

# MAKING AN OLD CITY A PLEASANT PLACE TO STAY FOR *MENEER AND MEVROUW:* SOLO, 1900-1915

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## Introduction

In 1900 Solo was already a multiracial city, though the Javanese were dominating the scene. The whole population was 109,459, out of which 1,973 were Europeans, 5,129 Chinese, 171 Arabs, 262 Other Foreign Easterners, and the rest 101,924 Javanese (RA, 1902). Five years later in 1905 the population increased to 118,378, out of which 1,572 were Europeans, 6,532 Chinese, 337 Arabs, 413 Other Foreign Easterners, and 109,524 Javanese (RA, 1908). The same sources showed that at these times the Javanese population of the whole Surakarta were respectively 1,499,438 and 1,577,996, thus it was only about one fifteenth of the native lived in the capital city. The reverse was true to the foreigners. Numbers showed that in 1900 in the whole Surakarta there were 3,637 Europeans, 9,265 Chinese, 171 Arabs, and 262 Other Foreign Easterners; meanwhile in 1905 there were 3,335 Europeans, 10,971 Chinese, 337 Arabs, and 417 Other Foreign Easterners. These numbers meant that the Arabs and Other Foreign Easterners practically all lived in the capital city.

The Dutch administration of the city divided the territory into several *wijk* (neighbourhood), each with its own *wijkmeester* (chief). After expansion, there were three *wijk* in 1915. First, the *wijk* of South-East. It was with the Pepe in the north, the Bengawan in the east, the end of the city in the

South, and the street through the Pepe bridge and the Mangkunegaran palace to the south up to the southern end of the city. Second, the *wijk* of the North-East. It was with the northern end of the city in the north, the Bengawan in the east, the Pepe in the south, and the Pepe in the west. Third, the *wijk* of the Westside. It was with the northern end of the city and the Pepe in the north, the Pepe and the road through the bridge of the Pepe to the south of the Mangkunegaran palace in the east, the end of the city in the south, and the west end of the city to the west (DNV, 3-9-1915). The Chinese lived in their own *wijk* with a *wijkmeester* appointed by the colonial government (RA, 1906: 272). Their kampongs were Jebres (Mesen), Kepatihan, Balapan, and houses along the streets in the Kasunan part of the city. So did the Arabs who lived in their own *wijk*, Pasar Kliwon.

## Technology

In 1900 Solo was a garden city with cool, pleasant, and shadowy tamarind trees. A traveller who entered the city from the westside witnessed the tamarind trees along the street, from the Kampong Kleco to the city. There was no news when the trees were planted, yet in the end of 1860's a traveller from outside the kingdom called Raden Mas Purwalelana who visited the city noted from his carriage that tamarind trees shaded the street as such that a

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traveller would not feel the sunburn (Purwalelana, 1877: 9). In 1901 the trees were so thick that a reader of the local newspaper wrote that the roots of those trees emerged above the ground in the dikes along the main street. It seemed that the tamarind trees were so important for the city that the reader worried the open roots would cause the death of the trees (DNV, 20 February 1901).

**Flood Control.** The traditional government (i.e. the Kasunanan) and the colonial government cooperated in the making of the modern urban ecology in controlling the yearly flood. The city was threatened from the south and the east by the Bengawan with 2,000 cubics per second. Dams were built in the southern and eastern part of the city in order to prevent flood from sinking the city streets. New river was built in the southern part to connect the Jenes and the Bengawan. So was the Pepe which flowed through the middle of the city with 800 cubics per second. It partly redirected its flow so that it did not flood the city during the rainy season (Kol, 1904). Dikes were also digged to redirect the flows of the small rivers in the city. The longest news reported by the media in the beginning of the decade was the construction of five kilometer long canal connecting the Pepe and the Bengawan. The decision was made in 1902, through a cooperation of the Kasunanan and the Dutch colonial government (*Verslag BW 1902*). The decision was made due to the fact that in the beginning of the year 1902 the water of the Pepe flooded the city. In January the kampongs of Kebalen, Mangkunegaran, Krapyak, and Balong were full of water. The next month the water flooded the city for two days, including the Dutch residences around the fort, Mangkunegaran, and the main street of Purwasari. It was reported that those places at the time looked much like river (DNV, 22 January 1902; DNV, 10 February 1902).

