

2. Pasar Gambir of Batavia: Hybrid Architecture and Space of Encounter for the Indies People

Around the early twentieth century in the Dutch East Indies, one could observe three important changes in society: a development of a consumer society, a cultural ascendancy of the middle class, and a quest for a suitable cultural form for the new urban society. These phenomena were the result of a growing number of commercial businesses in the colony that created a growing number of middle class people. Parallel to the new opportunity in business, there was also the Dutch Ethical Policy that had created an opportunity for a limited number of local people to be educated in a modern education system, enabling them to join the modern Dutch lifestyle. Progresses and social changes, in turn, had triggered a keener cultural awareness of the educated Dutch people living in the Indies to better understand the colony. Previously they had lived only according to the Dutch's way of life and had neglected unique local conditions. Those Dutch people, some of whom had been born in the Indies, understood that customs of the motherland did not always translate well to the Indies. Thus, it was necessary to foster a suitable cultural form fitted the new society.

Beside the expansion of technology, the Dutch late colonial period in the Indies could be characterized by the emergence of a plural society based on the idea of change and progress. Takashi Shiraishi called this time 'an age in motion,' since a wide segment of population in the Indies began to see the world in a new way.³³ Those people who embraced this dynamic felt that they could change their world and articulate this new consciousness in modern forms and languages such as via newspapers and organizations. Local people, even those who were not widely known as representatives of the national organization, supported and shared the new ideals. There was an engagement of the Indies cultural, social and political movements with the urban environment in the city. The Dutch also started to recognize such changes and differences as being local and modern. This moment in Indonesia's colonial history indicated an opportunity for commercial, cultural and social negotiations between the colonizer and colonized people.

One important place for these negotiations was an exhibition or a night fair organized by the Dutch East Indies government. By the 1920s, big cities such as Batavia and Surabaya already had yearly modern fairs. People living in big cities had been exposed to different kinds of new technology, music, modern products and lifestyles through the events. These modern fairs were held at the center of the cities

³³ Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java 1912-1926*.

with ephemeral buildings that were exclusively built to hold the events and attract visitors. The importance of the fairs pushed the organizers to design exceptional fairs that could create a big commercial space, attract a large public and mediate people's desire for modernity and consumerism. The temporality of the fair and the need to design special pavilions every year allowed for a great creativity in design and spurred a new architecture that combined both modern and traditional sources. In addition to shaping the public's life styles, the organizers had to overcome differences in culture and society at that time and deal with local availabilities and sources.

This chapter analyzes Pasar Gambir in Batavia as one of the most important fairs in the Dutch East Indies during the Dutch late colonial period. This annual fair was held at the center of Batavia and was renowned for its unique architecture that used Indonesian vernacular architecture as its precedence. This study focuses on how Pasar Gambir became a place where both the Dutch and Indonesians could experience modernity, and how the architecture of the fair became an important medium to promote consumerism, modernity and helped to shape social relation between the colonizer and the colonized. Though there were some extensive studies on colonial exhibitions, most of these studies focused on Western perspectives and there was relatively little discussion about local exhibitions like Pasar Gambir. The yearly fair at Pasar Gambir in Batavia is a unique setting in which we can examine specific conditions of modernity that allowed cultural and social negotiations between the Dutch and local people. Pasar Gambir functioned as a commercial space. Its arrangement of products, exhibits and performances was related to the re-articulation of Dutch colonialism in the Dutch East Indies. This colonial fair was also related to the cultural construction of the colony through the collection of its art and architecture, and became a showcase for the progress of Dutch colonialism.

While the approach of using local architecture had helped visitors to the fair to visualize modernity, its popularity for elevating the Indies vernacular architecture in a prime site had created a *lingua franca* of architecture and inspired natives to imagine 'Indonesia.' Pasar Gambir fair was more than an open architectural experiment. What happened in Pasar Gambir showed an important stage not only in re-configuring local architecture to symbolize traditions and progress, but also in imagining the 'Self' and the 'Other' before the independence of the Dutch East Indies.

In discussing the fair, I first describe the importance of the site and its relation to the center of the Dutch's administration as well as how Pasar Gambir became the extension of the Dutch power. Pasar Gambir embodied the idea that this unique combination of market, fair and a museum could educate its visitors to adapt their behavior and change their mentality as comparable to the intent of Western museums or exhibitions. The mix and ambiguity of the idea of the fair showed the beginning of negotiations between the Dutch and natives.

In addition, I will discuss the eclectic and hybrid architecture of Pasar Gambir, and the reception of visitors. The architecture of this fair was eclectic, because it took and combined different sources and assembled them into one building. It was hybrid because the architecture of the pavilions was a combination and a synthesis of various architectures of the colony that had never existed before. The idea of hybrid architecture could help in understanding the mixture of some architectural forms that operated beyond the original architecture. Moreover, the notion of hybridity gave access to mixing cultures and to the realization that there was an alternative way of how the colonizer and the colonized people could act. In relation to hybrid architecture, Pasar Gambir became an open architectural experiment that possessed an ability to transfer modernity for both the Dutch and the natives. In relation to social hybrid behavior, Pasar Gambir embodied a spatial reconciliation of the Dutch and the natives that was located at the interface of everyday life and festivities and helped to overcome the subject-object relationship inherent to colonialism. It was in the process of producing and consuming modernity that allowed Pasar Gambir's visitors to assume new positions as subjects or observers. In Pasar Gambir the Dutch reluctantly accepted local people as more equal partners in consumer society and the natives created their own meaning of the fair as a space of encounter.

It is important to link the discussion to the contexts of the fair, Batavia as an urban scheme that allowed modernity, consumerism and other modern life styles in the colony. Therefore, I will discuss Pasar Gambir and some characteristics of urban modernity including consumerism and technology - such as electric lights and advertisement - that affected visitors' perception. The use of electric lights and advertisements at the fair had influenced people to come and participate in the celebration of modern culture and new social relationships.

The last discussion will be on the Pasar Gambir and its relation to power and possibility of a future nation. Pasar Gambir with its collection of local architecture and urban modernity setting was an essential stage for the Indonesians in conceiving of the future nation and evoking their national pride as Indonesians. Not only did local visitors absorb the richness of the collections but also shared this as a community. Thus, this experience led them to imagining 'Indonesia' as a nation. This image depicted in the mind of the natives had brought an agency to create their own modernity that challenged the Dutch's agenda in controlling modernity and constructing the culture of the Indies. Beyond the negotiation of social divisions, Pasar Gambir gave an agency for its visitors to create a localized modernity.

In discussing Pasar Gambir colonial fair, there were some underlying questions in this chapter. How did the architecture of Pasar Gambir connect its visitors to modernity? What were some cultural and social negotiations that occurred at Pasar Gambir, and the relation of those negotiations with the construction of identity for

both the Dutch and local visitors? In what ways did the fair help native people to imagine the future nation of the colony? Beyond the discussion of the fair ground, I believe that it was hybrid architecture – the *lingua franca* of Indonesian vernacular architecture – that invited participation of local people to join modernity and made their own taking of modernity. My argument is that middle class Indonesia turned out convincing themselves of being modern by contemplating themselves in their new urban spaces, hybrid architecture, and practicing a new standard of behavior. Therefore the formation of modernity in the Dutch East Indies was not only the product of colonialism and capitalism but it was strongly modified by the localized modernity.

2.1. Pasar Gambir as the Liveliest Colonial Exhibition in Batavia

On September 5, 1925, *D'Orient*, the Dutch newspaper of Batavia, nowadays Jakarta, ran a special edition dedicated to the Pasar Gambir Fair. The writer was P.A.J. Moojen, a leading architect and a head of Batavia's Art Society in the Dutch East Indies. He wrote:

The buildings (of Pasar Gambir) were designed with knowledge of the material and the form derived from native structures, the buildings were an architecture composed from decorative operation. The whimsical, picturesque silhouettes of Minangkabau and Batak houses lent themselves perfectly for such a temporary architecture exhibition. But above all, it was actually a demonstration of vitality and potentiality of the Indonesian architecture. And it was not just for display purposes!³⁴

Moojen's astonishment was not merely caused by the unique and splendid architecture of Pasar Gambir that originated from traditional forms. Pavilions of Pasar Gambir were designed with knowledge of local architectural forms, materials and structures, in collaboration among a progressive Dutch architect and *tukangs* or local builders. J.H. Antonisse, the Dutch architect in charge of the design of Pasar Gambir, applied modern architectural principles in his design and relied on *tukangs*, who possessed the skill to build traditional houses without formal education, to help him realizing his design ideas. As a result of this collaboration, the architecture of Pasar Gambir was well known as a representation of what was modern during that time. This fair offered a unique space of interaction for its visitors. Moojen, too, valued the architecture of Pasar Gambir as a stage in the development of

³⁴ My translation from an article in P. A. J. Moojen, "De Architectuur Van Den Pasar Gambir," *D'Orient* 5 September 1925, p. 15.

modern architecture in the Dutch East Indies that successfully incorporated local architecture.

2.1.1. *Pasar Gambir in the King's Square*

The idea of Pasar Gambir in Koningsplein or the King's Square was related to the birthday of the Dutch's Queen Wilhelmina on August 31st, and her enthronement on September 6th 1898. After this inaugural event, some newspapers reported that the municipal council of Batavia also held some night fairs to celebrate the Queen's birthday in the subsequent years. This night fair was known as Pasar Gambir. Due to great interest in the 1921 Pasar Gambir — whose attendance over one week had reached 75,000 visitors over the course of one week — the Dutch government decided to hold the fair yearly for two weeks between the end of August until the beginning of September.³⁵

People in Batavia called the King's Square *Gambir*, since there were many big Gambir trees (in Latin, *Uncaria gambir*) in this area. Other sources also mentioned that Gambir referred to the Dutch-French lieutenant named Gambier who was assigned to open the area and paved the way to expand Batavia to the south.³⁶ Pasar Gambir was known as the liveliest night fair during the colonial period and was animated by many spectacles, exhibitions, and performances. There were products of European technology as well as local ones that needed to find new markets. There was also Western music like rumba and jazz, traditional music like *kroncong*, and also performances like theater and circus. Open from around 10 in the morning until midnight, the fair offered its visitors technological and cultural exhibitions as well as an amusement park. The entrance fee was around 10 cents for Native Indonesians and 25 cents for the Dutch. The last Pasar Gambir was in the 1939, just a few years before the Dutch in the Indies surrendered to the Japanese in 1942. The government held Pasar Gambir in the Koningsplein, one of the biggest parks in Batavia, to incorporate commercial life and places of spectacle of the fair and the importance of the Queen's birthday. Located in the vicinity of Koningsplein, were some important governmental buildings, a residence of the Dutch governor general, the Willemkerk or the Immanuel Church, and the Batavia Society of Arts and Science. Moreover, the Dutch elite neighborhoods, the central station, and main traffic arteries surrounded the square. Koningsplein also functioned as a military training field and a sport facility. All of these surrounding buildings and facilities still

³⁵ Visitor of Pasar Gambir varied from 15,000 to 35,000 on a daily basis as stated by Peter Keppy, see Peter Keppy, "Keroncong, Concours and Crooners," in *Linking Destinies: Trade, Town, and Kind in Asian History*, ed. Peter Boomgaard, Dick Koolman, and Henk Schulte Nordholt (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008).

