Indies memory communities, not Indonesians.

Since decolonization, Dutch repatriates and Indies migrants in the Netherlands have clung to tempo doeloe as a memory trope for an idealized life in 'tropical Holland', which today is still fondly remembered and passed on to the next generations through everyday mementos such as colonial furniture, Indies cuisine, photographs, and a rich genre of nostalgic literature, films, and festivals (De Mul 2010; Van Leeuwen 2008). For all its sentimentality, though, this is also a discomfited nostalgia. Not only because of nostalgia's inherent quality of inducing 'eternal homesickness' by evoking irretrievably lost worlds (Davis 1974), but also because tempo doeloe is inseparable from the more violent history of colonialism, which sits uncomfortably with the 'ethical' self-image in Dutch collective memory (Houben 2000). Yet, it is precisely discomfort about the past which nostalgia serves to alleviate. As Rosaldo (1989:109) has argued, nostalgia for a lost empire, 'imperialist nostalgia', is tinged with a sense of guilt

for destroying that which is longed for, but the nostalgic discourse denies this guilt as the 'relatively benign character of most nostalgia facilitates imperialist nostalgia's capacity to transform the responsible colonial agent into an innocent bystander'. This historical denial seems to make the Dutch-Indies trope of *tempo doeloe* all the more inherently incompatible with Indonesian sensibilities.

However, historical denial is not unfamiliar to Indonesian interpretations of colonialism either. In official Indonesian history the colonial past has long been stifled as a humiliating episode which had to be un-remembered from the landscape of national memory. Even today, in the marketing of colonial heritage, the bitter facts of colonialism are consistently downplayed. Yet here, too, the omitting of historical facts creates an opening for Indonesian versions of *tempo doeloe*, for the nostalgic discourse turns both the former colonizer and formerly colonized into 'innocent bystanders' in history. By facilitating historical denial on both sides, *tempo doeloe* provides a 'benign' mnemonic discourse through which to re-collect the romantic aspects of an otherwise problematic history, a discourse 'innocent' enough for adoption by Indonesians. As with all collective memory, *tempo doeloe* discourses develop through an interplay of remembering and forgetting, depending on the needs of the memory community (Halbwachs 1992). Apparently, Dutch and Indonesian memory needs now coalesce in the trope of *tempo doeloe*, which might facilitate a sense of 'shared nostalgia', and, from there, 'shared heritage'.¹ However, historical power relations can be smoothed over but they cannot be erased. *Tempo doeloe* will continue to be haunted by the spectre of colonialism as long as discomfiting issues remain unaddressed. Seen from that perspective, as I will argue, youthful re-mediations of *tempo doeloe* might make a difference.

The question remains why Indonesians have only recently embraced *tempo doeloe*, as attested by the growing popularity of Kota Tua among local visitors, alongside the Dutch and other Western visitors who have long been drawn to Kota Tua's colonial charm. I will argue that this is not simply due to the passing of time supposedly healing old wounds, but to a large extent can be attributed to the trend set by young history enthusiasts, in the context of a decline in the authority of official history in conjunction with neo-liberal marketing trends.

1 In a 2005–2006 exhibition titled 'Indonesia: The Discovery of the Past', the National Museum in Jakarta and the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden thus presented their combined colonial collections as 'shared heritage', belonging equally to the Dutch and Indonesian people (Hardiati and Ter Keurs 2005). The exhibition in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam was enveloped in a warm *tempo doeloe* ambience, with matching tropical decorations and soft lighting, indeed as if to smooth over the rougher edges of colonialism.

In Indonesia this had a clear momentum in the era of reforms following the fall of Soeharto's New Order regime in 1998. It is not only in Indonesia, though, that colonial heritage is being revived after long postcolonial neglect; similar trends occur in postcolonial settings elsewhere (see, for example, Bissell 2005). This raises the question what it is about the present that spurs a postcolonial turn to the colonial past, and also how this relates to the 'imperialist original'. Are we witnessing the emergence of 'shared nostalgia', or is the one nostalgia not the other?

Colonial nostalgia in postcolonial settings can partly be explained in terms of broader trends of nostalgia for bygone eras which emerged in Western contexts since the 1980s (Samuel 1994) and subsequently spread elsewhere, as any global trend. Marking a 'new phase of accelerated, nostalgia-producing globalization' (Robertson 1990), this turn to memory appears to be a response to a sense of uprootedness caused by global modernity's dizzying pace of life and fragmentation of experience, while global media technologies also facilitate a 'globalization of memory cultures' through quick reproduction of popular forms of memorial representation (Huysen 1995). But this has raised concerns that what gets to be reproduced is in fact a superficial nostalgia readily exploited by a 'heritage industry' (Hewison 1987), in which complex histories are reduced to consumable heritage products, resulting in a 'commodified heritage culture' that feeds into a 'new kind of sentimentalism' (Corner and Harvey 1991). As Appadurai (1996:77–78) argues, modern marketing exploits this sentimentalism to sell retro-fashions that evoke the romanticism of bygone eras by 'creating experiences of losses that never took place', as exemplified by 'catalogues that exploit the colonial experience for merchandising purposes'. He calls it 'ersatz nostalgia', that is, 'nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory', which he differentiates from 'the force of nostalgia in its primary form'. Following this argument, *tempo doeloe* mainly represents 'ersatz nostalgia' for Indonesians, in particular those young Indonesians who have never experienced the Indies and merely consume *tempo doeloe* as a fashion item.

It is questionable, though, whether this distinction between 'primary' and 'ersatz' nostalgia makes sense to the people putting it into practice. As Bissell (2005:218) argues, colonial nostalgia in postcolonial settings has no fixed meanings, as it is always shaped by the social terrain in which it is played out and the 'multiple strands of remembrance' already at play there. Rather, it represents a complex mode of engaging with the past, a 'social practice that mobilizes various signs of the past (colonial and otherwise) in the context of contemporary struggles'. Likewise, Emoff (2002:270) argues that postcolonial performances of colonial nostalgia infuse it with local cultures of remembrance. Familiar forms

of colonial nostalgia, such as colonial-era songs, thus acquire 'unique sentiments, meanings [...] a unique performed sense of the past'. Thus nostalgia becomes authentic to postcolonial subjects, in the sense of 'salient, sentient, and claimable to them' as it is indeed connected to lived experience of the influence of the colonial past on local realities in the present (Emoff 2002:276). This sense of connection consequently inspires explorations into the past to 'seek out and appropriate from varied pasts that which they can use to empower and sentimentally intensify the present' (Emoff 2002:280).

This points to the agentic potential of nostalgia 'as a means of critically framing the present' (Bissell 2005:216). As Pickering and Keightley (2006:920–921, 937) argue, more attention is needed for nostalgia's 'positive dimension' as a 'desire not to return but to recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future', a 'desire for engagement with difference, with aspiration and critique', whereby 'nostalgia becomes an action rather than an attitude'. Samuel (1994), too, has pointed to the distinctly critical potential of popular nostalgia practices, as they facilitate a 'democratization of the past' by opening up a plurality of narratives that were previously suppressed. Still, what happens with these narratives depends on the field of users, since 'the politics of nostalgia are realised in its applications rather than being inherent in the affective phenomenon itself' (Pickering and Keightley 2006:937). Nostalgia is not inherently regressive or progressive. As Stewart (1988:227) has argued, it is 'a cultural practice, not a given content; its forms, meanings and effects shift with the context; it depends on where the speaker stands in the landscape of the present'. As a cultural practice reflecting and mediating present struggles, then, it matters when, where, and by whom tempo doeloe is played out.

