

BOOK REVIEWS

Cities and Towns in Indonesia: Their Development, Current Positions and Functions With Regard to Administration and Regional Economy. By Werner Rutz. Urbanization of the Earth (Urbanisierung der Erde) Series no. 4, edited by Dr Wolf Tietze, Gebrueder Borntraeger, Berlin/Stuttgart, 1987. Pp. 292.

This is an English translation of a book first published in German in 1985. As such, it gives the English language reader a window into the tradition of German regional geography, which has also produced substantial works on Indonesia by Herbert Lehmann and Karl Helbig. It also provides a wealth of technical data on Indonesian towns and cities, what the author terms “the urban system of Indonesia”.

The “Introduction” attempts to explain to the reader the basis on which data was collected and collated. Much of this discussion will be of primary interest to geographers. The author, however, clearly states his purpose, and signals that his material can certainly be useful to other social scientists as well. His book, he writes, “has been planned to take its place between the many small-scale field surveys on the one hand and the quantitative generalisations, aimed at characterising whole states, on the other” (p. 2).

The reader quickly learns just what a complex endeavour this is. For example, Rutz faced the definitional problem of “towns and cities” by collecting data on all sub-*kecamatan* (sub-district) administrative centres. The rendering of his data is represented in thirteen figures, thirty-eight tables, and six maps. Often the tables are the result of a series of complex calculations. For example, in the compilation

of “central services” one hundred different characteristics were isolated during field-work, and applied to the 2,760 places studied. Finally, from this group of one hundred characteristics, seventy-four different services were defined.

Chapter 1 describes the “politico-geographic framework” which the author considers necessary for an urban study emphasizing the cities and towns of Indonesia in their totality, that is, as an urban system. The main body of the book consists of six chapters, accompanied by large foldout maps which essentially summarize the main arguments of each chapter. The maps are located in a pocket attached to the inside of the back cover, and I would strongly recommend using the maps as guides through the chapters, particularly if the reader, like me, is rather unfamiliar with the intricacies of geographical calculations and terminologies.

The first two chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) are overviews summarizing secondary sources on “origins and genetic types of town” and “cultural and architectural habitus”, respectively. But because the author consistently views the towns and cities of Indonesia as an urban system across time, he comes up with some interesting observations. For example, in Chapter 2 he divides all cities and towns into four categories depending on time of founding: pre-1400; 1400–1700; 1700–1900; and post-1900. He comes to the conclusion that more than half the present-day Indonesian towns and cities are over 300 years old, and thus can be characterized by a relatively high degree of continuity. Chapter 3 includes an interesting discussion on what the author isolates as four structural elements which form the distinctive patterns of Indonesian towns and cities: the ancient nucleus surrounded by *kampung*, business districts that were formerly Chinese, and upper-class residential areas.

In Chapter 4 Rutz divides Indonesia into four “urban regions” (Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and east Indonesia), and then provides an interesting discussion on the intricacies of assessing and weighing the

differences amongst cities and towns in different regions in order to integrate the data into a total urban system.

Chapter 5 is devoted to a discussion of rank-size distribution according to population. Of particular interest are the author's calculations concerning the growth of Indonesian towns and cities over half a century, between 1930 and 1980. His general conclusions are that larger towns are growing more rapidly than the smaller ones and that towns on Java are growing more slowly than towns on the Outer Islands.

Chapter 6 is concerned with an analysis of urban functions to form categories of "functional types of towns". Expanding on this in Chapter 7, the author constructs a central place urban hierarchy which is based on the availability of central services. He argues that since the seventeenth century, the number of prominent towns and cities in the archipelago have increased by less than half, and furthermore, that until 1870 this small increase affected only Java.

In Chapter 8, the material is synthesized to yield an interesting discussion on hierarchical spheres of influence in the urban system, which corresponds to the hierarchy of central places. In the highest hierarchical class the number of leading cities decreased as the archipelago was united politically and economically under colonial rule. There are only two cities at the highest hierarchical level. One, of course, is Jakarta, whose influence extends beyond Indonesia to the 141st meridian, and also overlaps the second city of highest influence, which is the non-Indonesian city of Singapore. In fact, a description of Singapore's pivotal historical and contemporary role in the Indonesian urban system is one of the most fascinating and persuasive arguments in the book.

Finally, for those who have lost their way, the book is rounded out by a summary in both English and Bahasa Indonesia, and an excellent bibliography.

Needless to say, *Cities and Towns in Indonesia* is not easy bedtime

reading. The book is literally packed with facts, figures, and abstractions. As such, it is an invaluable reference text for anyone interested in any aspect of the evolution of the contemporary Indonesian urban system.

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