³⁶ Ridwan Saidi, *Profil Orang Betawi: Asal Mual, Kebudayaan, Dan Adat Istiadatnya* (Jakarta: Gunara Kata, 1997).

seemed to be relatively small comparing to the 90 ha of the square. The location for Pasar Gambir was set at the southwestern part of Koningsplein, on the left side of the oval sports area. In the middle of the fair grounds, there was also a garden and a small fountain and a path that extended out to the southern border.

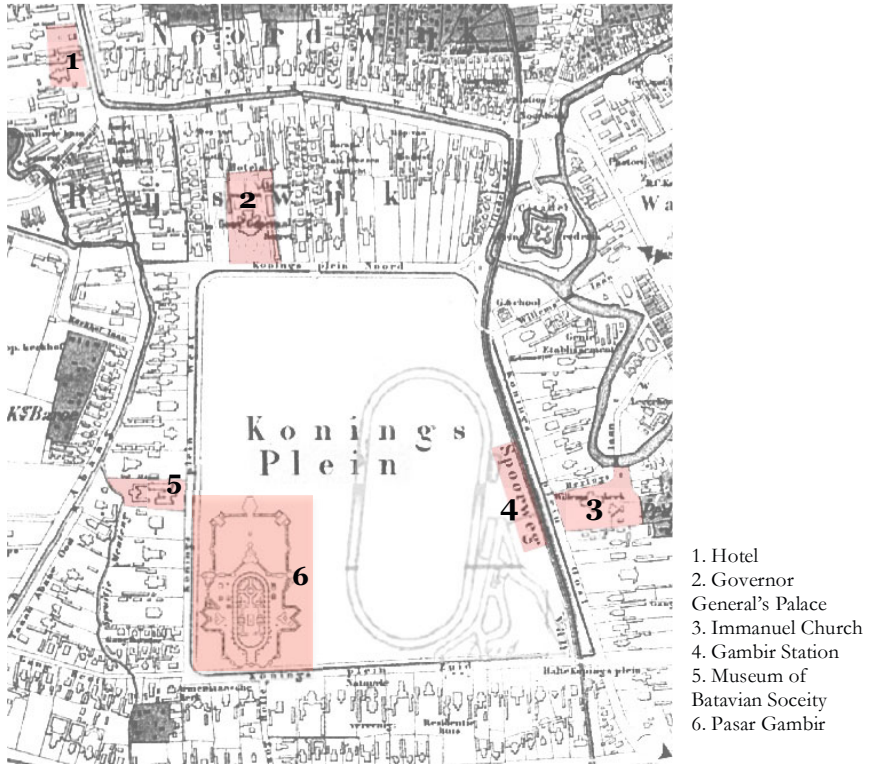


Fig. 2.1 A map of Koningsplein around the end of the 19th century with the plan of the 1925 Pasar Gambir

Koningsplein looked like a big open space without fences and was encircled by big trees, as shown in Fig. 2.2. Pictured is a Chinese merchant selling fabrics to his customers with the King's Square and the Willemskerk at the background. This image was made around 1880s and taken from the western part of the park. Since Koningsplein was located in the heart of Batavia city, there were wide streets on the four sides of the square that connected the park with other parts of the city and reachable for public from every directions. Besides horse carriages and bicycles,

public transportations, such as tram, train and taxi passed through the park. Gambir station, which was located in the eastern part, was one of the biggest and the most important stations in Batavia. There was also police station located in the northern section of Koningsplein.

Fig. 2.2 A lithograph after an original watercolor by Rappard showing Koningsplein as a background. Source: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-3728774



A young English photographer Walter Woodbury, a founder of Woodbury & Page photography, wrote his mother about Koningsplein on May 26th 1857:

Koningsplein, as it is called, is the Hyde Park of Batavia and the residence of all the fashionables amongst themselves. This part of the town is a perfect paradise with banyan and coconut trees and other beautiful tress (planted some 40 years ago).³⁷

In 1917, a Japanese guidebook stated:³⁸

To a newcomer it is an unattractive open space of trapezium shape, with only a few trees and small patches of course grass. The Batavians, however, its very barrenness seems to be its attraction, as thus the "refreshing wind blows unimpeded and the absence of vegetation ensures dryness of air." Here there gather in the evenings all the wealth and fashion of Weltevreden on horseback or in handsome equipages.

Woodbury compared Koningsplein to the Hyde Park of London for its central location and function as a public space. He even mentioned Koningsplein as a

³⁷ Woodbury stayed in Batavia from May to October 1857 and took a lot of pictures of the city. Woodbury 26 May 1857, quoted from Scott Merrillees, *Batavia in Nineteenth Century Photographs* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000).

³⁸ Official Guide to Eastern Asia; Vol. 5: East Indies, Tokyo, Imperial Government Railways of Japan, 1917, p.387, quoted from Scott Merillees, *Batavia in Nineteenth Century Photographs*.

paradise mostly because of its greenery. The latter book also illustrated the park as an attractive gathering park for Batavian in Weltevreden (Batavia) though the park seemed to have lost some of its big trees. These two illustrations showed that Koningsplein was a trendy place for wealthy and fashionable people to gather.

Regarding urban modernity, Batavia distinguished itself by having its own urban modernity characteristics. Urban modernity refers to the experience of modern city life and the associated cultural celebration of innovation.³⁹ In an European metropolis, urban modernity was usually characterized by the creation of infrastructure to support consumer society, and by a rise in development of the arts and architecture - an important result of technological, economical and societal changes.⁴⁰ Boulevards in European cities, for example, were the instruments of a dynamic bourgeois and an active state. Urban modernity in non-Western cities in the modern world was generally studied in relation to development and controlled environment like in colonialism.⁴¹ In the case of Batavia, the center of the city like in Koningsplein had a formal relationship to its peripheries, where Western and non-Western settlements were still segregated with limited access between them. In comparison to the infrastructures in the surrounding areas, Koningsplein was one of the most developed and modern parts of the city. Functioning much in the manner of a stage set for military exercise and symbolic power structure, Koningsplein stood in start contrast to its underdeveloped surrounding areas.

Sastradarma, a nobleman most likely from Surakarta visited Batavia in the second half of the nineteenth century. He observed Batavia from a traditional Javanese perspective as a familiar center of a powerful kingdom, but with no tradition of collective action between the Dutch and local people. His perspective contradicted the typical Western view of Batavia as a place of impressive architecture and without clear boundaries that one might have been expected.⁴² The power association in Koningsplein impressed Sastradarma for the square reminded him of a Javanese traditional city most likely as having the same strong power symbolism. In addition to the centrality of Koningsplein, the city of Batavia already depicted a hybrid character in the sense that it harbored migrants in search of education and job opportunities. Moreover, Batavia was known as a place of social and cultural blending between Indonesian, Eurasians, and *peranakan* Chinese.⁴³ Centrality and hybridity of Batavia were the legacy of urban modernity

³⁹ Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁰ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

⁴¹ Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*.

⁴² Willem van der Molen, "Glory of Batavia: The Image of a Colonial City through the Eyes of Nobleman," in *Urban Symbolism* ed. Peter Nas, *Studies in Human Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), p. 327.

⁴³ *peranakan* Chinese is basically a term used to call Indonesian Chinese or descendants of Chinese immigrants to the Indonesian archipelago.

during the Dutch colonial time that carried on in Jakarta until now. Even though Koningsplein might symbolize the 'ruler' and a 'controlled' environment, it is not necessarily bound by its limited territory. Not only should Batavia as a colonial city be the focus of academic analysis but rather Batavia as an 'ordinary' city with all its complexity and particularities.

In 1923 the Koningsplein was opened for redesign, though the implementation was suspended until 1937 due to the political situation. Thomas Karsten, a Dutch architect and an urban designer, was in charge of the redesign. He was known for his vision to look at the town as 'an organism.' Karsten suggested that the huge 900,000-square-meter-site should be divided into several functional zones or municipal facilities.⁴⁴ In his design for Koningsplein, he emphasized the visibility between the centers, important buildings and traffic to create a sense of order for the grounds.⁴⁵

This principle of authority was also seen in Thomas Karsten's project to design and build the 1914 Colonial Exhibition and a *pasar* or a city market both in Semarang, Central Java. Thomas Karsten placed the city market strategically at the center of the city, and spatially organized according to the classification of goods. He declared that the Dutch East Indies city was the center of order and that the market was a necessary element in the ordering of economic life to transform the primitive agrarian mentality of the population to an urban ordered mentality.⁴⁶ Though this ideal was related to the economic advantage, it was typically reflected in the architecture and the urban design of the Dutch late colonial period that used visibility and order as a representation of authority. Placing Pasar Gambir in Koningsplein meant not only ensuring good access to the public; it also implied an extension of power and authority. It seemed that the centrality of the King's Square imparted an aesthetic gesture of power to the grounds. The centrality of Pasar Gambir's site, in turn, induced the visitors to act in a controlled manner.

Pasar Gambir was a successful example of Karsten's idea that the market became a necessary element to change the mentality of the visitors to be modern yet controlled. Even though in the relationship between the center and the periphery of the Koningsplein relevantly determined its character, it seemed that the experimental architectural forms of Pasar Gambir had brought a new energy to the Koningsplein. The festivities of Pasar Gambir did not pale under the centrality of the park but offered a place for the visitors to transform their daily lives into an extraordinary moment of festivity. In other words, Pasar Gambir had offered

⁴⁴ Karsten, as discussed in Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures in Indonesia*.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Karsten, Thomas. "Town Development in the Indies." In *The Indonesian Town*, edited by W.F. Wertheim. et al. Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltds., 1958.

ambiguities to its visitors: to recognize the control but at the same time to offer an alternative and a relaxed experience between the ruler and the ruled.

2.1.2. A Blend of a Pasar and a Fair: the Beginning of Negotiation at Pasar Gambir

Pasar Gambir was an open public place for trading, carnival, and entertainment; it was a blend of a traditional market and a modern fair. The word *pasar* (market) in Bahasa Indonesia means a place where people buy and sell things. *Pasar* during the colonial era in Batavia was associated with a traditional market where people directly meet to buy or exchange products. *Pasar* was sometimes named following the day it was opened, for example *Pasar Minggu* (Sunday Market), and *Pasar Senen* (Monday Market). A traditional market usually took the form of a semi-permanent building made of bamboo or wood construction. As an alternative of going to *pasar*, many natives still depended on the small-scale trader like the *warung* or nomadic vendor. Therefore, both a fixed market and nomadic vendor was two inseparable components of a *pasar*.

As a comparison to the condition of *pasar* at that time, there were two big local markets located near the Koningsplein, namely Pasar Baru (new market) in the North, and Pasar Senen in the West. These two markets were simple markets where the local people could sell their crops. Eventually Pasar Baru became well known as the Chinese village, since there were many Chinese people and shop houses there. Both markets had similar long streets with shop houses on both sides of the street or modest buildings with wood and bamboo structures.

The word fair is derived from the Latin *forum*, or a public square. In general, a fair means a gathering of people to display or trade goods and often to enjoy associated public amusements. A fair was originally synonymous with a market, both signifying a public meeting place. Even so, a fair implies the idea of carnival or funfair entertainment – in essence, something temporary. Adding attractions and amusements became a necessity to a fair in order to enrich the place and to attract people. A translation for the word fair in Bahasa Indonesia was *pasar malam* (a night fair) for this kind of *pasar* was usually held at night and related to entertainment.