For Kota Tua, it matters that the popularization of tempo doeloe took off in the era of reforms, which heralded the decline of official history and moreover gave new impetus to neo-liberal urban redevelopments. Thus, the colonial re-collections taking place in Kota Tua are at the heart of current post-authoritarian struggles for historical re-interpretation and urban restructuring. Furthermore, it matters that the rediscovery of the colonial is spurred by a younger generation who did not live through colonialism yet experiences what this history has 'done' to their everyday environment. This is a generation eager to explore new avenues of engaging with the past beyond the commodification logic of tourism developments or the conservation ethic of the intellectual parent generation. It matters that ongoing endeavours to 'sell' and 'save' Kota Tua are re-mediated by young history enthusiasts, for in their playful re-collections tempo doeloe acquires critical new meanings. To clarify how they make a difference, I will first sketch the long history of struggles over the fate of Kota Tua,

in which Old Batavia, as it was known in the colonial days, had always found a careful balance between 'saving' and 'selling'.

From Batavia to Kota Tua: A Postcolonial Challenge

As the seat of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), Batavia used to be a bustling centre of commerce. Built around the Sunda Kelapa harbour at the mouth of the Ciliwung River, it had served as a trade route for centuries before the arrival of the Dutch. The harbour belonged to the Pajajaran Kingdom until it was conquered, in 1527, by General Fatahillah of a rivalling sultanate, who renamed it Jayakarta, or 'Glorious Victory' (this victory, on 22 June, is commemorated as Jakarta's date of establishment). In 1611 the VOC built its first warehouse at the harbour, which proved to be such a strategic location that the VOC marked it as its headquarters in Asia. In 1619 the Dutch seized and razed Jayakarta, and on its ashes built Batavia (Niemeijer 2012; Taylor 1983). Batavia was designed as a Dutch town, with a castle, a city hall doubling as gaol overseeing a public square, and Dutch town houses lined up along canals, a hallmark of Dutch town planning (Van der Heiden 1990). With this image of a European oasis amidst the Asian wilderness Batavia became a magnet to foreign merchants and soon prospered as an international trade centre. This was the Batavia—the illustriously styled 'Queen of the East', a symbol of the Dutch Golden Age—which late-twentieth-century Dutch visitors would come to re-collect, lured by enchanting stories of the VOC era found in Dutch history books and travel guides. However, Batavia's charm was not to last.

In the late eighteenth century Batavia lost its leading role in maritime trade to towns such as Surabaya in East Java. Crippled by corruption the VOC went bankrupt in 1798, and the old town, as symbol of the VOC era, lost its allure. Moreover, the crowded town with its still canals was plagued by devastating epidemics (Van der Brug 2000). Seeing no reason to hang on to the place, in the early nineteenth century Governor General Daendels ordered the demolition of the castle, city walls, and several VOC buildings, using the rubble to construct a new centre in healthier areas to the south. Named Weltevreden, 'Very Content', this became an elite district with grand government and society buildings and villas laid out along green lawns and open spaces suited for ceremonies and recreation. As the government and most Europeans moved to Weltevreden, Old Batavia rapidly declined, but it remained an active centre of commerce for the growing population of Chinese, Indian, and Arabic merchants. They kept the town in business until more profitable times arrived after 1870, when the Indies

market was opened up for private enterprise. Soon, Old Batavia thrived again as a trade centre closely connected with the adjacent Chinese district of Glodok.

Economic prosperity went hand in hand with further destruction of the old. In the early twentieth century old buildings rapidly disappeared to make way for modern infrastructure. But as modern heritage discourses found their way to the Indies, a new breed of conservationists began expressing concerns about the loss of Batavia's 'historic character', signalling an emerging sensibility towards urban heritage. While the 1931 Monument Ordinance offered little protection against developers' insensitivity, citizen action did. In 1937, as authorities planned to dismantle the only Old Dutch, early-eighteenth-century double lift-bridge in Batavia, conservationists joined in the Old Batavia Foundation staged an assertive campaign, and took on the task of its restoration and maintenance. Now known as *Jembatan Intan* (Emerald Bridge), this exemplar of Batavian heritage still stands as a popular tourist attraction, serving as a reminder of the benefits of colonial-heritage preservation. But Indonesian appreciation of this heritage was a long time coming. And, as Dutch civilian interventions came to a halt with the Japanese occupation in 1942, in the following decades Old Batavia was again left to crumble.

After the long independence struggle, to Indonesians the idea of preserving colonial heritage seemed nothing short of ludicrous. No protests were heard when the Amsterdam Gate, once the gateway to Old Batavia and a VOC-era landmark, was demolished in 1950, one year after the transfer of sovereignty. Many more colonial monuments were removed, and Dutch street names were replaced by those featuring the names of national heroes. Keen to erase the colonial past, both President Sukarno (1945–1966) and President Soeharto (1967–1998) focused on building the nation-state based on the postcolonial dictum of 'modernization-rooted-in-tradition', as symbolized in Jakarta's cityscape (Kusno 2010; Silver 2008). Under Sukarno, Jakarta was filled with modern buildings and grand monuments glorifying the national struggle with reference to a mythologized, precolonial Golden Age. Under Soeharto, skyscrapers, highways, and shopping malls were added to the cityscape, and on its outskirts a theme park arose, *Taman Mini Indonesia Indah* (Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature), which celebrated the national motto, Unity in Diversity, with a timeless display of traditional cultures. The only prominent architectural traces of the Dutch era left were the government buildings, the National Museum (formerly the museum of the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences), and European villas in the former area of *Weltevreden*. They were adopted for functional reasons, but also to signify the national co-optation of colonial power, symbolized by the renaming of the central square from King's Square to Independence Square, at the centre of which the National Monument was erected. Other-

wise Jakarta sprawled southwards, ever further away from Kota Tua, as Old Batavia became known, which became an impoverished, seedy, chaotic district. As elsewhere in postcolonial Southeast Asia, the vestiges of colonialism represented 'irrelevant relics rapidly succumbing to the seemingly irresistible forces of modernization' (Shaw, Jones and Ooi 1997:169). But while Kota Tua was thus excluded from the nationscape, it was not razed from it. Indicative of the discomfort of official memory discourses towards the colonial past, authorities were rather unsure about what to do with this place. Ignoring it seemed the best option.