A canal would free the above mentioned kampongs from flood. So some 500 people were recruited to work with 30-40 cents a day (DNV, 12-1-1903). While the canal was in the making the flood was still took place. In the year of 1903 on 7 February and again on 20 to 21 December the Bengawan

flooded the city, much like the one which occurred in 1886. European residences and other kampongs were full of water (*Verslag BW 1904*, 140-143). Flood took place again on 29-30 December 1906, in the sheets of European residences water was two feet high, while in the native kampongs water seemed higher (MR, 1907/54; *Verslag BW 1908*, 207-223).

The city was declared to be free from flood when the canal of the Pepe-the Bengawan finished in 1910. However, in the meantime the city was never free from the threat of water, for often drainage could not held the water inside. This happened in 1909 when the drainage of Kapatihan to Warungpelem was overloaded so that water inside came out (NV, 9 June, 11 June 1909).

Without flood and unregulated surface water, Solo would be a pleasant place to stay. The streets were wide and excellent, especially those in European residences. The longest street was the Residency/laan (street) with 595 meter long and 21 meter wide stretching from the bridge of Gladak to Purbayan. Next was Voorstraat with 370 meter long and 17 meter wide stretching from the bridge of Pasar Kliwon to Societeit Harmonie. Not all the streets were having such a size. Achterstreet in the Dutch settlement had only 4.5 meters in width, Moordenaarslaan had 3.5 meters. Approximately one half the width of the streets in the Dutch *gouvernementsgebied* had been hardened with rocks ("MvO van Wijk", 1914).

**Transportation.** In Purwasari a steam train terminal was built, connecting Surakarta and Yogyakarta. With a horse train, the terminal also connected the plantations westward of the city and the city. People who wanted to catch the train of Surakarta-Surabaya should also travel with the horse train through the city, for the terminal to Surabaya was located in the eastside of the city, in the kampong of Jebres. Other steam train terminal was Balapan, which connected Surakarta and Semarang in the north coast. Thus, Solo was located in the very heart of the island of Java.

The city train was managed by Solosche Tramweg Maatschappij. Established since

1892, the train ran over an iron tracks laid on block of woods, and was dragged by horses. Those who travelled from Surabaya and intended to go to Yogyakarta had to stop at Jebres station and take city train to Purwasari. The city train connected Jebres train station in the eastside of the city with sugar plantations westward of the city. The train stopovers were Javasche Bank, Coyudan, Mangunjayan, Purwasari, Banaran, Kartasura, Pasar Ngasem, and Bangak (*Ver slag STM 1895*). Bangak terminal was demolished in 1896, replaced by Banyudono terminal, and at the same time the track went westward up to Boyolali. Most users of the city train went from Purwasari to Javasche Bank and *vice versa* which means that the city train was utilized mainly as city transportation means. Those who travelled from the city center in the nearby Javasche Bank to Jebres seemed to choose other means of transportation (*Ver slag STM 1899*). Easily one could plan one's journey, for advertisements of the train schedule would be found in the Dutch language local newspaper (Advertisement DNV 2 January 1899).

The city train took the southern side of the street along the main street of Purwasari. The train track was in the eastern side along the streets of Gladak, in front of the Duth fort, crossing the bridge of Pepe forwarding towards Pasar Gede, the Chinese kampong of Warungpelem, and advancing to Jebres. Terminals were with fences and roof made from thin metal (*seng*). The city train was dragged by two or four horses with one wagon containing 20-25 seats (Tiknopranoto and Mardisuwignya, nd.: 19; Sajid, 1984: 68). The driver would always rang the bell which sounded "*neng-neng-neng*". The first wagon was imported from Europe, but in 1899 new wagon was made by a local workshop, G. Scheltes and the native craftsmen. The new wagon was nicely polished and with silvery iron ornaments. The new wagon seemed larger for its contained 30 seats, with enough room in the middle to stand up (DNV, 2 January 1899).