Pasar malam or night fair was a hybridized event and combined of the native's *pasar* or market with night fair. The early *pasar malam* was opened to Europeans only, for example, to celebrate the Queen's Wedding in 1901. The more recent Pasar Malam might be held in association with a local party like Sarikat Islam in Cirebon in 1915 or even in conjunction with the Chinese New Year.⁴⁷ There were

⁴⁷ Joost Coté, "Towards an Architecture of Association: H.F. Tillema, Semarang and the Construction of Colonial Modernity," in *The Indonesian Town Revisited*, ed. Peter Nas (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002).

also the related exhibitions known in Dutch as *tentoonstelling*, such as in Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Semarang, especially in relation to arts and crafts, technology and industrial exhibitions.

The fact that the rise in popularity of Pasar Malam occurred around the 1920s was not incidental. By the 1920s, the Dutch government had greatly extended the rail system in Java and Sumatra, enabling many sugar plantations, factories and private companies to expand their business. The 1920s also marked a substantial intensification of advertising in the Indies, particularly in Java, that helped accumulate the capital for Pasar Malam to become fashionable. With the subjection of the outlying islands, such as Sumatra and Sulawesi, the early twentieth century marked the extension of Dutch power to every corner of the East Indies archipelago and signaled the end of military conquest there.

Using the word Pasar Gambir for the fair implied contradictory things. Whereas *pasar* for natives meant something that was ordinary and everyday, while the meaning of the Pasar Gambir was actually far from the ordinary. This fair was held temporary for two weeks and remarkably incorporated amusement and festivity. One local newspaper even highlighted the function of Pasar Gambir not as a place to gain profits from trading but to advertise products and to teach people *coperatie* or cooperation, which was a relatively new concept to the colony.⁴⁸ In *pasar* buyers and sellers actively negotiated on the price and they engaged a negotiation tactic such as bargaining and elastic conversation. Though in the fair the price was most of the time fixed, another kind of negotiations occurred both in a cultural and social context that showed elastic understanding like that in the *pasar*.

It seemed that the organizer of Pasar Gambir had borrowed a familiar word for the natives to encourage them to come and experience a special event. Such effort was a realization that the natives would be the dominant participants of the fair. Nevertheless, using the word Pasar Gambir for the fair did not make this fair less significant for the Dutch since the fair was held in a very prominent site. The organizer of Pasar Gambir had made an effort to attract and advertise this fair using both Dutch and local languages.

2.1.3. *The Organizer of Pasar Gambir*

The organizer of Pasar Gambir was initially the Batavia city council that at first organized the fair on a small scale and for a limited purpose of celebration and gaining economic profit. In 1904 Dutch colonial bureaucrats, however, decided to turn this celebration into a business fair to promote trading including indigenous products. Between 1907 and 1921 there was no regular fair due to insecure financial

⁴⁸ *Bintang Hindia* 12 September 1925, p. 581.

conditions and tenuous conditions after the World War I. At first the Batavia government dedicated the event to selling products, but after 1918 there was a committee for Pasar Gambir that added performances, and amusement areas to the fair. The Batavia fair held its official name Pasar Gambir since 1921.⁴⁹ The Governor General granted a Decree to establish the Pasar Gambir Committee that consisted of 36 members: 12 from Batavia City Council (Batavia *Gemeenteraad*), 12 from Local Council (*Gawestelijke Raad*) and 12 from well-known traders.⁵⁰ The committee directed and decided important aspects related to the fair such as financial issues and the design.

Consisting of Dutch, Indies and Chinese people, this committee reflected the hybrid social and economic conditions in Batavia at that time. The 1923 Pasar Gambir's committee comprised 39 Dutch, 2 Indonesians and 2 Chinese members. In the next years, there was an increasing number of Indonesian members. For the 1924 and the 1925 Pasar Gambir the number of Indonesian's committee rose to 7 people. The 1929 and the 1930 Pasar Gambir had a similar composition with 32 Dutch, 3 Chinese, and 9 Indonesians. Concerning the Chinese, the Dutch exploited the *peranakan* to enhance Dutch commercial interests: i.e., to take products imported from the Netherlands to the interior and bring back the products of the interior to colonial towns. However, the Dutch tended to keep ethnic groups such as the Chinese separated from each other, and did not officially recognize their cultures.⁵¹

Pasar Gambir fair was successful and profitable from income garnered from the rent of the stands and admission tickets. The first year's profit was over 12,000 guilders, the second year's was 32,500 guilders, the third year reached 18,000 guilders, and the fourth year's 9,000 guilders. The year 1925 experienced a shortfall in profits, because the Chinese, who at the time were commemorating of the death of Soen Yat Sen, hardly visited the fair that year. Therefore the visit of foreign Orientals was very much less than other years. That loss, however, was again regained in 1926 when the profits rose to almost 35,000 guilders.

Since the committee of Pasar Gambir aimed to gain profits from trading and to promote the products of technology and industry at the fair, those economic aims depended both on the products and the exhibits. Thus, the design of the pavilions and the exhibits played a very important role in communicating the purpose of the fair and in spreading consumerism to the fair's visitors. In essence, it ensured the process of production and consumption. On the commercial level, the

⁴⁹ "De Pasar Gambir En Haar Financien," *D'Orient* 3 September 1927, p. 9.

⁵⁰ My translation to "Voorwoord," in *The Official Program of the 1922 Pasar Gambir* (Batavia: August 1922).

⁵¹ In the basic law of 1854 Eurasians, Foreign Oriental (Chinese, Arabs and other Asians) and indigenes became legal terms. See Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, Second ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980). Despite successes in economy, Indonesian Chinese were restricted to enter the colonial cultural and sociopolitical scenes.

architecture exemplified the ambitions of the Dutch to market their products and gain profits. This ambition prompted the committee to never hesitated in creating different buildings every year to attract people. Since the fair was proved to be successful to include locals and the *peranakan*, the architecture of the fair came to symbolize the Dutch's recognition of the colony as a great resource and a big market. In other words, Pasar Gambir offered a platform for negotiation and a mutual acceptance between the Dutch and Indonesians in production and consumerism, though not yet as equal partners.

One of the committee members of Pasar Gambir was the architect who designed the whole pavilions, J.H. Antonisse. He arrived in Batavia in 1914 at the age of 26 years. In 1920, this self-taught architect became a chief of the Engineering Department of the City of Batavia Public Works institution. He was interested in local architecture and also studied bamboo construction for semi-permanent houses. In 1920 he became the head of the Department of Engineering in Municipal Batavia. Three years later Anonisse was assigned to design Pasar Gambir replacing Ir. B.J. Cramer so that this annual event would gain its popularity once again after a shortfall. Antonisse's interest and knowledge of local architecture and construction was proven to be useful in supporting his creativity in designing the pavilions.

Antonisse worked for the Department of Public Works that had built most of the public buildings and infrastructures in the Indies. At that time people began to criticize the department regarding the quality of design, the lack of artistic capacity and the lack of working experience of the engineers and architects working in the tropics. Antonisse himself was a figure that partly fitted this critique. He had neither formal architectural education nor extensive work experience. Nevertheless, at quite a young age, he was already accorded responsibility to design Pasar Gambir. Yet, as previously mentioned in this chapter, Antonisse work in designing the 1925 Pasar Gambir complimented by Moojen, illustrated his success. From newspapers and magazines that discussed Pasar Gambir from 1923 to 1938, Antonisse won accolades for his original design in Pasar Gambir and for bringing in profits to the government and Pasar Gambir's participants.⁵²

2.2. The Hybrid Architecture of Pasar Gambir

The design of Pasar Gambir's pavilions varied every year, and the architect was inspired by local architectural forms to enrich his designs for Pasar Gambir. For example, he chose Minangkabau architecture as the theme for the 1923 Pasar

⁵² *D' Orient*, Pandji Poestaka, and Bintang Hindia for example covered Pasar Gambir every year and those newspapers sometimes published a special report about the fair.

Gambir, his first assignment to design the fair. It seemed that Antonisse simply mimicked the horn-roof-shape of Minangkabau architecture for some pavilions without combining any other types of traditional roofs. As a result, visitors understood easily how the gates, the main pavilions and the small booths resembled this typical Minangkabau architecture with a dramatically curved roof structure and upswept gables. Before Antonisse designed Pasar Gambir, the pavilions were more modest, less spectacular and used only minimum lighting for the whole complex. At the end Antonisse was applauded by the public for his designing creativity.



Fig. 2.3 The 1923 Pasar Gambir during the day and the night. Source Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-60029699 (above) and TM-60029700 (below)

In Fig. 2.3, the physical appearance of Pasar Gambir revealed how Batavia's urbanites were attracted by the foreign material and immaterial symbols of modernity such as electric lights and hybrid architecture that accompanied technological invention and aesthetic transformations in Batavia urban modernity. Pasar Gambir,

especially through unique architecture and electric lighting, popularized culture of a cosmopolitan character, which had a distinctly local and hybrid nature. The popular culture was the result of an autonomous and ambiguous process of a multiethnic urban society reinterpreting their culture, and connecting to the outside world.⁵³ The use of electric light in Pasar Gambir, which was sponsored by the Dutch lighting company Philips, revealed how the architect framed tradition and blended it with spectators and performers.

In the following years, Antonisse continued to use local architecture as his design theme. Nevertheless, instead of using one source, he combined some local and foreign architectural forms. Here I wish to discuss, in particular, the architecture of both the 1925, and the 1928 Pasar Gambir in order to analyze the unique quality of this colonial fair and discuss how visitors experienced modernity from various aspects of the Pasar Gambir. The reason for choosing the 1925 Pasar Gambir was because it had only been several years after Antonisse, the architect of Pasar Gambir, was assigned to design Pasar Gambir and his design for the 1925 fair included a clear reference to vernacular architecture. The 1928 Pasar Gambir might resemble the same strategy of using local architectural language. However, by presenting two different years of Pasar Gambir, I aim to elucidate the development of the fair from the initial idea to its maturity. There were also some sources that had intensively discussed the architecture of Pasar Gambir in these years in comparison to other years.

The 1925 Pasar Gambir was held from August 28 until September 9. Some newspapers such as the Dutch *D'Orient*, the Singapore *Strait Times*, the Indonesian-Malay *Pandji Poestaka*, *Bintang Hindia*, and some Sino Malay literature praised the fair as a big success that credited the government and the companies participating in the fair. Regarding industrial and cultural exhibition, this fair turned out to become a very popular event for both the Dutch and the rising middle class of Indonesians. In 1906, it was reported that the number of visitors reached 75,000 people. In 1923, 14,896 Europeans, 27,463 oriental foreigners and 54,206 Indonesians visited Pasar Gambir,⁵⁴ and in 1929 the total number reached more than half million people.⁵⁵

2.2.1. *The Plan of Pasar Gambir*

The site for Pasar Gambir consisted of an open area of both exhibition stands and an amusement zone. There were more than 230 stands at the fair, both open and covered. The open stands were generally used for exhibitions and the sale of

⁵³ Keppy, "Keroncong, Concours and Crooners."

⁵⁴ My translation to "De Opening Van Den Pasar Gambir," *D'Orient* 5 September 1925, Number 36, p. 14.