Nevertheless, since the 1970s Kota Tua has acquired a special place in urban consciousness. In 1970 plans for the construction of a road through Kota Tua provoked protests from local community groups, who framed their objections in terms of heritage concerns. The building of the road was suspended, and urban heritage was put on the political agenda. This was largely owing to the Jakarta governor Ali Sadikin (1966–1977), who made unprecedented efforts to establish a conservation zone in Kota Tua (Cobban 1985; De Vletter, Voskuil and Van Diessen 1997). In 1972, following study trips to historic districts in the United States and Europe, the city launched an ambitious project for the restoration and reuse of the historic buildings located around the old town square, which was renamed Taman Fatahillah in honour of Jayakarta's founder. By 1977 the old city hall had been converted into the Jakarta History Museum; the old Hall of Justice into the Museum of Fine Arts; a Dutch church, which in the 1930s had served as a municipal museum, into the Wayang Museum; and a warehouse complex near the old harbour, which had its name of Sunda Kelapa restored, into the Maritime Museum. Sadikin's appreciation of urban history certainly contributed to the project's success. As he later explained in an interview:

I have often been abroad and there I learned how important museums are. In Amsterdam, which is much smaller than Jakarta, there are no less than fifty museums. For each historical period or art form there is a museum. We didn't have that at all. The history [of Jakarta] deserved attention, including the period in which the Indonesian people were not independent. ... I realized that we owe it to our grandchildren to preserve Kota. Economically, of course, the promotion of culture and history is not profitable in the short term. ... But in the long term it is vital to preserve culture, including that of the Dutch-Indies period. I believe you should always adopt the good parts from the past, even if you don't agree with the whole.

DE VLETTER, VOSKUIL and VAN DIESEN 1997:106; my translation

Despite this conservationist discourse, ultimately 'tourism was the leading motive for the commitment of personnel and financing for the project by the Indonesian government' (Cobban 1985:310). City officials were waking up to the fact that Jakarta needed a distinctive heritage attraction if it wished to become a tourist destination rather than merely a stopover to popular Bali and Yogyakarta, where tourism thrived on heritage marketing (Picard 1996; Dahles 2001). To attract tourists, the Kota Tua plans included a traditional arts market and boutique shopping plaza, although these were not part of Old Batavia. This also indicated that 'Indonesians were still somewhat hesitant to embrace the full authenticity of their colonial past' (Shaw, Jones and Ooi 1997:190). Indeed, Kota Tua's new museums were mostly devoted to Indonesian culture, not the colonial past. But historical authenticity was of little concern to Indonesian heritage policy in general. While 'there is little about the history of Jakarta' in the Jakarta History Museum, whose collection (a jumble of colonial artefacts and replicas of ancient relics) 'fails to suggest living conditions, either Dutch or Indonesian, in former times' (Cobban 1985:316), there is also little on the historical living conditions of Indonesians in the National Museum or Taman Mini. For the government, history could only be interpreted in terms of timeless national heritage.

Since few officials shared Sadikin's concerns, the end of his term of office also meant the end of the restoration project. Following the New Order development ideology, planning priorities returned to large infrastructural projects. Anything standing in the way, whether slums or historic buildings, was bulldozed. In 1985 this led to civic outrage over the demolition of Clubhouse De Harmonie (opened in 1815), a landmark building at the border of Old Batavia and Weltevreden. This time the protests were in vain, but the controversy did raise public awareness of urban heritage, and several conservationist foundations emerged in its wake (Van Roosmalen 2003). Owing to their efforts some historic buildings were restored, such as the city theatre in 1987, and some conservationists gained fame for pushing through improvements in Kota Tua—notably the architect Budi Lim, who later played a leading role in Jakarta Old Town Kotaku (My city), a prominent interest group formed in 2004 to promote responsible restoration and revitalization of Kota Tua. Another prominent architect, Marwono Yuwono, took seat in local city-planning agencies to ensure that restoration plans for Kota Tua were resumed, at least on the drawing board.

The 1985–2005 Jakarta City Planning Masterplan thus included plans for further restoration of Kota Tua—including the old harbour, the Pasar Ikan (Fish Market), the Onrust islands in Jakarta Bay (once a VOC bastion), and Glodok—as well as renovation of streets and parks and sanitary improvements

as 'an alternative approach for the enhancement of the quality of life' (Yuwono 1987:1). As the key objective was still tourism promotion, it was recommended to add antique and souvenir shops and restaurants in 'the 17th and 18th century styles prevalent in the City of Old Jakarta', to 'contribute to the economic rehabilitation of a developing area of Jakarta through the revival of the historical and cultural heritage of the ancient city', and thereby establish 'a new pattern in urban development that can set an example to other cities in Indonesia' (Yuwono 1987:4). Note the use of the terms 'Old Jakarta' and 'ancient city'. In the plan there is no mention of colonial history, even though the '17th and 18th century styles' referred to were very much colonial.

The silencing of the colonial was carefully lifted in a 1991 'Urban Heritage' plan designed by Dutch engineers from the Technical University Delft in collaboration with the University of Indonesia. This plan proposed restoration of the 'historical coherence' of Kota Tua's urban morphology, to revive 'the urban memory of Kota as a whole' and to 'highlight once again a unique phenomenon in the history of Dutch urban planning and design' (Gill 1991:9). This Dutch heritage was also linked to Indonesian national history by the proposition of a 'historical axis'—from Kota Tua to the National Monument, and further south to the city of Bogor (formerly Buitenzorg, where colonial elites had their weekend residences and Sukarno later had his presidential palace)—which would serve 'as a spatial reference and identity axis for the metropolis and the region and as a basis for a program of cultural tourism' (Gill 1991:21). The plan also highlighted the mixture of Dutch and Indonesian heritage as a selling point for Kota Tua, in particular the 'unique mixture of fragments of Dutch nineteenth century harbour architecture and a traditional Indonesian fishermen's settlement' (Gill 1991:22) found in Sunda Kelapa and the adjacent village of Luar Batang. However, the idea of 'mixed heritage' did not resonate with the Indonesian authorities, for whom any heritage—indigenous or colonial—was only worth preserving and promoting if it could be nationalized. The plan was not seen through.

In 1992 the city published its own plan in collaboration with the Yayasan Pelestarian Budaya Bangsa (Foundation for Preservation of National Culture, a forerunner of the National Heritage Trust), in which Kota Tua formed the stage for a 'Jayakarta Heritage Park'. Rather than restoring the old colonial town, the plan was to 'rebuild Jayakarta', 'not only to evoke the city's past grandeur, but more importantly, to provide the present Jakarta with a major viable point of cultural, touristic and economic attraction' (Yuwono and Rachman 1992:1), based on a distinctive historical identity (Silver 2008:180). As the name implies, this identity was to be based on a precolonial past, packaged as a theme park for tourist consumption. The focal point was to be the old harbour, with its

picturesque, still-operational, traditional Bugis boats, which would receive a makeover with the addition of 'typical coastal buildings that evoke the image and feeling of a lively harbour enveloped in a mixture of Hindu and Moslem atmosphere' which would serve to 'show the grandeur and beauty of Jayakarta in the past' (Yuwono and Rachman 1992:13). Pasar Ikan would be converted into a sea food restaurant centre and souvenir bazaar set in 'original architecture', and the Luar Batang village, 'drenched in traditions of past centuries', would be renovated 'according to modern standards' for enhanced touristic appeal. The Ciliwung River would be the scene of a recreational waterfront area, with a 'unique and charming pedestrian route, where at several places visitors can take a rest in open air cafés and relax under the shadow of verdurous trees', or take a boat trip in an ambience 'filled with historical reminiscences as well as tinged with maritime flavour' (Yuwono and Rachman 1992:17–18). Two statues would adorn the park: one of the 'legendary heroic commander' Fatahillah, to be erected on a twenty-metre-high pedestal at Sunda Kelapa; another of Sultan Agung of the Mataram Kingdom, 'who had successfully attacked foreign powers in Batavia', to be erected at Taman Fatahillah, once the heart of colonial rule. While designed for tourism, then, the Jayakarta Heritage Park would serve to 'arouse people's pride in their past grandeur' (Yuwono and Rachman 1992:9); it was, however, never realized.