Attempt to enlarge network of city train had been on the move. In fact Solosche Tramweg Maatschappij had planned in 1895 to replace horses with machine, especially when in early 1899 the horse disease

threatened the existence of the company. In 1901 the permission to combine horse with machine was granted (Vb, 19 August 1902). However, it was apparent that replacement of horse by machine did not soon take place, for years afterwards there were still reports on buying of horses and making of stables. In 1906 attempt to replace horses with machine was once again tried by the signing of a cooperation between Solosche Tramweg Maatschappij and Nederlandsch-Indische Spoorweg Maatschappij (*Ver slag STM 1906*). Local newspaper mentioned that the replacement would take place in 1907 (DK, 20 December 1906). The replacement of horses with machine was declared all finished on 1 May 1908 by inviting 28 government officials to ride the train free of charge (DNV, 0 August 1909). The replacement benefitted the commoners, for it lowered the fare considerably. Formerly it was only the foreigners, the *priyayi*, and the merchants who rode the city train, then even the commoners or *tiyang alit* could afford to buy the ticket (Sajid, 1964: 69).

In the meantime, while the city train was already run by machine, there was a plan to add up the train services. The government had given permission to build and to manage the train services—either steam or electrical—of the city to a Dutch entrepreneur (MR, 1904/704; *Besluit*, 12 July 1903 No.27 and 31 July 1904). Yet the plan was never materialized, although the permit was renewed from time to time (MR, 1905/2; Vb, 5 April 1907 No. 52). Travel within the city for the native commoners thus still much depended on traditional *andhong* (horse carriage). The Dutch, Foreign Easterners, and the rich natives could travel on their own private horse carriages. The local newspapers were full of *Americaansche buggies* advertisements, workshops of buggy making, and repairment places (e.g. advertisement DNV, 27 March 1903).

Bridges were also built. The longest metal bridge was built in 1910 in the Jurug area to enable people to cross the Bengawan. The bridge connected Solo and the territory across the river, and the farther regions of East Java. It was financed by the three governments of the city, the Kasunanan, the Mangkunegaran, and the Dutch.

The metal construction was laid down in 1913, and in the end of the year, 31 December 1913, declared to be ready in a special celebration. A tent was built at the entrance of the bridge to welcome the guests, the Sunan, the Ruler of Mangkunegara, the Dutch Resident, the Patih of the Kasunanan, and other dignitaries. Almost all the dignitaries attended the ceremony, among whom the Military Commandant, the Assistant Resident of Surakarta, the Assistant Resident of Sragen, the colonial government's officials, the native governments' officials, the princes, and the representatives of landholders. Also attended the ceremony Sri Pakualam and Pangeran Notodirojo of the Paku Alam palace in Yogyakarta. The ceremony was accompanied by the Orchestra of Kepatihan and the gamelan. An automobile with the Sunan and the Resident in it and other automobiles came at 10:00 AM. They took a foto, then the Sunan walked across the bridge, and the went up to Palur, eastward of the city border (DNV, 25 May 1913; DNV, 31 December 1913).

Other important bridge was the Bacem bridge which connected the city and the southern regions. Wonogiri and Pacitan. The 50,000 guilder-bridge was financed by the Kasunanan, with a credit from the colonial government. It was actually started to be built in 1908, but it had been seriously constructed in 1912. Metal for the bridge was ordered from The United States Steel Product Co. at the price of 23,000 guilders. The bridge was opened up by the Sunan on 8 January 1915. Those who crossed the bridge had to pay the toll as much as 1 cent for those who walked, and 1 guilder for those who rode an automobile (DNV, 14 July 1909; DNV, 8 January 1915).