⁵⁵ , *Pandji Poestaka* 5 September 1930.

products from throughout the archipelago and imported goods. The covered stands featured various attractions such as magic shows, music, dances, and movies as well as exhibitions for the government and big companies. There were usually some bigger pavilions occupying the corners and a tower or a high building placed at the center. Big stands sometimes charged additional entrance fees. Smaller exhibition stands were mostly arranged at the circumference, while the bigger ones at the center. Antonisse also tried to occupy the big park by strategically arranging the pavilions to invite the visitors to walk around and accommodate the needs of the companies who joined the exhibition. As seen in his early design for Pasar Gambir, he placed a single tall pavilion at the center so that visitors might be able to orient themselves. Visitors strolled in a circle, and had an opportune vantage point to enjoy the exhibits on both sides.



Fig. 2.4. Aerial view of the 1925 Pasar Gambir. Source: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-60019735

The plan of the 1925 Pasar Gambir was symmetrical and there were usually two entrances to the fair. The main entrance, which was the most elaborate pavilion, was located to the south and the side entrance to the west. In the east, there was an access to the sport grounds, and in the north there was an exit from the open-air theater. The main entrance mostly became the center of architectural composition. Those were connected directly to the main streets. Each entrance was in a form of a pavilion that copied local architectural forms including a typical raised floor and an extended roof.

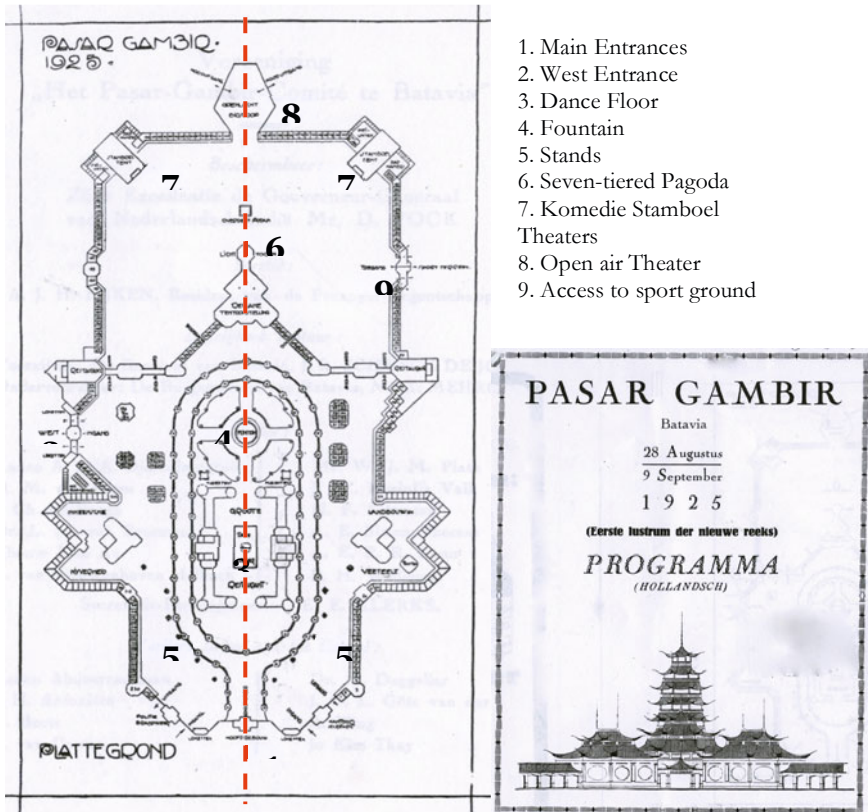


Fig. 2.5. The plan and the elevation of the 1925 Pasar Gambir printed for the program distributed to visitors. Source: Programma Van Den Pasar Gambir 1925

There were two ticket booths at each entrance of the 1925 Pasar Gambir. A small secretariat and a police station were also located near the main entrance. Whereas the left middle part was dedicated to local and industrial exhibitions, the right middle part was dedicated to livestock and agriculture exhibitions. At the end corners were two tents for a theater *Komedie Stamboel* and a cinema sponsored by the electric light company Philips. There was also an advertising exhibition located between the fountain and the pagoda. In the middle northernmost end of the fair

ground was an open theater scheduled to show movies every night.⁵⁶ The film screening and especially the *Komedi Stamboel*, as a new hybrid theater, catered to both local and European audiences; this indicated entertainment that transcended races and classes. At the middle of the fairground was a large restaurant surrounded by some clustered stands and the fountain with two music tents at its two sides. At the middle of the big restaurant was a dance floor.

Fig. 2.5.-2.7. showed the plans of the 1925, 1927, and 1928 Pasar Gambir; each year the architect used similar plans and design strategies. From year to year, the fair covered more or less the same area with a rectangular form at the outer section and an oval at the inner section. A fountain became a given feature located in the inner section and some big pavilions marked the corners of the fair ground. The outer part was surrounded by many stands dedicated to companies or traders. Some of these stands might be larger than others and some might be single or attached buildings. Several restaurants were located symmetrically on the longer sides. The place for stages dedicated to performances and theater might slightly changed each year, but they always occupied a focal area.

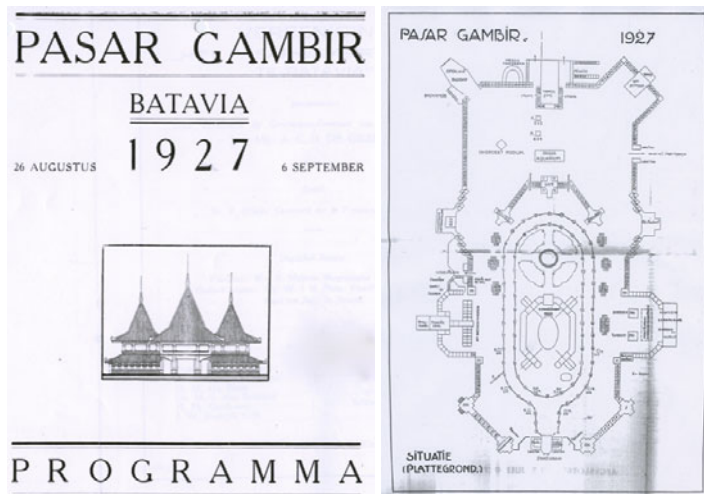


Fig. 2.6. Program and Plan of the 1927 Pasar Gambir. Programma Van Den Pasar Gambir 1927

⁵⁶ *Komedi Stamboel* or Istanbul-style theater performed musical versions of both Western and on-Western stories, fairy tales, operand political allegories. The actors were primarily Eurasians, thought there were also Chinese and native supporting actors, and audiences were made up of mixed races and classes. See Matthew Isaac Cohen, *The Komedi Stamboel: Popular Theater in Colonial Indonesia, 1891-1903*, Southeast Asia Series (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006).

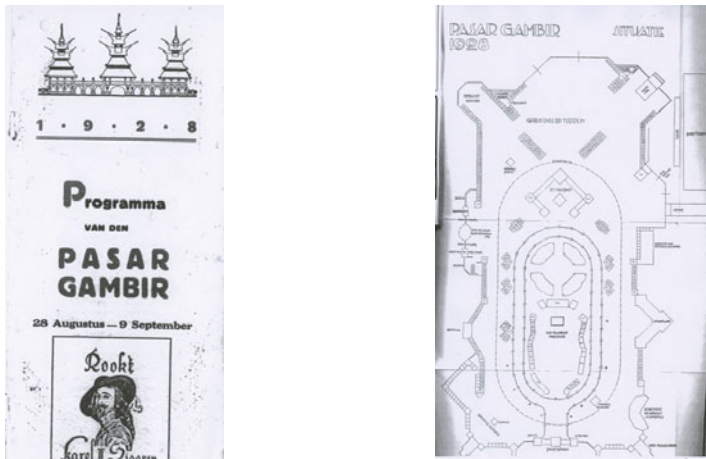


Fig. 2.7. Program and Plan of the 1928 Pasar Gambir. Programma Van Den Pasar Gambir 1928

Every year's cover of the Pasar Gambir program boasted a picture of the pavilions. It seemed that the architect used the program of Pasar Gambir to share with the public his excitement about the design of the upcoming fair. The image of the pavilions as in the program indicated how the pavilions helped visitors to understand the fair.

The plan of Pasar Gambir functioned as a support for the display of products and directing visitors. The arrangement of the pavilions had created an enclosed feeling that distinguished the fair from the outside area. As visitors entered the fair, they could see the arrangement of stands and choose to go to the right or to the left. Since the layout was symmetrical, visitors could sense an axis that connected the main entrance, the central pavilion and the fountain at the end of the site. In the middle of the site stood an elliptical composition of pavilions with some big pavilions, an open-air restaurant and a dance floor. These symmetrical and functional compositions were maintained in Pasar Gambir from year to year. There was a fountain in a symmetrical garden at the center, which was a set feature of the site. At the center of oval was also a dancing floor for the Dutch patron.

2.2.2. *The Gate to Pasar Gambir*

The architect showed his great attention to the entrances by making them higher and designing their roofs in a more elaborate way than other buildings in the fair.

The lower part of the building had arches at the four sides, architectural forms that reflected Western architecture. The corner of these arches had ornaments in a form of a temple's molding. Unlike a real temple that would be built according to an artificial enhancement of diminishing perspective, where the intervals between the rungs of a ladder were reduced so that the ladder would seem taller than it was in reality, the moldings seemed to be decorations only.⁵⁷ The ornaments and the details of the gates showed only the simplification of the original characters.



Fig. 2.8. Entrance to the 1925 Pasar Gambir with moldings as decorations at the base. Source: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-60029731

There was not only a free combination of Indonesian vernacular architectural forms, but also a combination of Eastern and Western architecture through the use of arches and the representation of solid wall at the lower part of the pavilions. People might recognize a Chinese influence on the roof form. A seven-tier-roof of a Chinese pagoda, which was placed in the opposite end of the main entrance, gave a culmination in the architectural compositions. Placing the pagoda at the center was a matter of visual composition. A close examination of the pagoda would reveal how this structure lacked details, proportions, functions and contexts of the original architecture.

⁵⁷ Jacques Dumarçay and Pascal Royère, *Cambodian Architecture: Eighth to Thirteenth Centuries* trans. Michael Smithies (Leiden: Brill, 2001).



Fig. 2.9. The architectural composition of Pasar Gambir pictured from the main entrance. Source: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-60019752

Looking inside the fair from the main entrance such as in Fig. 2.9., visitors could easily understand the symmetrical arrangement of buildings. There were two big pavilions and one pagoda at the far end that created a depth to the fair ground. This symmetrical arrangement allowed visitors to understand the fair as a whole and also as a climax in the architectural composition. As one entered the gate, the arches became a frame to the fair and implied a surprising architectural delight that visitors would soon experience during their visit. This frame forced visitors to stop and understand the architectural composition before they walked inside the fair. The frame also emphasized the depth of the fair. It was the gate in a form of an open pavilion and without any door that had been chosen in Pasar Gambir to represent the fair to its visitors once they entered the fair. There was a composition of high and low as one came through the gate and looked above to the pagoda high above the horizon. The gate was a small part of the fair but it gave an image of the whole fair through 'the whole and its parts,' 'moving and static,' 'up and down.' A powerful architectural tool at Pasar Gambir was the capacity of the gate to transfer excitement of the fair to visitors and meanwhile construct the visitors' visual perception of the fair that was powerful at Pasar Gambir. Executed this way, it was clear that the architecture, starting with the gate, exuded an uplifting effect to visitors to enter an extraordinary place apart from their daily lives.