In the following years some of Kota Tua's oldest buildings were demolished for the construction of a road, while high-rise apartments encroached further on the old town. Yet it was also in this period of critical damage to Kota Tua's historic landscape that 'the colonial' came into view, owing to conservationists such as Budi Lim, whose efforts struck a chord with commercial enterprises. Two new establishments in Kota Tua stood out for bluntly exploiting colonial nostalgia. The first is Café Batavia, a grand café located in a nineteenth-century building across the Jakarta History Museum. Since its opening in 1993 it has been one of Kota Tua's prime attractions, catering mainly to tourists and expats (and, increasingly, local cosmopolitans) who are drawn to its ambience of colonial chic. Advertised as 'historical, nostalgic, colonial, classic, comfortable & authentic', its richly decorated interior is a fusion of all things 'tempo doeloe', including rustic stone and wooden floors, elegantly draped curtains, rugged Persian carpets, ceiling fans, chicly dressed colonial teak furniture, 'antique'-style lamps, and the café's signature portrait gallery featuring anyone remotely 'historical', from Sukarno to James Dean. The second establishment is the luxurious Hotel Batavia, located right by the Emerald Bridge, which is advertised as a romantic venue designed with 'the strong character of [unspecified] Dutch architecture' as 'a reflection of Batavian heritage', meant to 'complement and support the historical identity of Kota Tua'. Yet,

several historic buildings were demolished for its construction, and at six storeys high it towers above its surroundings, thus 'greatly spoiling' Kota Tua's 'spatial image', as critics feared long before its opening in 1995 (Gill 1991:13). Then again, the arrival of Hotel Batavia also spurred further improvements of the area, allowing Budi Lim to have pavements and palm trees installed along the banks of the river.

The city anyhow welcomed these 'colonial' establishments, despite its long-standing hesitancy to acknowledge the Batavian element in Kota Tua. Perhaps their success in making colonial heritage 'available as a stage set for consumption practices and, indeed, as a consumable spectacle in itself', as Peleggi (2005:264) argues is true of monumentalized colonial hotels in Southeast Asia, opened officials' eyes to the potential to 'tap into the high-end segment of the international tourism market', as neighbouring Singapore and Malaysia had discovered before. This prospect made up for the counter-nationalist intuition of promoting the colonial. Thus, in time, 'Batavia' replaced 'Jayakarta' in Kota Tua's planning and marketing, though resurrection of the colonial memory still had to await the end of the New Order.

Old Batavia Revisited

During the New Order, heritage management was strictly controlled by the central government. Each museum, monument, or heritage site had to represent the New Order narrative of national history. The end of the New Order did not bring immediate changes to this narrative, but subsequent decentralization policies did provide local governments with the opportunity to implement heritage policies suited to local interests. This period happened to coincide with a shift in the international development field, as key agencies such as the World Bank realized that heritage preservation and economic development 'can go hand in hand, and that policies dealing with the two aspects together can bring about more effective programmes to raise standards of living [...] and lead cities towards a more sustainable future' (Logan 2002: xxi). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, increasing private and multinational involvement in heritage management led to 'a shift from the national to the cosmopolitan viewpoint, which has had a significant effect on the nature of heritage preservation' (Shaw, Jones and Ooi 1997:188).

These developments had a clear effect on city planning and heritage management in Jakarta, although the 'cosmopolitan' discourse remained tied to a nationalist agenda. In the context of neo-liberal policies initiated by President Megawati (2001–2004) and supported by the Jakarta governor Sutiyoso (1997–

2007), Jakartan city planning acquired a dualist orientation (Kusno 2004, 2010). On the one hand, Jakarta's central spaces, from public parks to malls and other semi-public sites, were refurbished to create the feel of a 'global city', offering an 'authentic downtown experience' matching the experience of Paris, as Sutiyooso liked to put it. On the other hand, spatially set apart from the modern cityscape, the colonial past was given centre stage in the form of a recreation site in Kota Tua, which would offer a 'place of tranquillity amidst the hectic city', with its 'historical European' ambience in 'stark contrast to the outside world of malls, high-rise buildings and busy traffic'.² In this spatially segregated yet mutually reinforcing representation of New Global Jakarta and Old Colonial Batavia, the colonial past was re-collected as an intrinsic part of the cosmopolitan cityscape.

Still, since Sutiyooso focused on New Global Jakarta, few official steps were undertaken in Kota Tua, while smaller initiatives failed to get off the ground. In 2001 the Australian national heritage trust, AusHeritage, proposed to develop a Batavia Trail, along with a Kraton Trail in Yogyakarta, as 'a very simple, inexpensive and proven means to achieve some lasting conservation benefits'.³ The Kraton Trail was launched in 2004, but the Batavia Trail never left the planning stages. The different outcome may be linked to the choice of local partners. In Yogyakarta this was the Jogja Heritage Society, one of many local heritage societies founded by conservationists in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as forerunners of the Indonesian Heritage Trust (founded 2003). In Jakarta the chosen partner was the Sunda Kelapa Waterfront Tourism Management Board. While in Yogyakarta the emphasis was on grassroots management, Jakarta put a premium on flagship tourism projects. In 2002, the Jakarta History Museum did manage to get a short-lived Old Village Tourism programme off the ground. This largely ran on the energy of student volunteers, who soon went on to create their own, more successful programmes discussed below.

A breakthrough for Kota Tua seemed to come with the emergence of Sutiyooso's successor, Fauzi Bowo (2007–2012), who grew up in the area and holds a degree in city planning, and whose succession thus raised expectations that this time the plans would bear fruit. Bowo presented an ambitious plan for Kota Tua's revitalization, envisioning apartments in renovated colonial buildings, offices in renovated Chinese storehouses, boutique hotels, shops, and wine bars, and small parks and tree-lined promenades. To kick-

2 'Antique-style bikes find new life in Old Town', *Jakarta Post*, 13-12-2008.