Automobile was introduced in early 1906. An advertisement in local newspaper offered steam-automobile with a "Serpellet" system, 30 h.p., and 4 cylinder (DNV, 27 February 1906). It was still doubted whether the steam-automobile had a buyer at all, for several months later a *benzine* (gas) car was introduced (DNV, 1906). It was reported that the Sunan acquired an automobile in 1907, the time when even the Resident did not ("MvO van Wijk"). It seemed that market for automobile was prospective, due

to the landholders, that a show was conducted in September 1907 (DNV, 7 September 1907). In a few years the new technology became a lucrative business. In 1912 renting an automobile was fashionable, in 1914 people in the smaller cities in Surakarta (Klaten and Boyolali) knew that to hire automobile was as easy as ringing the telephone (DNV, 6 May 1914) and in 1915 in the city there was already an automobile dealer (DNV, 16 December 1912; *Handbook*, 1915: 1416).

**Electrification.** Electrification of Solo took place early in this century. The Dutch government had released a permit to Solosche Electriciteits-Maatschappij to establish its factory in 1899. The management of the company was in the hand of Firma Maintz & Co. in Batavia, but it soon established its local commissaries in Surakarta for the purpose. The commissaries comprised all elements in the society, Adipati Sosrodiningrat (the *patih* of Kasunanan), J.A.C. de Kock van Leeuwen (supervisor of the Mangkunegaran's lands), Be Kwat Koen (the Chinese captain of Solo), and S.J.W. van Buuren (a middleman from Jakarta). The attempt was well responded, and many orders came in. The would-be customers were the Sunan, the Resident, the Patih, the Chinese captain, and the Dutch businessmen. The share was already sold to the amount of 70,000 guilders (MR, 1899/183; DNV, 13 August 1900). The charter of establishment was signed on 12 March 1901 and formally announced in the *Javaasche Courant* two months later, on 21 May 1901. One can imagine that the lot of the electricity was the same as that of the city train. The first customers were foreigners and the upper layer of society, because the monthly payment of the light was high enough, as much as 20 to 30 cents per lamp (DNV, 13 March 1901). The company built an electricity factory and opened up an office. The factory was built by G. Scheltes company, the same one which built the new wagon of the city train, while for office still hired a place in the Slier Hotel (DNV, 15 May 1901). One year later, on 19 April 1902 or on 10 Sura Year Be 1832 electricity embrightened the city of Solo (Sajid, 1964: 74). A few days afterward a feast was held

in the electric factory in Purwasari. The feast was attended by representatives of the company from Batavia, Du Mosch, the President of Firma Maintz & Co. and van Buuren, the middleman; and the local officials, including the Resident, Mangkunegara, the Military Commandant, the Assistant Resident of Surakarta, the nobilities of the Kasunan, Sosrodingrat the Patih, and several *bupati*. After speeches of Du Mosch, the Resident, and van Buuren, drank champagne together (DNV, 28 April 1902).

Soon electricity replaced the position of the former *aerogeen* (natural gas) and petroleum in the main buildings of the city, and houses in the Dutch residences. Since 1902 on one could see the advertisement in the local Dutch newspaper of a polytechnical company, Fabriek C. Senstius of Semarang, offering services in installment of electricity, in addition to the installment of natural gas for lighting, heating, and industry (Advertisement DNV, 15 December 1902). Show business. Schouwburg, had used electricity for its shows. Projected pictures were used in the dance of *serpentine* (Advertisement DNV, 15 October 1902). The Rusche Hotel renovated its building and installed electricity for its 36 rooms (Advertisement DNV, 6 November 1903). Within one year the company sold as much as 3,586 lamps. The most abundant user was the Sunan, with 200 lamps. The Sunan had planned to buy up to 1,000 lamps for street lighting (NV, 6 May 1903).

In the surface, the customer was large enough, nevertheless some more customers were still expected to join in order to enable the company to cover exploitation cost. In the first year of exploitation it even ran in a loss. In a meeting of share holders in 1903 in Kepatihan the company reported that in the last eight months it lost 8,000 guilders, and it would be amounted to 22,000 in a year. The expectation that in the first year the company would have as much as 23,000 guilders benefit proved to be wrong. The news dissatisfied the Dutch share holders, while those of the Javanese and the Chinese were reported to be more calm. The loss was due to the fact that the potential market did not well respond the new facility. The expected Chinese had failed to be customers, the Sunan did not

fully buy the electricity, and expenditure for buildings, all contributed to the unbalanced budget. The report was refused by the share holders. It was recommended that the directors be replaced by Solonese who knew well the society. But, at last the directors were still in the hands of the Batavians, and the Solonese were positioned as commissaries (DNV, 6 May 1903).