The gate to the fair became a form of symbolic dialog between Western and Indies vernacular architecture, and between natives and Europeans. This gate

intended to become a monumental structure located at the border of everyday life and festivity. As a symbol, the gate also stood for a transformation of Indies vernacular architecture into hybrid architecture and a celebration of a new relation in the society. The gate became an interface that prompted people outside the fair to start their experience of modernity and helped them to transform their daily lives into a hybrid space. Thus, the gate became a symbolic monument for it played a crucial role in blending and regulating public life, and at the same time, it redefined a territory of the Dutch and natives. Once the visitors entered the fair, the Dutch and local people exchanged gazes and those gazes arguably were more powerful than the image of order stamped in Koningsplein.

2.2.3. *The Pavilion of Pasar Gambir: the Power of Hybrid Architecture*

Every year, Antonisse researched different kinds of Indonesian vernacular architecture for his design and combined these forms with Western and other foreign architectural forms. Though the layout of the site presented symmetrical and classical compositions, Antonisse did not place Western or neoclassical architecture as his primary emphasis. In the *D'Orient* magazine covering the 1925 Pasar Gambir, Moojen said that Antonisse borrowed architecture from Batak, Minangkabau, and China for the upper part and combined them with a solid column with arches for the lower part.⁵⁸ The association of the pavilions with Batak and Minangkabau architecture could not be seen directly, since the architect did not strictly apply local architectural forms. The roof always became a dominant part of Indonesian vernacular architecture, and some roofs included an outward-sloping gable topped by a cluster of smaller roofs like in Batak Karo or dramatically upsweeping ridge ends like in the Minangkabau house. Raised pile foundations with the house's posts resting on top of foundation stones were other common features of Indonesian vernacular architecture that could be seen in Pasar Gambir.

Antonisse made some variations in his design of the pavilion. As shown in Fig. 2.9., he placed big pavilions in several corners of the fair. Some pavilions might have two or three layers of roofs, each of which had quite a dramatic curve. The pavilions were square and had two stories. The lower roof had four sides while the upper roof had six sides. This form could be seen almost in every pavilion. The lower part had columns with no walls that seemed solid and aimed to support the upper part. There was an arch in every side that might be understood as the influence of Western architecture, especially because this kind of solid base with arches was atypical of local architecture. The upper part of the pavilion having half walls imbued an open quality. The big pavilions located on the south side had

⁵⁸ Moojen, "De Architectuur Van Den Pasar Gambir."

octagonal plans. These pavilions had three layers of roof each with eight dramatic slanted roof ends.

At the center of the complex stood a large restaurant exclusively for Dutch patrons. This restaurant served European food and alcoholic beverages. Other ethnic groups usually ate from food stalls spread throughout the fairgrounds, which mostly sold traditional foods from different parts of the Indies. The center of the fairgrounds was still reserved for the Dutch and this indicated the colonial hierarchy not breached by the natives. Even though the openness of the dance floor and the arrangement of the pavilions might give a visual access to the center, natives were not allowed to enter.

The placement of a pagoda tower at the end of the site was repeated almost in every year though with different architectural forms. In the 1925 Pasar Gambir program, the image of the pagoda seemed to be big and dominant. Yet as one entered the fair the pagoda looked smaller for it was placed at the far end. This implied how media could manipulate visitors' thought and lead their fantasy. The fountain at the center was also used as an attraction in Pasar Gambir especially at night. The fountain was decorated with electric lighting – its luminescence shining through the spray of water and attracting people nearby.

The fair featured *petasan* or local fireworks at the beginning and the end of the fair and on Queen Wilhelmina's birthday. Western performances like a circus and cinema, and traditional performances like *wayang* (puppet show) and *ketoprak* (local theater) took place during the fair. The committee also held sport matches and singing competitions. Music such as *keroncong* and a theater such as *komedie stamboel*, that combined both Western and local sources, had become a popular form of culture for a larger strata of Batavians. Here the fair had provoked a creative cultural form that connected people and fostered urban social cohesion. The popular culture, ubiquitous and widely consumed in Pasar Gambir, marked the beginning of a new cultural and social network that ultimately helped to establish a new identity for the urban society.

Pasar Gambir also drew street sellers throughout Batavia to sell their goods outside the gates. This indicated the extension of the fair to the outside and the importance of the fair to gather people from all parts of the city. At the same time there were people who came to see the fair from the outside; even though those people were unable to pay the entrance fee they did not want to miss the opportunity to join the fair.

The stands in Pasar Gambir had the same architectural theme and material like the main entrance. There were many stands dedicated to exhibits of technological and cultural products such as machines for agriculture, cars, hotels, newspapers, cigarettes, mosquito repellent, syrups, beer, chocolates, jewelries, clothes, and home appliances. Local newspapers such as the *Pandji Poestaka* and *Bintang Hindia* wrote that the stall of the state-owned publisher *Balai Poestaka* attracted great attention from

visitors. Some other local newspaper complimented the attractive local handicrafts sold in the fair that had become the favorite products for European customers.

Fig. 2.10. Pavilions of the 1928 Pasar Gambir. Source: National Archives of the Republic Indonesia



The pavilions for the 1928 Pasar Gambir, held between August 28 and September 9 of that year, boasted a very sophisticated design. The roof was still a dominant part of the pavilion, which was roughly five times the size of the body or the base part. The connection between the design of Pasar Gambir and Batak Karo architecture of North Sumatra could be seen on the roof parts. The pavilions had stilts as their bases and the upper floor was a typical room with half walls. The roofs in each pavilion consisted of six parts with three different styles. The first style depicted double tiered pitch roofs located directly above the upper floor. The second style was a two-tiered modification of Batak Karo roofs. The third style was distinguished by two tiers of small and simple roofs. The last two styles used antennas to dramatize the ridges of the roofs.

The pavilions located at the circumference of the fair were simpler and showed less character of Batak Karo architecture. The walls of these pavilions had almost no ornaments, and their roofs were simple. The respective body and base of these pavilions looked solid and heavy because of the use of big protruding columns and square ornaments. The base had arches, which could not be found in Batak Karo architecture and might signify the influence of European architectural forms. Three pavilions stood next to each other with porticos and stairs connecting the base and the body of the pavilions. The architects used some geometrical decorations both in the lower and the upper parts. Both pavilions of the 1925 and the 1928 Pasar

Gambir showed a freedom of quoting, and combined many sources. The pavilions designed for those years of the fair exuded a festive and experimental atmosphere.

2.2.4. Pasar Gambir Fair as an Open Experimental Platform of Hybrid Architecture

The architect of Pasar Gambir had the task to find a suitable architecture for the fair that could represent the culture and the society in the Dutch East Indies yet accommodate modernization and progress. Thus, the architecture of Pasar Gambir might share a common culture and origin but held a new identity. Referring to common features of Indonesian vernacular architecture was intended both to represent Indonesian culture and to nourish fantasy of the visitors. The experiential qualities of architecture had created intimate architecture that was accessible to all, and offered a realistic impression of the culture and society they represented. The architecture of Pasar Gambir became an architectural experiment open to the public without questioning the original forms, because it was the idea of festivity, not architectural dictates, that was relevant here.

Pasar Gambir was important, because it was a place where modern and hybrid architectural concepts were molded to an already established framework of building traditions, thereby resulting in a distinctive and unique architectural form. The building forms and styles were also influenced by a foreign oriental form, and often only superficially resembled the models that had inspired them. The power that the architecture of Pasar Gambir seemed to possess was an ability to combine many sources into one particular building and to attract both natives and the Dutch without raising the issue of originality.

Even though the design of buildings in Pasar Gambir changed every year, the layout and plan stayed almost the same. Working in this way, the architect understood very well the necessity to build ephemeral pavilions to fit the purpose of the fair. This comprehension pushed the architect to design pavilions that could suit the fair and preconceived historical categories. In the case of Pasar Gambir, the architect chose Indies vernacular architecture as preconceived historical categories.

In many ways it was the architecture of Pasar Gambir that defined the spatial character of the fairgrounds. The architecture of the Pasar Gambir did not primarily adopt Western styles and building types firstly, but rather used indigenous architecture as its main reference. Antonisse selected icons of Indonesian vernacular architecture, assumed them as his vocabulary in his design and experimentation, and established a kind of catalog for the design of Pasar Gambir. From this catalog, every year Antonisse designed a different kind of buildings for Pasar Gambir. Hence, the colony was being inventoried and surveyed in Pasar Gambir. A turn to traditional architecture to house industrial progress and modern products provided

a platform for displaying differences, new identity, and drawing temporary boundaries and convenient alliances. Here, the architecture of Pasar Gambir became a vehicle for celebrating new social relations for middle class Indonesia and for expressing the idea of a modern identity.

The simplified architectural form that represented a common aspect of the East Indies architecture might act as a *lingua franca*. This architectural form allowed people from various ethnic groups to communicate and understand each other's culture without having to learn or to use each of the different architectural forms in Indonesia. In a linguistic context, *lingua franca* means a vehicular language used in communication among members of societies whose own languages are different. In contrast to a vernacular language, a vehicular language is meant to enable people of diverse backgrounds to communicate usually in a basic form of speech and simplified grammar. The *lingua franca* was borrowed by the respective communities, not inherited as a distinct type of language inherent to that community. Analogous to the idea of *lingua franca*, the architects of the fair combined their designs with modern architectural principals that transcended local traditional architectural forms. The result was an experimental architecture that did not belong to any social group or ethnic group and, thus, was less intimidating to both the colonizer and the colonized people.

Unlike international colonial exhibitions in Europe, Pasar Gambir was not intended to be primarily pedagogical nor to authenticate colonial life. Nor did it aim to demonstrate explicitly the positive effects of colonization. In contradiction to the exotic and eclectic architecture of nineteenth century international exhibitions, Pasar Gambir was a kind of synopsis of the cultures and peoples of the colony without being dogmatic. It embodied a new social relations triggered by the fast changes of the early twentieth century in many aspects of urban Batavia. Except for the central dance floor, Pasar Gambir had no separate sections for European and local people. This, however, represented a direct contradiction of actual societal conditions in the colony. In reality, only educated and highly ranked local people could interact with the Dutch. Twentieth-century urbanism in Indonesia was still branded by segregation—European and indigenous quarters having radically different typological character and levels of hygienic improvement.

Pasar Gambir became an experimental ground of how the Dutch had discovered Indonesian culture and architecture and had advanced them to a higher level out of their traditional contexts. The self-congratulatory spirit of this discovering and making experiments of vernacular architecture could be related to kitsch. According to Broch, the essence of kitsch was imitation: kitsch mimicked its

immediate predecessor with no regard to ethics - it aimed to copy the beautiful, not the good.⁵⁹

Looking at some programs printed for Pasar Gambir at the end of the 1920s, the font and decorations used in the program had an Art Deco influence, a flourish of modern style during that time. Both traditional and modern ornaments embellished the designs of the pavilions and the program such as showing exotic *stupa* in Hindu or Buddhist temples all over Indonesia. The whole composition of the program and the pavilions embraced a mixture between horizontal and vertical lines and also streamlined and geometrical forms. The program preceded the fair through the presentation of architecture elevation. The way the program was presented to the visitor also interesting. Sometimes it was folded vertically or horizontally; sometimes it was handed like a book. Although the Pasar Gambir program initially showed a relationship between the architecture of the fair and the media, it actually served to preface the whole Indonesian culture.