3 <http://www.ausheritage.org.au/projects/developing-heritage-trails-in-historic-yogyakarta-and-batavia/> (accessed 1-10-2008).

start the project, in 2007 Taman Fatahillah received a thorough facelift with the aim of enhancing its nostalgic charm, including new paving, palm trees, and 'antique' street lamps, as well as the removal of all street stalls. Taman Fatahillah was reopened with a new, annual, two-day Kota Tua Tourism Attraction Festival, featuring traditional performances from various ethnic groups associated with Batavia, including Betawi *ondel-ondel*, Sundanese *kuda renggong*, Javanese *reog ponorogo*, Portuguese-inspired *keroncong tugu*, Arabic *zapin* and *gambus* music, and Chinese *barongsai*— as well as a Dutch colonial drum band played by Indonesians and a *tableaux vivant* of Indonesian models in Dutch colonial costume. In 2008 a cooking contest was added to the programme with a set list of 'local' recipes, including Indonesian dishes, Japanese *sukiyaki*, and Dutch *bestek* (beefsteak). Antique cars and bicycles were also on display, offering visitors a romantic ride around the square. As the organizer stated, the aim was 'to ignite a sense of nostalgia through all the senses: through the sight of the old buildings and old cars, and the taste of traditional and increasingly rare foods.'⁴ Interestingly, then, this sense of nostalgia was achieved by highlighting the hybrid nature of Jakarta's past. The formula for Kota Tua had shifted from the mixed heritage concept of Dutch consultants and the precolonial grandeur of the Jayakarta Heritage Park to a bricolage of ethnically diverse cultural heritages.

Bowo's ambitions did not stop there. He also planned to promote creative industries in Kota Tua through the development of a traditional-arts centre and outdoor theatre, and the relocation of the contemporary-art academy, Institut Kesenian Jakarta (IKJ), from the cultural centre Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM) in Central Jakarta to a VOC-era warehouse. Both plans fell through, but Bowo's vision of cultural vitality and hybrid heritage put a lasting mark on Kota Tua's ongoing redevelopment. Bowo's successor, Joko Widodo, has equally vowed commitment to Kota Tua's revitalization as part of his 'New Jakarta' policy. In 2014 the city established the Jakarta Endowment for Arts and Heritage, a consortium of government-owned and private companies, experts, and artists, with an executive arm called the Jakarta Old Town Revitalization Corporation. Its first feat was to launch another festival, the four-day Fiesta Fatahillah, which was held in March 2014 and spotlighted local cuisine and contemporary art. As the head of Jakarta's tourism and culture office stated, 'At last, everything falls into place. [...] After decades of planning, we're now going to revitalize the heart of the city.'⁵

4 'Old Town festival offers visitors rare recipes', *Jakarta Post*, 7-11-2008.

5 'Jakarta is going back to its roots with Old Town Fiesta', *Jakarta Globe*, 11-3-2014.

The prestige now accorded to Kota Tua is reflected in it forming the stage for the Program Ruang Publik Kreatif (Creative Public Spaces Programme), an urban project initiated by the Liveable Cities Taskforce of the Indonesian Diaspora Network in collaboration with the Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy). In June 2014 this project kicked off with a two-day Kota Tua Creative Festival: Ideas for the Future of Our Past. Described as 'a public event inviting Jakarta citizens and visitors to explore the potential of the unique open public spaces and abandoned heritage buildings in the treasured yet often forgotten part of Jakarta', the festival sought to address the question: 'What are the different ways to reoccupy heritage buildings with contemporary uses without losing its historical memories (*sic*)?'⁶ This seems to offer a more constructive engagement with the past than the previous festivities. In this festival, indeed, everything seemed to fall into place: from contemporary art and design exhibitions and architecture roundtables, to modern and traditional performances, local and high cuisine, and heritage excursions. In Kota Tua, cosmopolitanism-rooted-in-heritage, a future growing from the past, would find a new beginning, which would finally enhance Jakarta's global appeal.

So far, then, Kota Tua's ongoing redevelopment seems to follow global models of touristic cityscapes, highlighting aesthetic appeal to attract visitors in a competitive market. Indeed, aesthetic urban redevelopments everywhere are 'about enhancing the profile and image of places in a new global context', and 'heritage, or the simulacrum of heritage, can be mobilized to gain competitive advantage in the race between places' (Robins 1991:38). Once cities rely more on tourism they are revamped into what Dicks (2003) calls 'visitable spaces', spaces designed to increase tourist visits, using cultural and heritage theming 'to manufacture an ambience of multi-faceted cultural vitality', usually through flagship projects such as 'waterfront and canal-side redevelopments and the restoration of entire historic areas' (Dicks 2003:3). Since such projects rely on tried-and-tested models, cities thus 'end up replicating each other in terms of architectural style, retail outlets and the now ubiquitous café culture', becoming 'conveyor-belt cities', despite the objective of global distinction (Dicks 2003:80). This is most evident in what Ashworth and Turnbridge (2004:219–220) call the 'catalogue heritage' characterizing 'tourist-historic cities', where 'the detailing of the heritage itself is becoming meaningless to the extent that it conveys no heritage meaning other than a simple idea of antiquity', thus turning the heritage into 'a near-universal icon, symbolizing

6 <http://ktcf2014.org/about> (accessed 1-6-2014).

just “old” or “traditional”, without reference to any particular age or local tradition’. Still, despite global replication tourist-historic cities continue to fulfil a ‘public function of the nation-state’, contributing to the ‘process of a nationalization of the past’ (Ashworth and Turnbridge 2004:215). Indeed, Jakarta’s marketing of colonial nostalgia is no less nation-oriented than the earlier plans for a Jayakarta Heritage Park. In both cases, the heritage is rendered historically flat to fit national narratives, at present the post-New Order narrative of cosmopolitanism and cultural vitality as a backdrop for ‘visitability’. Its containment in Kota Tua as a clearly demarcated, controllable conservation-recreation zone further facilitates this function.

As Bissell (2005:232–233) notes about colonial-heritage exploitation in Zanzibar, however, ‘[c]onservation spawned a series of contradictions that could not be neatly contained’, as the profit-oriented development strategies of the state ‘effectively undercut its claim to serve as a guardian of local heritage’. Despite the discourse of sustainable local development, it seemed that ‘the only way to “restore” the city was to render old buildings profitable, displacing local residents and transforming everyday spaces into capital assets’. As Dicks (2003:74) argues, urban redevelopments aimed at ‘producing visitability’ rely on the neo-liberal logic ‘that community benefits are produced through a trickle-down effect, but there is little evidence that this occurs’. Rather, the usual effect is gentrification and eviction of poorer residents from historic districts.

The case of Kota Tua is slightly more complicated, as the government owns less than 10% of the 283 buildings listed in the conservation zone, so that implementation of the plans depends on partnership with local stakeholders. Therefore there is much community rhetoric, but frequent complaints from local property owners about careless planning reveal the lack of local consultation in practice. Critics are especially resentful about the billions of rupiah spent on aesthetic enhancements, festivals, and other tourism promotions, while basic infrastructural problems, such as lacking public facilities and poor waste and water management, remain unresolved.⁷

For now local businesses do appear to profit from the growing visitor numbers. Profits are reaped in particular by entrepreneurs in colonial charm; not only high-end establishments such as Café Batavia (several more have emerged in Kota Tua in recent years), but also local bicycle riders who usually serve local

7 ‘Owners want their say in Old Town development’, *Jakarta Post*, 4-8-2008; ‘Editorial: Helping Old Town shine again’, *Jakarta Post*, 15-3-2014; ‘Jakarta looks to give Old Town new life’, *Jakarta Globe*, 18-12-2009. ‘More money requested for Old Town revival after 2009 funds “disappeared”’, *Jakarta Globe*, 25-1-2010; ‘The obstacles: Old Batavia is wrapped in red tape’, *Jakarta Globe*, 27-7-2010.

residents cheaply but now rent out their 'antique' vehicles for Rp. 20,000 an hour to middle-class Jakartans (this is quite a popular idea for wedding photo shoots). It remains to be seen, though, how small entrepreneurs will fare once they are regulated. Touristification typically entails the creation of sanitized enclave spaces to allay any sense of urban threat, which further heightens the contrast with the urban neglect, filth, and chaos in the immediate surroundings. Such segmentation of urban space may not only result in restricted movement of local entrepreneurs and residents, but also in displacement of local memories. While a festive form of 'tempo doeloe' lends itself well for containment, local memories are at risk of suffocation. At some point in Kota Tua's redevelopment, growing popularity may herald the decline of the actual locale. This is where young history enthusiasts step in.