Construction of the buildings for the electric company was all finished, and the temporary office in the Slier Hotel was relocated to a building in Purwasari on 1 January 1906 (DNV, 1 December 1905). The loss of the first years of exploitation was then over, and in the following years the records of the company were good, as such that the dividend was increasing from year to year. In 1909 it was only 7.5% and in 1913 it was 10% (*Handbook*, 1915: 1001).

Electricity was on, but in general the housings were too late in responding the new facility. Petroleum lamp was still more attractive. In the *Sekaten* feast (yearly held feast in commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet) of 1905, petroleum lamp made by Best Light & Co. was promoted in the palace square, and sold by its representative in the Slier Hotel (DNV, 15 May 1905). When the house of the Chinese Lieutenant, Be Siauw Tjong, was burnt the Dutch local newspaper blamed the petroleum lamps that the Lieutenant preferred to electricity for its soft yellowish light (DNV, 26 July 1905).

However, the availability of electricity still could not change the face of the larger part of the city. The Sunan could not afford to provide lamps for street lighting for the cost was too high, that the streets were dark at night. In many places people put the petroleum lamps. So in general the city was very dark when the houses had been closed at night. So dark that it was reported that "one could not even see his own hands" (DNV, 20 May 1903).

**Others.** Other facilities of the city were telegraph, telephone, and clean water. Clean water was taken from artesis well. In Jebres, where many landholders lived, there was a well with a reservoir tower as high as 10 meters. It was from this tower that clean water made available for houses of the Europeans (*Verslag BW*, 1901).

### Service and Leisure

It was only the Dutch who could afford to buy all the following new facilities of the city. The Dutch landholders from the whole Surakaria came to the city to do shopping, to get services done, and to pay visits to families and friends. They would subscribed to the Dutch newspaper *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* to know the world, Netherland East-Indies, and the local events of the city. The newspaper would informed them on shoppings, services, and entertainments. It was from the newspaper that they knew business, social, and religious events.

Life was easy for the Dutch. The office of the Resident was opened from Monday to Thursday, 9:00 to 12:00 a.m. In the afternoon they would have siesta while in the evening and night there were ample programs of social gatherings and entertainments. There was monthly gathering at the Residency House, on the first date in the late afternoon (*vooravond*). The Patih had a monthly open house on every second Saturday of the month, while Mangkunegara who was generous to European opened his house every Monday from 18:30 to 20:00 p.m. Meetings in the House of L'Union Frederic Royal, a Freemasonry Club which was established in 1872, were held in the second Tuesday every month. Social gatherings were held weekly in the houses of the Dutch families, usually on every Friday. Fire extinguishing exercise was held monthly, every second Wednesday. The Catholic Church held catechism every Thursday and Friday and religious instruction was held on every fourth Sunday. The busiest office was certainly the Postal and Telegraphic Service which was opened everyday, Monday to Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 18:00 p.m. The post office was even opened on Mondays and holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 17:00 p.m. Agenda of the events could be seen regularly in *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*.

The Dutch had made the city busy with business, social, and religious institutions. Javasche Bank was opened in 1867, especially to do services for the landholders living outside the city. An association of landholders was formed in 1871, Indisch Landhuurder te Soerakarta. Later it was renamed into Solosche Landhuurder Veree-

niging. Meetings were held in Solo, and deliberately scheduled to enable families outside the city to enjoy the various entertainments. In order to be able to arrange social, art, leisure time activities a *societeit* was founded in 1874, the Societeit de Harmonie. The society had its own building. Small as it was, the Dutch community of Solo enjoyed the life and culture of European style (Palm, nd.).