2.2.5. *Hybridity in the Making of Pasar Gambir*

The making of Pasar Gambir, which included its design, construction and material aspects, was as unique as the fair. Some weeks before the opening, the public could see the construction of Pasar Gambir in Koningsplein evolved from stage to stage, and wondered what kind of building was dedicated to Pasar Gambir this year. Fig. 2.11. illustrates how people could see the construction of Pasar Gambir in the Koningsplein, and the making of the fair seemed to be part of the show. Every year the committee had a strategic plan for the fair, and the architect would use this plan and his creativity in designing the pavilions.



Fig. 2.11. The Construction of the 1927 Pasar Gambir. Source: *D'Orient*, 1927

The buildings in Pasar Gambir were built almost entirely using bamboo, with only few wood constructions to support and decorate the buildings. There were basically three types of buildings in Pasar Gambir. The first type was a two-story

⁵⁹ Hermann Broch, " Evil in the Value System of Art," in *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age. Six Essays by Hermann Broch* (Counterpoint 2002).

building usually comprised of stilts on the lower level with no walls and one-meter-high walls on the upper level. This kind of buildings usually had multi-tiered roofs whose forms were cited from different sources. The second type was a one-story pavilion, sometimes in a form of long pavilion, which housed small companies exhibitions. This pavilion usually had more modest roofs and decorations than the first type. The third type was a high structure that usually became an entrance or housed a single exhibition. This third type of structure had multi-tiered roofs comprised of the same combination like the first kind of building. The architect made an architectural composition from these three types of building and organized them around the center area, which was the fountain and the dance floor.

It cost about 19,300 guilders to build the whole complex of the 1926 Pasar Gambir and about 22,000 guilders in the following year. There were no less than two hundred and fifty bamboo workers. The head of the construction for the 1927 Pasar Gambir was a white man Porthene, which showed a hierarchy in the making of the fair.⁶⁰

Fig. 2.12. View of the pagoda made of bamboos. Source: *D'Orient*, September 1925.



⁶⁰ "De Bouw Van Den Pasar Gambir ", *D'Orient* 3 September 1927, No. 36, pp. 5-6.

Antonisse preferred to use inexpensive and readily available materials throughout the Indonesian archipelago such as bamboo and wood for building construction, and palm leaves for the roof cover. Bamboo was a predominant construction material because it was plentiful and had been used extensively all over Indonesia. Bamboo was strong in both tension and compression. Local people already had a good knowledge in bamboo construction such as treating bamboo against rot and insects to have longer lasting structures. They also cured the bamboo traditionally by standing the cut culms on a stone for a month and soaked them in water for some weeks. Local people also commonly used bamboo as building materials such as big bamboo for posts, plaited bamboo for walls, and small bamboos for roofs. Since the pavilions were temporary, the making and the clearing up the fair ground should be fast. Using this economic and light bamboo construction was the best possibility at that time. The use of local material also supported the local character of the fair.

The construction of Pasar Gambir was covered in a *Bouwkundig Weekblad* published by the association of the architects in the Netherlands. The 1932 *Bouwkundig Weekblad* highlighted the effective construction process that suited the temporary exhibition. In discussing Pasar Gambir it was stated that "the construction period is 3 months, after the fair (the construction) is directly turned down so that within a month the square becomes free of the indigenous construction."⁶¹ The main colors of the buildings were white, green, yellow, blue, red and orange. The main construction was a 30-meter-high tower, the greatest possible height in bamboo frame at that time. The welds and joints for bamboo was *tali* - a sort of rope made from the fibers of the palm tree. In the magazine, there was a discussion on the construction materials chosen by the architect of Pasar Gambir:

It can be said that the Pasar Gambir is equally important for the Indies, like the Foire de Lyon for the French. Antonisse has developed outstanding exhibition buildings in the thirteen years that he was in charge. Initially, he used oriental styles; then he gradually proceeded to design with more personal strength and imagination, without losing Indies construction and forms, and without being unfaithful to the Indonesian construction materials. Particularly those materials that even the poorest native can use in many parts of Java and Sumatra: bamboo and *atap*. ... After all, bamboo grows everywhere, and *atap* or dried palm leaves can be found almost everywhere cheaply. Now, Antonisse worked with those indigenous-bronze-color-materials.⁶²

⁶¹ My free translation from Architectural Weekly or a Dutch architectural magazine founded in 1881 as a part of the Society of the Promotion of Architecture. In 1927 Architectural Weekly merged with the magazine Architectura and was then continued under the name *Bouwkundig Weekblad Architectura*. For the original text see "De Pasar Gambir Te Batavia," *Bouwkundig Weekblad Architectura* 5 November 1932 No. 45, p. 401.

⁶² "Over De Pasar Gambir Te Batavia," *Bouwkundig Weekblad* 1936 No. 57, p. 58.

Most of the time the architect also used plaited bamboo for the walls to gain density for the lower level. Although both the lower and upper parts of a construction employed the same material, the architect wanted the lower part to look heavier with the applied solid and arch forms. This illustrated how the skin of the buildings in Pasar Gambir was important to realize the unique design. Since there was lack of modern equipment in the Indies, as shown in Fig. 2.13, the construction process was carried without any help from modern machines.

Fig. 2.13. The use of Bamboo Construction in Pasar Gambir. Source: National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia



In *D'Orient* Moojen also described Pasar Gambir as the most natural way to line together the work of an architect and *tukang*, - the former to encompass modern architectural knowledge and later to encompass traditional skills.⁶³ Both architect and *tukang* collaborated and presented a building that was unique and that surpassed conventional architecture at that time. The image below showed how the construction phase of the 1925 Pasar Gambir, indicating the use of bamboo as construction materials. Since the design of the pavilions was a combination between some local and non-local architecture, it was understandable that the structure and the construction of the pavilions also did not follow any particular traditional structure and construction. The constructional and technical experimentation showed a progress in construction and craftsmanship that did not correspond anymore to any local architecture. This meant pushing traditional bamboo construction to a new limit to support the design of the fair.

⁶³ "De Opening Van Den Pasar Gambir," p. 15.

The unique construction of Pasar Gambir could be related to the idea of woven fabric proposed by the nineteenth century German architect and theorist Gottfried Semper.⁶⁴ According to Semper the woven fabric was essentially patterned and ornamental, and yet was primary in architecture. He asserted that the tectonic and structural concerns of architecture were ascribed a secondary status.⁶⁵ He described the roof, the building shell and the earth excavations as jointly surrounding and protecting the hearth of the building. Semper's attribution to the textile as the most important was often defined as *Bekleidungstheorie* or 'theory of clothing.'

The reasons lay behind one's idea of putting together textile units, characterized by their flexibility, elasticity and strength: first, to organize and bind them; second, to protect and cover. Semper's words could even be interpreted to indicate that a wall construction only exists to facilitate textiles or carpets to be fixed to it. He saw textiles as a manifestation of man's desire to beautify by designing and decorating alongside functionality. He assessed that the cultural role of the decorated wall to be more substantial than its structural function. In his opinion, the 'clothing' of a building with its patterns and ornaments derived directly from the building's use hence, embellishment was a reflection of culture. Semper's argument was controversial because it disturbed the hierarchy in architectural discourse that prioritized the structure as the foundational and ornament as he supplemental. He inverted the order of the structure-ornament hierarchy with the structure now becoming a kind of temporary scaffolding.

Vernacular architecture depended on the availability of materials and conditions at sites. With the new design, it was unlikely to use one specific method of construction. The idea about *bricolage* in French, introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss, could describe best the work of *tukangs*. Similar to *bricoleur*, *tukangs* used whatever materials and tools available at hand, and regarded previous construction knowledge as tools in performing his tasks. As Lévi-Strauss put it, "The rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand,' that is to say with a set of tools . . . which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project."⁶⁶ Though not entirely comparable to *bricolage* that implied working with one's hands and using devious means to achieve one's goals, a *tukang* in the Indies was skillful at performing some diverse tasks with limited availability of raw materials and tools. Local *tukangs* had a tactile and worldly dimension to their

⁶⁴ Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetics* trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2004).

⁶⁵ *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 103.

⁶⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1966).

knowledge and ability, as well as flexibility in using local constructions and materials.

In the making of Pasar Gambir's pavilions, the architect faced the challenge of building the pavilions with local materials, construction techniques, and building culture. Regarding the construction and the materials for pavilions in Pasar Gambir, it was the work of *tukangs* that made this work succeed. As the architect had limited instruments for realizing his design, collaborating with the *tukangs* was the best way to meet the challenge. In adapting traditional construction for the fair's roof construction, for example, *tukangs* combined the need for structure with the spatial conception and the careful selection of materials. Ultimately, the constructing of a particular building was based on an observation of the sensible world such as the meaning of the fair, what resources the architect and *tukangs* had available and combining all these resources to create a new system for the building. Together they could find possible solutions, because the architect and *tukangs* paid attention not only to a catalogue of a previously determined set of architectural demands, but rather were able to weave their theoretical and practical knowledge to create the buildings. In conclusion, the making of Pasar Gambir, especially in the construction stage, had created a new specialized vocabulary in construction that comes from practical and intellectual considerations and collaborations.

2.3. Pasar Gambir and the Experience of Modernity

Having discussed the unique architecture of Pasar Gambir as an effort to invite people of Batavia to partake in consumerism and a modern life style, I wish to emphasize the importance of Pasar Gambir beyond its unique architecture. In addition to its eclectic and hybrid architecture that became a marketing device for its commercial, social and cultural purposes, in essence Pasar Gambir represented a celebration of crowd and modernity. Pasar Gambir embraced the idea that modernity could include everyone or the entire colony within the Dutch colonial framework. However, the fair multiplied the experience of modernity beyond any theory could describe.

Since the most valuable commodity in Pasar Gambir was not consumer goods but the unique social contact between the Dutch and natives, it is hereby necessary to link the fair with urban modernity in Batavia in order to understand the social condition during that time. Batavia was a center of Dutch colonial administration, a center of Indonesian nationalist discourse, and an important urban city in Indonesia. The city of Batavia functioned as the Dutch's access point to the commercial commodities in the Dutch East Indies. Moreover, colonially inspired architecture and urban planning transformed assumptions about colonial relations

in the experiential realities that defined colonial lives.⁶⁷ The urban city simultaneously gave a context in which colonial assumptions could be challenged or could become a 'contested space.' In the colonial city like Batavia, the built environment expressed the tensions and negotiations between different groups.

The ideas for the argument I develop on the fair and the urban modernity in Batavia are related to the works of Baudrillard and Walter Benjamin as well as of Dutch intellectuals who have described the condition of modernity in Batavia. One of the early incursions into consumer society and urban modernity was Baudrillard's account of modernity that examined the struggle of newly empowered classes to overcome the exclusivity of 'signs'. It began in the Renaissance when the bourgeois managed a political revolution to establish the right to equality.⁶⁸ For Baudrillard, modernity concerned how new technological techniques, for instance, techniques in making copies, imitations and reproductions, challenged that exclusivity, thereby effecting social change. In his early works, Baudrillard concentrated on how different objects were consumed in different ways and underscored the idea that all consumed things, because they always signified something 'socially', had their fetish side. An object of consumption had sign value that denoted social status rather than material value stemming from the function and the primary use of the object.⁶⁹

If, as Baudrillard argued, the promise of 'access' was the basic commodity that underpinned consumer society, then Pasar Gambir - epitomized by Indonesian vernacular architecture in its delicate culture - was purposely designed to fit its Dutch organizer and visitors. The fair coincided with the moment when sign-value took precedence over use-value with respect to the imitation of traditional houses, the use of lighting and advertising. Even though traditional houses, for example, had functional or exchange value such as a place for living, and a symbolic value reflecting the beliefs in the communities, in Pasar Gambir these houses became a commodity. These houses did not connect to their actual characteristics and functions but exploited experience and perception as commodities. Visitors perceived the architecture of Pasar Gambir not by the function of the houses but as an invitation to imagine a 'unique social contact' in the fair.