Youthful Journeys into Urban Local Memory

Before the colonial was officially recognized and promoted in festive commodity form, it was already being re-collected by young history enthusiasts, who took the initiative to mobilize peers onto alternative journeys into history, at least since 2002. The timing of this youthful trend is no coincidence. As Ade Purnama, founder of Sahabat Museum (see below), told me, 'I don't think it would've been possible in the New Order'. In the era of reforms, official history and the authority of its institutional gatekeepers—from history textbooks to museums—came to be contested from all sides (Zurbuchen 2005). Growing media attention for suppressed histories has made people aware of the gaps in official history, and the more the state version is proven to be flawed, the more the general public, especially educated youth, distrust official programmes to raise historical awareness, while the desire for historical knowledge only grows. No one understands this better than the organizers of youthful history communities.

In 2007–2008, as part of my broader research into shifting heritage discourses and practices in Indonesia, I spoke with several of these organizers in Jakarta and participated in events. These communities mostly consist of students and recent graduates, who are mobilized through informal channels open to anyone subscribing to the idea of 'loving history'. Through social events and virtual media they share stories on urban history, in particular stories related to specific places. This concern with place has to do with their principal activity, which is to go out on heritage trails in search for the less familiar stories behind familiar heritage sites, or the untold stories found at a myriad of hidden and forgotten historical sites scattered around Kota Tua, the city at

large, and other places with a relationship to Jakarta's history. These trails may mean different things to each participant, but overall they are about physical exploration and adventure, not unlike the longstanding student tradition of experiencing nature through hiking, as well as about the pursuit of 'Do-It-Yourself knowledge', as it is sometimes called, that is, knowledge acquired through one's own effort, and about the discovery of the historical self, that is, a self that acknowledges a connection with the history of his or her environment. Moreover, it is about play, both in Urry's (1990) sense of ludic manipulation of touristic signs and in the sense of collective fun, which explains the trend's phenomenal growth among youth. This does not mean that they lack 'serious' elements; they do espouse a critical vision and a mission for the future of the past.

Most of the communities assume a strategy of 'edutainment'. This seems to be in line with global trends in heritage management, as museums and other heritage institutions in Indonesia, too, attempt to engage increasingly demanding publics by offering more attractive interactive programmes (Sastramidjaja 2015). But the young history enthusiasts use the concept more loosely, less paradigmatically. For them it mainly denotes a spectrum between 'learning through fun' and 'fun in learning', as two of the largest groups in Jakarta illustrate. A 'learning through fun' approach was adopted by the first community of this kind, Sahabat Museum (Friends of Museums)—popularly known by its acronym Batmus, like the action hero Batman, so members explain—which was founded in 2002 by Ade Purnama, then a history student at the University of Indonesia, as a way of doing what he liked to do best: exploring Jakarta's colonial history and spreading this interest among 'mall-addicted friends', so he told me. Previously he was involved in the Jakarta History Museum's Old Village Tourism programme, but as he found it to be 'too government-style' he soon went on to organize his own heritage trails, based on 'solid knowledge and experience' and an 'energetic spirit of fun'.⁸ These heritage trails are named *Pleisir*an Tempo Doeloe, thus cleverly appropriating the key trope of Dutch Indies nostalgia discourse as well as the Dutch word for 'fun', *plezier*, which in this form denotes 'going out for a picnic'. These events are held at least once a month in and around Jakarta, and occasionally elsewhere in Indonesia. In 2013 a group of 30 members also made a trip to the Netherlands to celebrate Batmus' tenth anniversary, visiting museums and sites related to colonial history in Amsterdam and other Dutch towns.

A 'fun in learning' approach characterizes Komunitas Historia Indonesia (KHI, Indonesian History Community), which was founded in 2003 by Asep

8 <http://sahabatmuseum.org> (accessed 1-2-2008).

Kambali, then a history student at the National University. As a student he had organized history events for high schoolers (a competition to search traces of the National Revolution in Jakarta's museums), which met with such positive response that he subsequently went on a mission to 'combat the general lack of interest in history among youth', by showing that 'history is not boring but exciting, inspiring, and fun'.⁹ To that end, KHI organizes various 'recreational, educational, and entertaining events in an atmosphere in which history becomes embedded in the heart'.¹⁰ A KHI heritage trail may include a 'talk show' with history experts, a film screening, book discussion, or heritage games. Night trails and sleepovers in Kota Tua have also become a KHI trademark since 2009, when it hosted 'the world's first museum sleepover' in the Mandiri Bank Museum near Taman Fatahillah. In 2010 KHI hosted a sleepover in a VOC warehouse, with a night trail through Kota Tua and an early-morning screening of the Dutch feature films *Max Havelaar* and *Oeroeg*, two critical films on tense colonial relations in the Indies. Since 2013, KHI in collaboration with *The Jakarta Post* also organizes an annual Museum Week, showcasing Jakarta's well-known and lesser known museums through interactive activities.

Besides Batmus and KHI, many similar communities have emerged in Jakarta and other cities, each playing up to its own style and attracting its own, though often overlapping, following. Whatever the style, each attempts to create new avenues for history appreciation, especially among younger generations, in a manner not accommodated by formal institutions. They all offer a sense of youthful open-mindedness, excitement, and fun as well as 'solid knowledge and experience' in their interactions with history, which distinguishes them from 'government-style' or commercial history-heritage programmes. They do so successfully: Batmus and KHI each boast a loose membership of three to five thousand, and their events often attract hundreds of participants.

In a typical youth heritage trail, participants first gather in one of the many vacant historic buildings in Kota Tua for registration, receiving a badge and a lunch box with a 'tempo doeloe' meal inspired by the Indies rice table.¹¹ While enjoying this meal in a casual atmosphere, often seated on the floor, a 'tempo doeloe' film is screened, such as old footage of colonial street scenes, with narration from an organizer or an expert. Large groups often invite experts

9 <http://www.komunitashistoria.org> (accessed 1-2-2008).

10 <http://www.komunitashistoria.org> (accessed 1-2-2008).