Services were also flourishing. Hotels grew, possibly due to the many landholder living outside the city. In 1900 there were three, in 1905 four, in 1910 three, and in 1915 four hotels. In addition the hotels there was also pension (*Handbook*, 1905, 1910, and 1915). It was reported that there were also two coffee-houses in 1903 (DNU, 2 April 1903). Slaughter houses for Dutch families numbered four in 1905, including one meat house in Hotel Slier (Advertisement DNU, 26 December 1903). The Dutch had their own wood trader and saw mill (Advertisement DNU, 31 July 1907), cattle and milk trader (dvertisement DNU, 18 December 1909), photography (Advetisement DNU, 3 January 1900), public library (DNU, in November 1902), bike shop (Advertisement DNU, 7 June 1909, 30 December 1910), dentistry (Dutch, Cinese, and Japanese dentists were availabele at different times; see advertisements DNU 4 July 1902, DNU 24 November 1902, and DNU 25 January 1909), auctioners (DNU 23 Kanuary 1899, DNU 12 March 1900, DNU 26 April 1905) and notary public (RA, 1905). Like those in Europe, the Dutch in Solo were fond of having dogs in the houses so that when mouth-disease attacked the city, the Assistant Resident in charge announced that dogs should be kept inside the yard (Advertisement DNU, 23 April 1909).

Thus life for the Dutch was a splendid one in Solo, everything was available. Horses certainly had a special place in the Dutch community in the Fatherland, and so did they in the city. Various services were available for horses and horse carriages. There was advertisement in the local newspaper on the availability of horse cookies, advertisements on reparation places of horse carriages, news on inspection (*keur*) of horses, and advertisement on insurance of horses (Advertisements DNU 1 January

1901 for cookies, DNV 16 February 1903 for repair, DNV 18 March 1907 for horse inspection, and DNV 15 April 1915 for carriage insurance). Where did the gentlemen go for hair cuts? Though in the city there were already barbershops, but in 1906 there were at least two barbershops advertised (DNV, 1 June 1906; DNV, 5 November 1906), and one in 1907 another one in 1910 (DNV, 21 August 1907; DNV, 6 January 1910). And where did they go for tailors? There must be several tailors, but we know through advertisements that at the turn of the century, in 1900 and 1901, a Dutch tailor family had been in the city (DNV 3 January 1900 and DNV 2 January 1901). For ladies, travelling fashion sellers used to visit the city that they must wore the same "Parisienne" fashion as those in Europe (DNV, 6 April 1901). In 1902 one could also buy costume for masked-dance in the local Dutch shop (advertisement DNV, 24 January 1902).

There was a lively social life. The Dutch could go either to Protestant or to Catholic churches which both were available, and regularly announced in the local newspaper. In the city, Vrijmetselarij (Freemasonry) was popular among the military, especially those of the lower, for the institution was active in helping the widows and orphans. In addition the Freemasonry building was a place for recreation and entertainment. In 1905 Loge L'Union Frederic Roijal held a lottery in order to collect money for the needy (DNV, 26 April 1905). The more pretigious social life was held in the Societeit Harmonie, a place where even the Sunan often visited. The club offered music, operette, orchestra, and dance (including masked-dance). It seemed that the orchestra of the Kapatihan at most of the times was always ready to be there (DNV, 12 March 1900; DNV, 14 December 1903; DNV, 1 March 1907; DNV, 4 April 1912).

The all-European exclusive performances were done in the Schouwburg (Purbayan) by groups from the Netherlands East Indies, the Netherlands, and the international companies. In December 1903 a dramatic company from Surabaya was playing in the city (DNV, 14 December 1903), in March 1907 it showed King Oedipus (DNV, 18 March 1907), and in January

1912 it presented performers from America (DNV, 23 January 1912). In addition, the Schouwburg was sometimes used for bioscopes (DNV, 25 April 1913).

### Conclusion

With all the facilities, the Dutch in Solo was not lagged behind those lived in the Fatherland. They lived in the streets with Dutch names, they rode the same city train, the same automobiles, and the same horse carriages. They got the same clean water and the same electricity. They did shopping at the similar shops, read the similar newspaper, got the similar services, and having the similar free time activities.

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