In more recent time, Marshall Berman describes modernity in his book *All That is Solid Melts into Air*.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*.

⁶⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* trans. Chris Turner (Sage Publications, 1998); and *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, 1995).

⁶⁹ Baudrillard mentions four ways of an object obtaining value that are functional, exchange, symbolic, and sign values. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St Louis: Telos Press, 1981).

⁷⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Verso, 1983), p. 15.

There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils – that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience 'modernity'. ... Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air.'

Baudrillard and Berman observed the same aspects of modernity such as the overwhelming changes, the sense of fragmentation, and the experience of space that was subjective. Both recognized some characteristic of modernity such as consumption, rapid changes, conflicted meanings and technology that changed people's perceptions.

In addition to the concepts of change and modernity above, Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin wrote about the modern city in the pre-war era in connection to perceptual and psychological effects. In his classical 1903 text, Simmel argued that social relations in the metropolis – for example, an urbanizing industrial metropolis like Berlin - progressively changed and people learned to negotiate and deal with changes through consumption.⁷¹ Benjamin observed that the modern city, with its new speed, brought about a change in human perception. He said: "World exhibitions are places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish," and that these exhibitions provide contact to a fantasy, where a person enters in order to be distracted.⁷² In the framework of the fair, a person joined a crowd and became a part of the spectacle.⁷³

2.3.1. *Urban Modernity in Batavia*

To a different degree with people living in a metropolis, Batavia experienced rapid changes and consumption, for instance, through the establishment of shipping companies, telegraphs, telephone lines and radios. Introduction to modern technology such as new machines, photography and films not only helped to

⁷¹ See Georg Simmel, *Metropolis and Mental Life* The Sociology of Georg Simmel (New York Free Press, 1976).

⁷² Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century " in *In Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).

⁷³ Charles Baudelaire in his essay 'The painter of modern life' published in 1863 wrote that 'Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is the one half of the art, the other being the eternal and the immutable.' His statement showed conflicting meanings attributed to modernism and he conjoined the ephemeral and the fleeting with the eternal and immutable. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: De Capo, 1986).

expand modern products but also brought changes in the lives of the natives. Dutch sociologist J.A.A van Doorn described that the Dutch late colonial era in Indonesia as not only expanding the economy but also the ambitions of some Dutch intellectuals, especially engineers, to systematically rearrange social relations.⁷⁴ These engineers wanted to apply progressive plans apart from the ideas of conservative officials who wanted to maintain the reins of traditional authority. The desire to create an Indies society was associated with a concern to proportionally assimilate local culture within the context of Western modernity. As Doorn explained, Indies society was made up of 'a synthesis of interests and ideas to be borne by an increasing number of the archipelago's residents, a synthesis, therefore, neither 'Indonesian' nor 'Dutch,' but a combination of what all the participants had to offer.⁷⁵

There were three basic reasons that influenced this intellectuals' vision. The first was the need of a local middle-class Indonesia that could fulfill the needs of trained workers and bridge the large gap between traditional communities living in traditional environments and modern people who lived in the cities. The second was the realization that the Indies was the place for the Dutch people to live, and advancement in any living areas would make their lives better. The third was that the rearrangement of social relations would create local middle class or a new market and, thus, secure both production and consumption. The Dutch traditional form of authority was considered ineffective to cope with the needs and changes at that time.

There was a similarity between the experience of the modern city and a fair like Pasar Gambir. The exterior of urban modernity in Batavia, in general, included physical spaces such as infrastructures, parks, fairs, museums and markets and brought different classes together. In Pasar Gambir, the architecture, the pavilions, the whole site of the fair became a place that brought different classes and culture together. The interior of urban modernity Batavia and Pasar Gambir included non-physical aspects such as challenging the secure domain of classes in the society and, like the aforementioned explanation of Doorn, synthesizing the interests and the ideas of the participants.

Both the modern city and Pasar Gambir were affected by new techniques of perception such as presenting the whole city such as through montage, close-up, transparency and lighting.⁷⁶ The montage or eclectic as its early form combined

⁷⁴ Doorn, *De Laatste Eeuw Van Indië. Ontwikkeling En Ondergang Van Een Koloniaal Project*. As discussed in Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An Illustrated Hypothesis."

⁷⁵ J. A. A. van Doorn, *A Divided Society: Segmentation and Mediation in Late-Colonial Indonesia* (Rotterdam: Faculty of Social Sciences Erasmus University Rotterdam, 1983), pp. 9-13.

⁷⁶ Debord said that the society of the spectacle came to existence in the late 1920s, the period in which modern advertising with the innovative techniques developed was introduced. Guy Debord, *Society of Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

different images or sources into one object, climaxing to a surprise. Through montage, spectators were forced to accept an attitude toward the situation in question. Evidence could be seen on the pavilions' open lower parts, which acted as an opening through which visitors saw the crowds and the exhibits, and would be tempted to crowd in. Such transparency and openness on the pavilions' lower level closed up and emphasized the commercial space and its exhibits and inquired people to participate in the crowd and celebration. The open lower facades of the pavilions acted like display windows to advertise the goods available inside but also implied a promise of a new social contact. There were no glass walls, but there was an illusion of social equality that disguised the commodity status of the exhibits displayed within. Thus, social contact became the most valuable commodity Pasar Gambir offered. Everything societal was collapsed in mimicking and imitating each other.



Fig. 2.14. Advertisement for Van Nelle tobacco. *Pandji Poestaka* 1–2, 1940

During the Dutch late colonial period in the Dutch East Indies, modernity evolved as many forms like media, fashion, and in everyday life especially for the middle class people. Attributes of a modern lifestyle could be seen in advertisements in newspapers and magazines, for example, the advertisement for Van Nelle tobacco in *Pandji Poestaka*, as shown in Fig. 2.14. The advertisement

showed men dressed up wearing coats, shoes, ties, and hats, as well as Javanese *blangkon* and *peci* (local cap).⁷⁷ All of these illustrated modernity and implied that adopting white lords' manners was necessary to be recognized as a modern person. Although the local middle class was still barred from fully appropriating this new lifestyle because of racial boundaries, the people here nonetheless claimed a particular aspect of modernity and explored a possibility to participate in the new lifestyle.

There was no westernizing behavioral revolution but an appropriation of modern attributes. The local middle class was the main actor in the urban modernity, modern lifestyles and cultural citizenship in the colony. This attribution did not belong to nationalist convictions or traditional submission but rather to the identity of the same cultural citizenship.⁷⁸ As Nordholt mentioned, by means of education and commercial advertisements, the middle class of Indonesia was introduced to new lifestyles and invited to become the new cultural citizens of the colony and neglect traditional habits.⁷⁹ In conclusion, it was modernity and joining cultural citizenship that seemed to be important for the Indonesian middle class.

Modernity referred to the role of the individual with regard to equality, progress and mobility. It was a condition where people were exposed to a perplexing variety of new ideologies and lifestyles. This destabilization generated the new ability for local people for 'self creation' and 'imagination'.⁸⁰ Instead of being ephemeral, colonial fairs like Pasar Gambir began making festivities as its permanent feature by offering popular entertainment, and the temporary interruption of social convention. This was where Pasar Gambir's critique of modernity in the colony set in. In its celebration of crowds and modern culture, modernity in Pasar Gambir emphasized the colonial principle of order but at the same time stimulated the agency of local people and conferred them power to imagine and conceptualize the 'self'. In addition to the idea that modernity at the

⁷⁷ *Pandji Poestaka* was a magazine published by Balai Pustaka with a circulation of 7.000 copies twice a week. This magazine was dedicated to a modern lifestyle and informing about international issues, the Dutch royal family and society, and the appointment of high civil servants.

⁷⁸ I owe the discussion on cultural citizenship to Prof. Nordholt who, in his article, disconnected modernity from nationalism by focusing on the role of cultural citizens in the late colonial period for whom modernity was a desirable lifestyle. Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An Illustrated Hypothesis," pp. 435–57.

⁷⁹ Nordholt discussed that it was advertisements and school posters that illustrated the desires and the interests of the colonial regime, as well as invited members of the indigenous urban middle class to become cultural citizens of the colony. *Ibid.*. In this study of Pasar Gambir, it was the advertisements that were used to invite of a large number of local middle class people to become cultural citizens of the colony.

⁸⁰ For further discussion see Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Public Worlds Volume 1*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

fair could include everyone yet emphasized the ruler's power in the colony, modernity gave a context in which locality was situated.

2.3.2. *Electric Lighting and Advertisements as Signs of Modernity in Pasar Gambir*

One of the remarkable things that Antonisse did in his design was an extensive use of lighting to decorate pavilions of Pasar Gambir. The lighting was used to accentuate the buildings and stress the advertisements. There were also some spotlights at the top of the tower to emphasize some parts of the fair grounds such as the entrance to the fair. The effects of overall lighting created not only the silhouettes of the pavilions but also conferred the image of modernity on the fair.

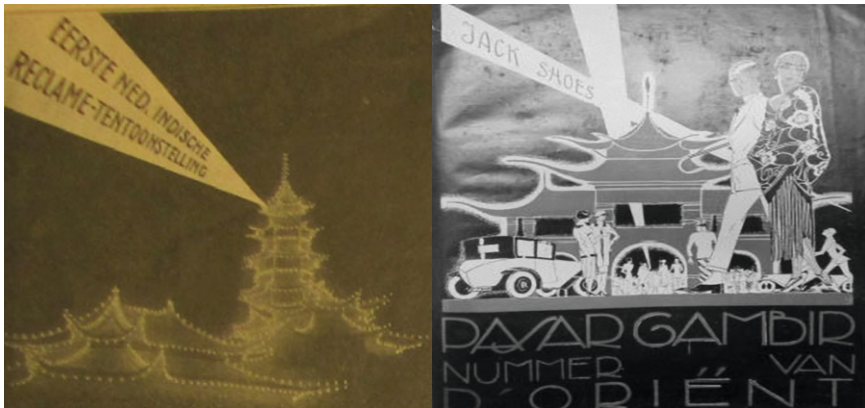


Fig. 2.15. Electric lights and advertisement at the 1925 Pasar Gambir. Source: *D'Orient* September 1925

In the 1926 *D'Orient* report about Pasar Gambir, the vice chairman of the fair's committee W. J. M. Flat. emphasized the effect of the spotlight at the entrance to create a carnival atmosphere, and he complimented the mastery of technology:

Entering through the large gate creates the sense of a big carnival (...) The great spotlight of the entrance tower casts its glow over the field and when the rays reach on the beautiful fountain this is the peak of brilliance and gives sparkle. From a technical perspective, the lighting is a genuine piece of art. Nowhere else the lighting installations

shine, flicker, and dazzle the eye; this (moment) can only be happened through technology carried out by professionals and associated with mastery.⁸¹

A total of fifteen thousand small lights was used to celebrate the Queen Wilhelmina birthday, a big investment for the two-week fair especially when at that time most of natives had no electricity.⁸² At the fair, technology and culture seemed capable of integrating various groups and, arguably, erasing differences in identity temporarily. In reality, urban Batavia was deeply divided into Dutch and non-Dutch parts, a segregation basically attributed to Dutch's exploitation of technologies to draw a line between the Dutch and natives.