11 The cost of participation (not confined to members) is kept relatively low (Rp 30–50,000, less than US\$5, for a Kota Tua trail, including lunch and refreshments), mostly covering expenses.

in local histories, most frequently Alwi Shahab, a historian of Christian-Muslim relations in Jakarta. Then they head out onto the streets. The sight of throngs of middle-class youth strolling through Kota Tua is a phenomenon in itself, since cosmopolitan Jakartans are conditioned to avoid the streets with its dirt, heat, and manifold dangers, and to move through the city in air-conditioned cars. But as true history enthusiasts they are willing to brave the streets and walk amidst Kota Tua's chaotic traffic and waste stench. Along the trail they take snap shots or video shoots of the locale, at times wandering off in smaller groups, exploring alleys or crawling into buildings to get a feel for the place, while listening to the stories and asking questions about historical events at a certain building, street, or location passed along the way. The stories are told by the invited expert in conversation with organizers and participants. They may also be told by local residents, such as an old shop keeper, who can narrate the lived experience of the past and convey local knowledge which the participants could never learn from conventional sources such as education, commercial trails, or the Internet.

This quest for local history clearly overflows the parameters of spatially contained 'visitable' sites. Although they do also visit official heritage sites, they bypass the official markers by bringing along their own stories and expectations of stories from experts and local community members consulted on the spot. Moreover, by linking the stories found at visitable sites to stories found at historic places off the map of visitability, they cross the boundaries of official history. Regarding the growing popularity of 'amateur local history', De Groot (2009:63–64) argues that '[k]ey to local history is a sense of place', that is, of everyday places, in contrast to the monumentalized spaces of the nation-state, 'and a desire to understand the narrative of that place' without 'imposition of historical meaning by cultural and institutional gatekeepers'. Such popular modes of engaging with the past represent grassroots 'Do-It-Yourself' movements that 'challenge mainstream historical models and modes of disseminating knowledge', and may lead to 'enfranchisement' through 'a complexity of historical interaction which is missing in much academic or "official" history' (De Groot 2009:104). Thus, to borrow metaphors from Crang (1994), the youthful heritage trails represent a new kind of Journey into the past that disrupts the totalizing Map of National History. In these Journeys, suppressed place-memories that have no place on the official Map are rediscovered and hence re-appropriated from the state.

Re-Connecting with Suppressed Histories

A good example is the rediscovery of local Chinese history, which was long suppressed as alien to the Map of Indonesian nationhood. This formally changed after President Wahid (1999–2001) granted Chinese-Indonesians full Indonesian citizenship status. Since then Chinese identity has been strikingly visible in urban space, but this visual emancipation is mainly aesthetic in nature. The *barongsai* thus features prominently in the recent Kota Tua festivals or other festive events. Chinese heritage is also visible in malls with the rise of stores specializing in chinoiserie, and especially during Chinese New Year, when malls are copiously decorated with red ribbons, Chinese lanterns, and gifts wrapped in gold foil. This kind of Chinese aesthetic symbolism perfectly fits consumerist desires for ‘ethno-chic’, and thus complements Jakarta’s new image of hybrid cosmopolitanism. However, young history enthusiasts insist on looking beyond *barongsai* and red ribbons. As KHI stated during Chinese New Year 2010: ‘If most people went to malls and other fancy places to celebrate the Chinese New Year then we want to do something different [...] to see a side of Chinese-Indonesian culture that most people never experience.’¹² ‘Something different’ refers to their more expanded, inclusive interpretation of history and culture, whereby they explicitly distance themselves from state-condoned commercialized celebrations.

Thus, they went to visit ‘rarely seen Chinese culture in Tangerang’, a rural-industrial town near Jakarta, stressing their rejection of the commercial rush by taking cheap public transport, so as to get ‘a sense of the everyday lives of those living and working in and around Tangerang’. Besides visiting old Buddhist and Hindu temples that signify historically rooted religious pluralism in this predominantly Muslim town, they visited farming villages to trace local colonial histories there, talked with ageing residents, and met with a Chinese-Indonesian artist who narrated local stories from an artistic point of view. For the participants it was an ‘eye-opening experience’ that left them enthralled, puzzled, and curious for more.¹³ Likewise, Batmus frequently visits Chinese-Indonesian historic sites in Jakarta, such as Chinese storehouses and temples, or the graves of colonial-era Chinese officers, to recover the silenced contributions of Chinese-Indonesians to the ‘building of Batavia’ and making the city into what it is today. Rather than reducing Chinese heritage to fashion

12 ‘Dear Jakarta: Forget shopping, and live history!’, *Jakarta Globe*, 21-2-2010.

13 ‘Dear Jakarta: Forget shopping, and live history!’, *Jakarta Globe*, 21-2-2010.

items, the young history enthusiasts thus acknowledge local Chinese histories and culture as part of theirs.

A similar process is at work in their recognition of Dutch-colonial history, but a more playful approach is taken to re-appropriate it from commercialized spectacles of colonial nostalgia—although, at first sight, this playfulness also seems to make a spectacle of the colonial. The most eye-catching element of youthful heritage events is the sight of participants dressed in colonial costumes, such as that of a 'Dutch colonial master' with impeccable white suit and ditto tropical hat, or that of colonial soldiers, sporting khaki outfits and leather boots, and carrying rifles and trumpet horns. Some groups also specialize in costumed re-enactments of colonial-era events or in colonial *tableaux vivants*. Not all, or even most, youthful heritage events are accompanied by this colonial theatre, yet as the most conspicuous element it is what they are associated with. The costumed role play is bound to attract public attention, which is also why some of the groups are welcome guests at Kota Tua festivals, and for many participants it is part of the appeal of colonial-heritage events. However, they also receive much criticism for this from academic authorities.

According to Wiendu Nuryanti, professor in architecture and planning at the Gadjah Mada University and currently deputy minister of cultural affairs, who has published extensively on heritage management and tourism (for example, Nuryanti 1996), the costumed role play makes these events no different from popular historical re-enactments elsewhere, such as Civil War re-enactments in the United States.¹⁴ This echoes the concerns of critics of the heritage industry, who deem the re-enactments sensationalist events that strip the past of its historical and emotional meaning by emphasizing material attributes such as setting and costume, reflecting what Raymond Williams called a 'dramatized society' (Corner and Harvey 1991:56). Alluding to the 'rootless' character of these events, Nuryanti drew a parallel with Star Trek conventions, where 'people also dress up as their favourite species and speak imaginary languages such as Klingon', and she wondered whether these events 'are as superficial as they appear, just a fad, to be replaced next year with other forms of role play', or worse, whether such 'trivialization of the past' could damage the 'serious work' done by professionals in the field of heritage.

This view illustrates the gap between 'serious' expert discourse and 'fun' youth practice, a gap that also exists in the minds of the young heritage enthu-

14 Nuryanti made these comments while refereeing an earlier version of this article at the international conference 'The Heritage Theatre: The Dynamics of Cultural Heritage in a Globalizing World', Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, 13–15 May 2009. Of course, she also made highly constructive comments that have greatly benefited this article.

siasts, as shown below. From the latter point of view, costumed role play is certainly not a trivialization of the past; more is at stake than 'unserious' irony. Indeed, the role play is ironic, but in the same sense as the ironic use of Dutch-Indies nostalgia discourse in the term *plesiran tempo doeloe*, signifying a learning-through-fun approach to history. Moreover, beyond the sheer fun of dressing up as a Dutch overseer or colonial soldier waving a rifle, this playful approach articulates their attempt to take control of historical memory re-production.

