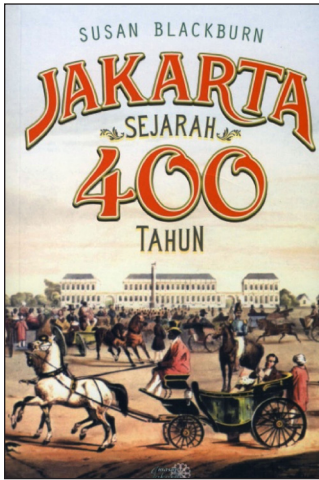


Susan Blackburn, *Jakarta; Sejarah 400 tahun*. Translated by Gatot Triwira. Depok: Masup Jakarta, 2011, 416 pp. ISBN 978-602-96256-3-9. Price: IDR 95,000 (soft cover).



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We could talk endlessly about Jakarta. There are many sources about Jakarta and many books were written on the subject, like this book. It is a translation and revision of *Jakarta; A history* (1989) published in 1987 by Oxford University Press. At that time, the author still used her former surname Abeyasekere. Indonesian readers had to wait for more than twenty years, before they were able to read the translation of this book.

Many researchers used the early edition of this book as source when they talked about Batavia or Jakarta. J.R. van Diessen stated in his review of the English edition that it was a valuable book for readers outside the Netherlands and Indonesia, as it provided a wealth of information and views (1992). Now, this Indonesian version is within the reach of a wider Indonesian audience.

The book presents a general history of the city of Jakarta and it covers four centuries (400 years) of Jakarta's existence. It traces Jakarta's development from its early origin as a company (VOC, Dutch East India Company) town in the early seventeenth century, through the Japanese occupation to Soekarno's rule, and the era of the New Order government up to 1985.

The book deals with two main themes. The first is the disparity between dream and reality. For nearly 400 years – as shown by the title of this book – the governments –, from the VOC up to the New Order government, tried to use Jakarta as a showcase for their policies in the Indonesian archipelago. A second theme is the rich diversity of Jakarta's population. From century to century, the city grew and grew and it became a metropolitan area. Immigrant groups of Chinese, Arabs, Europeans and peoples from all over the archipelago mingled to produce a mixed cultural environment.

The book is arranged in chronological order. It starts with the VOC, ends in the New Order Government in 1985, and consists of three parts. Each part is divided into several chapters.

In the first part "Tuan-tuan lama", Blackburn discusses Jakarta from the seventeenth century (1619) up to Japan's entry in 1942. This section consists of three chapters: "Kompeni; Asal mula hingga 1800", "Kota kolonial; Batavia pada abad ke-19", and "Batavia 1900-1942; Kota kolonial menghadapi tantangan".

In the chapter "Kompeni; Asal mula hingga 1800" (pp. 3-66), Blackburn discusses the development of Jakarta under the VOC until it collapsed in 1799.

In this chapter, she also presents social life in Batavia and its population such as Eurasian, Chinese, and Mardijkers. In the chapter "Kota kolonial; Batavia pada abad ke-19" (pp. 67-122), Blackburn describes the city government's move from Old Batavia to Weltevreden, one of Batavia's suburb. A discussion about the population also is presented in this chapter.

After a "calm" period during the nineteenth century, Batavia had to face the challenges of the twentieth century, for example, the population increase had become a problem. The new settlements for the Europeans in Menteng and Gondangdia were built (pp. 124-125) and the first becak arrived in Batavia around 1936 (p. 127). These interesting topics we can find in the chapter "Batavia 1900-1942; Kota kolonial menghadapi tantangan" (pp. 123-177).

In the second part "Masa peralihan pemerintahan" discusses Jakarta from the war period until after independence and consists of just one chapter "Pendudukan Jepang dan perjuangan meraih kemerdekaan, 1942-1949" (pp. 181-224). In 1942, the Japanese renamed Batavia to Jakarta, which is the short form of Jayakarta or derived from the name Jacatra (p. 182). During the Japanese occupation Jakarta was administratively divided into units called *tonarigumi* as *Rukun Tetangga/RT* - (neighbourhood association) (p. 194). The function of this unit was to control Jakarta's residents and the rule still exists until today; we may still read the notice board: *Tamu 1 x 24 Jam harap lapor* (Guests please report within 24 hours).

Jakarta is also an important city in the history of Indonesia because at Jalan Pegangsaan 56 Soekarno proclaimed Indonesian Independence on 17 August 1945 (p. 202). Jakarta was renamed to Batavia in 1948 and in this period the Dutch East Indies' Government agreed to a plan to build a "satellite city" in Kebayoran to solve Jakarta's housing problems (p. 216)

In the third part of "Tuan-tuan baru", Blackburn discusses Jakarta under Soekarno and under the New Order Government. This section consists of two chapters: "Jakarta masa Sukarno: 1950 -1965" (pp. 227-289) and "Jakarta di bawah pemerintahan Sadikin dan para penerusnya: 1966-1985" (pp. 291-344).

As Blackburn states, the Soekarno government was good at symbolism but rather poor in providing the necessary facilities to run a world-class city. Many statues and monuments were erected during Soekarno's period. One of the statues is the Welcome Statue (*Patung Selamat Datang*) built to welcome foreign athletes who participate in the Fourth Asian Games in 1962. It is located in the front of Hotel Indonesia, central Jakarta.

After an attempted coup in 1965, Indonesia entered the "New Order" period. Ali Sadikin (Bang Ali) was appointed as the Governor of Jakarta in April 1966 when he was 39 and as Blackburn writes, Sadikin was Soekarno's farewell gift to the city (p. 291). Adopting the top-down 1965-1985 Jakarta Master Plan, the New Order set about the promoting road-based transport development for the Jakarta metropolitan area in a manner akin to the freeway system implemented under the 1950s US Federal Highway program. Sadikin's vision of Jakarta was that it was the capital of a major nation were transport development did not merely serve national pride but also attracted foreign investment by catering to the foreign business elite.

However, as we see Jakarta today, its population of 9,5 million and around 3,5 million commuters from the surrounding areas continue to face traffic problems. Roads and highways are packed with cars, buses, and motorcycles. Jakarta's traffic problem has remained unsolved until today.

The periods and data that this book covers (until 1985) make it seem out of the date, especially, after the New Order era and after the events of Reform in 1998, which might have provided important new data about Jakarta and which changed Jakarta's face. As Blackburn states in her introduction for this Indonesian edition, a revision of this edition would have resulted in a separate book (p. xx).

The book features interesting matters that relevant for the present situation, such as Jakarta's unending flooding. As early as the 1640s, the VOC administration realized the need for flood prevention and a system of channels to surround and penetrate the town was created, according to this book during that time (p. 56) and subsequent years (pp. 98, 100).

This Indonesian version is interesting and provides maps and illustration that help us to re-imagine the situation during the periods covered. For anyone interested in the history of Jakarta, this Indonesian edition is a rich and fascinating source of information and ideas.

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Andreas Teeuw, whose view of thought is ever prominent in Indonesian Literature studies, reviewed Claudine Salmon's *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia; A provisional annotated bibliography*. In his review in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 140 (4), 1984, pp. 537-539, Teeuw values Claudine Salmon's efforts and achievements, principally in