The colonial role play of postcolonial youth articulates an attempt to disclose and reclaim what Stoler and Strassler (2000) call the 'subjected knowledge' of colonial rule in Indonesia, a knowledge not recognized in established narrative. As they point out, the New Order-raised children and grandchildren of formerly colonized Indonesians not only knew little about, but also seemed to care little about older generations' stories of colonial rule, because there was 'no common script [...] no audience and no forum for their telling' (Stoler and Strassler 2000:15). It is precisely with regard to this issue that the various recent forms of colonial re-collection can be differentiated. Evidently, a forum for telling such stories is not provided by the commercial exploitation of colonial nostalgia. And although the 'serious work' of heritage experts is indeed aimed at creating a new common script and forum for its telling, its public reach remains limited due to its academic discourse. In contrast, young history enthusiasts represent a new generation that is discovering the suppressed knowledge of colonialism on their own terms, through their own playful forms of re-collection, drawing on their own sense of history and place. The play allows them to reclaim this knowledge through experience first, before accepting a fixed common script for it. It enables them to recover untold stories before their official utterance, before they are moulded into a narrative appropriate to official history. As De Groot (2009:108–109) notes, contrary to the totalizing claims of official history 'the postmodern play involved in re-enactment [does] not claim total understanding' but rather articulates 'awareness of historical contingency and multiplicity' and hence 'rejection of a positivist "whole" identity'. Indeed, a striking effect of the role play is that whole, binary identity-constructions of 'our' Indonesian and 'their' Dutch-colonial past are jumbled with. This is possible because the play remains unscripted. This is not a trivialization of the past; it is about drawing new connections.

Tempo Doeloe as a Resource for the Future

The young history enthusiasts are aware that they represent a different movement, if only on account of a sense of 'being young'. While not all members of these groups are young, they do explicitly target 'the youth' (*kaum muda*), which comes with all the rhetoric of youth agency and responsibility that are so deeply ingrained in the history of Indonesian nationalism and are closely tied to the history of the student movement in which some of the organizers were involved (or by which they were at least impacted) in 1998 (Sastramidjaja 2014). Yet, in this case, youthfulness also expresses a distancing from the heritage establishment. Although many of the organizers are also involved in formal platforms such as the National Heritage Trust, mostly they prefer to remain autonomous from official institutions that are 'stuck in elitist, bureaucratic discourse', as Ade Purnama put it. He drew a comparison with heritage experts in Europe and the United States, which he had recently visited:

It struck me that they're all over the pension age. To be disrespectful, it's like they have too much time on their hands. You can see it in the way they operate, too slow. Westerners talk too much. They have all the funds at their disposal and still there's no action. But it's the same in Indonesia: all talk and no action. People are stuck in a discourse of 'ah, the government should do this' or 'oh, the government has to do that'. But I prefer J.F. Kennedy's saying, 'don't ask what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country'. I do something for my country, I make young people aware of history and make them like museums. The difference [...] is, we *just do it*, like the Nike slogan! I can hold endless meetings and launch campaigns, or I can mobilize people out into the streets, and do it fast; I use my mobile phone or email and the rest goes by word of mouth, I make them go out and explore for themselves what the fuss is all about. [...] I create a group, someone else creates a group, and participants keep flowing in.¹⁵

This 'non-government-style' approach has proven its worth: participants keep flowing in. The heritage trails have also become popular with young expats and clued-up tourists looking for an 'insider experience', as well as with parents who have been 'infected' by their children's enthusiasm. The success has not gone

15 Interview, February 2008.

by unnoticed by the lifestyle industry either. Multinational brands such as Coca Cola and Starbucks have offered several groups their sponsorship. Moreover, Starbucks and other trendy retail chains consider setting up shop in Kota Tua, and ever more popular music video clips and television shows are shot in this new 'place-to-be'. The founders of Batmus, KHI, and other prominent groups also make frequent media appearances in popular media such as MTV, Cosmopolitan Radio, and youth magazines, as well as in leading intellectual newspapers. Both the historic cityscape and its young rediscoverers have thus become a real phenomenon. Yet again, this has resulted in accusations that the movement is merely a lifestyle phenomenon.

It is undeniable that this movement is mostly confined to a class of culturally literate, young cosmopolitans, who easily move between virtual space and material places, which excludes the majority of young Indonesians who lack the economic, cultural, and social capital to participate. It is also undeniable that they are sensitive to trends and that fun is a key element of the events. But it is precisely by integrating the practice of re-collecting the past in their everyday life that this past is experienced as theirs. As Ade Purnama retorted the criticism: 'Yes, we are trendsetters in that we have started something that has become popular beyond my wildest dreams, but that doesn't mean it's fleeting; I truly believe that we are trendsetters in a new movement of historical awareness.' They take this movement seriously, putting no less 'serious work' into preparing events than heritage experts do in theirs. Organizers, many of them history students or recent graduates, spend much of their time in archives, rummaging through old manuscripts, mulling over different perspectives, and exchanging thoughts with scholars. Yet they take their 'youthful spirit' no less seriously, well aware that this sets them apart.

Their practices represent a different potential in colonial re-collection than that of official promotions of Kota Tua. Less festive and more theatrical, less staged and more played, less commercial and more communal, less proper and more intimate, their engagement with the multiple voices in colonial history and its pluralistic, multi-ethnic, and hybrid genealogy signals a profound re-imagining of local historicity in a way that critically challenges official history and heritage discourses. The critique is not articulated in the form of counternarratives to these discourses, but in unscripted, playful practices based on their own terms. For them, the colonial past is not something to be preserved as such, to be 'saved' from either neglect or trivialization, nor is it something to be 'sold' as commodified nostalgia. Rather, it is a tempo doeloe reclaimed for the present, predicated on experiences of cultural intimacy of the everyday (Herzfeld 1997). As 'subjected knowledge' thus becomes subjective knowledge, their sense of local rootedness is re-established. An interesting consequence

is that this movement, while it grates with the totalizing claims of the nation-state, appears to rekindle a different, more grassroots, inclusive kind of nationalism among its participants.

Nostalgia has to do with longing, but also, and more importantly, with belonging. By re-collecting the memories of their city and other localities in Indonesia, young history enthusiasts acknowledge that the city and the nation, with its multifaceted pasts, belongs to them. And what belongs to them is what they feel impelled to nurture for the future. It is in this sense that nostalgia can become a resource for critical awareness and social engagement. Indeed, many of the groups engage in social action in Kota Tua and other places. This ranges from 'Let's clean up Kota' projects, in which school children and students are mobilized to remove litter from the historic district, to emergency aid provided for local residents whenever Kota Tua is struck by monsoon floods (severe flooding occurs every five years, displacing hundreds of local poor people). In this way the young history enthusiasts are also at the forefront of calling the authorities to account. Some are also engaged in efforts of community empowerment, such as helping local residents to set up small businesses to profit from the growing visitor numbers. Furthermore, there are efforts to make the movement more inclusive to marginalized youth, for example by organizing heritage trails for street children, as KHI does during the Ramadhan. This type of action exemplifies their hands-on approach ('just do it'), but the sense of social engagement lies deeper than that. It lies in a sense of being 'trendsetters' in social change. In their hands, social action for a better future becomes part of the tempo doeloe 'trend'.

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