The architecture of Pasar Gambir, however, helped to articulate a general anxiety over modernism. The architect of Pasar Gambir outlined the main pavilions with lights so that the pavilions served as a starting point for the visitors to grasp modernity and escape from ordinary life where the un-equality of social and cultural relationships would fade, at least temporarily. Presenting different designs for Pasar Gambir and placing the hybrid architecture under the panoptic eye of the fair-goers seemed to bring into the visitor's consciousness, the whole Indonesian culture and the extension of Dutch power all at once.



Fig. 2.16. The use of electric lights at the 1925 and the 1934 Pasar Gambir. Source: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TM-60029732 and TM-60041491

⁸¹ My translation "De Opening Van Den Pasar Gambir," *D'Orient* 4 September 1926, p. 10.

⁸² There were 6,000 electric lights for front buildings, 3,200 for the middle section, 1,300 for the garlands along the main roads and 3,900 for back buildings with its three towers. *D'Orient* 4 September 1925, p. 6.

With respect to Pasar Gambir, the architect of Pasar Gambir did not question culture but re-packaged it in order to soothe the audience. As a result, the architecture of Pasar Gambir was easy to consume, appealed to visitors' tastes and gratified communal experiences. As shown in Fig. 2.15. and 2.16., the electric lights had created a picturesque silhouette of Indonesian vernacular architecture, taking over its details and its enigmatic meanings. The picturesque scene was comfortable, since it confirmed beloved clichés where the whole image of the building was more important than the details. The visitors could enjoy new forms of architecture enabled by modern technology and by reproduction of their own culture in the pavilions.

2.4. Space of Encounter in Pasar Gambir

Late-colonial Indonesia reflected many mixed images of the Dutch and Indies cultures— ideas of changes, transitions, tensions and hybrid representations. By 1900 telephone lines had been established in Batavia, Cirebon, and other big cities in Java. By the 1920s, the train system in Java had reached its greatest extent to connect most towns and cities with branches and tramways connecting sugar plantations to factories. A great variety of modern technologies, such as cinemas, sewing machines and gramophones signaled change. Such changes as well as progress, confusion and tensions were part of the daily life in Indonesia. Generally, people in many Indies' cities, involved with various social encounters on a daily basis, took little heed of all of this.

Traditionally, colonized people were regarded as passive victims of colonization, in which the colonizer's culture and ideology was forced upon them.⁸³ Indeed, the colonial power used force to maintain hegemony, but the relations between the colonized and colonizer in the Indies was more of a mutual relation. The idea of hybridity as a lived experience could explain the unique sense of identity shared and experienced individually in a distinctive context like in Pasar Gambir of Batavia during the Dutch late colonial era. Stuart Hall argued that identity should be understood as 'produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practice, by specific enunciate strategies.'⁸⁴ In Pasar Gambir, both the Dutch and the natives struggled to maintain their position and identity as having certain social labels, which might be assigned by both parties. Therefore this fair became an example of how hybridity and identity were socially

⁸³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge (Classics edition), 2004).

⁸⁴ Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in *Questions of Cultural Identity* ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: SAGE Publications, 1996).

constructed and emerged from a struggle to maintain the dissimilarity between the ruler and the ruled.

In *The Oxford English Dictionary* the word 'hybrid' was originally derived from the Latin for offspring 'of a tame sow and wild boar' or 'human parents of different races.'⁸⁵ The idea of hybridity was raised in the eighteenth century to mark the different varieties of human beings according to the hierarchical scale of the Great Chain of Being. Within this hierarchy, the European was placed at the top and the African was placed at the bottom of the human family. This physiological phenomenon of the concept of hybridity had progressed into a racial theory in the nineteenth century and then to include cultures, and languages that derived from heterogeneous sources in the twentieth century.⁸⁶

Homi Bhabha used the word 'hybridity,' in postcolonial study and argued that hybridity was more than a third term that resolved the tension between two cultures, in a dialectical play of recognition.⁸⁷ The hybrid was an entity created out of crossing two dissimilar entities, in describing a cultural and racial mixing generated by colonialism. It meant that hybridity was no longer a matter of the mix of two entities; instead of X and Y, there were X and x as the split screen of the self and its doubling or the hybrid. For Bhabha, neither the colonizer nor the colonial subject existed as two restricted alternatives; a splitting of the identity positions of these two occurred through their shared contamination.

Hybridity did not emerge from the synthesis of different entities, but rather from a space where elements encountered and transformed each other. Bhabha believed that it was through the persistent displacements of this 'in-between' space that had spawned a site of resistance, where the colonial subject hybridized and the colonizer failed.⁸⁸ A space in between designation and that this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opened up via cultural hybridity that entertained differences without an imposed hierarchy. In this context, Bhabha speculated on differential temporal movements within the process of dialectical contemplation that Bhabha called this as 'a third space,' or 'a time lag'.⁸⁹ This process of temporal movement also meant a space of ambiguity. Bhabha connected this perspective of the in-between space to the process of creating culture in the colonization where meaning is slippery. Bhabha further inferred the demand on the colonized to be like the colonizer resulted in mimicry.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Oxford Online Dictionaries, *n.*, and *origin* "hybrid," accessed September 5, 2014, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hybrid>.

⁸⁶ See Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory*. Please see also Hall, "Introduction."

⁸⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 113-4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Mitchell, "Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity," pp. 533-53.

⁹⁰ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-90.

Since many experts had added dimensions to the idea of hybridity, which is a very complex idea, it is my intention here to ground 'hybridity' and the 'third space' in common practice so that these terms are meaningful. Katharyne Mitchell had criticized third space as a space of resistance, and did not believe Bhabha's abstract idea went far enough to consider cultural and national boundaries. Mitchell believed that hybridity can simply be a personal identity, while AlSayyad stated that hybridity must be considered in its tangible, daily expressions rather than just in theory.⁹¹ Hybridity, then, was a lived experience chosen by individuals who wished to use it to achieve various aims performed in everyday spaces and places.

Pasar Gambir's distinctive architectural forms and traditions contributed to the evolving cultural identity of Indies people, which allowed Indies communities to create and maintain multiple affiliations and associations to further their own social and cultural values. The architecture of Pasar Gambir inspired the Indonesian middle class – representing the majority of Pasar gambir's visitors – to model themselves on the Dutch in the medium of their own vernacular architecture. Pasar Gambir comprehensively presented the culture of the colony, providing the visitor with a panoptical vantage point of different Indies cultures under Dutch rule. The architecture of the fair also described the progressive contribution of the Dutch to its colony or, in other words, Pasar Gambir formed a platform for a dissemination of the superiority of the Dutch civilization, the self-congratulatory pride of the colonizer, and of the inferiority of the Indies people, viewed as 'exotic.'

The scene of Pasar Gambir showed a place where the Dutch and natives could easily interact. The middle class natives were allowed to enter the Western cultural sphere through their education and behavior. Unlike the visitor of colonial exposition in the Europe who came to see exotic culture, the visitor who came to Pasar Gambir wanted to see images of modernity. The architecture of the pavilions created a feeling of familiarity for local visitors because of well-known forms of Indonesian vernacular architecture.

2.5. The Reception of Pasar Gambir's Visitors

In a letter, Mrs. Kuyck, a Dutch expat family conveyed her experience upon visiting Pasar Gambir in September 1929:

It is remarkable how differently the natives behave lately. They are not hostile, but many of them consider themselves completely equal to the Europeans. [...] When we left we saw a couple of native women and men at the entrance. They looked so neat

⁹¹ See Nezar AlSayyad, "Hybrid Culture/Hybrid Urbanism: Pandora's Box of the Third Place," in *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, ed. Nezar AlSayyad (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001). See also Mitchell, "Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity."

and civilized [...] When we walked by I heard, again to my big surprise, that they spoke Dutch among themselves.⁹²

In this excerpt, Mrs. Kuyck articulated her feeling about the native middle class and alluded to the practicing of Western culture as being a crucial concept of modern Indonesia. It seemed that the natives not only mimicked how the Dutch spoke and behaved, but also considered themselves equal to the Europeans.

C.M. Vissering commented on the 1916 Batavia Pasar Gambir fair, as follows:

Batavia's biggest square is temporarily changed into a fair, a platform is erected for the resident of Batavia, other officials, and their dames ... below sits a group of native chiefs from the most remote lands of our Indies empire.⁹³ As soon as the darkness wins over, both of the main entrance gates and the whole front part of the square stands out as it reflects a glow coming from the multiform lights of cinematographs ... An immense crowd sits on the ground in their best plumage of white *baadje* coats, multicolor sarongs, and neat head cloths... For us, it is the joy of the show! That look of placid happiness of the thousands; that picture, which repeatedly emerges out of the darkness in the vehement lighting by the cinematograph ... always the same amazing multicolored still life, and the little *warung* stands's oil flames flickering orange and red.

When the movies were over, Vissering continued:

The native chiefs and the native workers return to their distant solitary regions; they will live again in their *kampung*, 'village,' work again with their primitive tools, busy with their pure handiwork of peace, for us, Westerners, they leave behind images of a culture of ennobled work.

Vissering captured the anxiety of the visitors of Pasar Gambir to watch movies, one of the signs of modernity in the early twentieth century, as well as tensions between two different kinds of visitors. Vissering's observation clearly showed how the Dutch observed the natives. The real show for him was not the movies but the contrasts between the *warungs*'s flame and the modern lights in the cinema; local people in their best dress but, with *sarongs*, not yet modern. For local people, coming to Pasar Gambir was a celebration of life, aside from their everyday way of living. The Dutch acknowledged that the presence of the natives was only temporary and the natives would return to their place in *kampung* after the show. For the Dutch, the natives belonged to a different place and world. Pasar Gambir,

⁹² Quoted from Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An Illustrated Hypothesis," p. 453.

⁹³ C.M. Vissering, "Een Pasar Gambir," *Nederlandsch-Indië Oud en Nieuw* 1916-1917, p. 399-407, quoted from Mrazek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony*, p. 112.

however, was an intersection between the two worlds where both parties could experience modernity.

Fig. 2.17. shows how the visitors of 1925 Pasar Gambir wore modern clothes. The males wore white suits – typical attire for the Dutchman - and the females dressed both in traditional *kebaya* or in modern clothing like the European women. For Indonesians, speaking Dutch and mimicking the Dutch's behavior meant appropriating their culture and knowledge in order to be equal to the Dutch. By doing this, the natives desired to raise their own status and be like the Dutch, even though this similarity could only happen temporarily in the arena of the fair. For the Dutch visitors, experiencing this kind of equality in the fair arena was also a unique experience. The temporal quality of the fair, which was also reflected by the architecture of the pavilion, made the Dutch feel comfortable in that they knew this equality was transient—a temporary happening at the fair. Though the Dutch government never intended on having equal citizenship between the Dutch and Indonesians, Pasar Gambir became an arena where both the category of 'Dutch' as the colonial subject hybridized and the category of the native as the 'Other' failed.



Fig. 2.17 Visitors of the 1925 Pasar Gambir. Source: Nationaal Museum van Wereldcultu-
ren. Coll.no. TM-60041490

Pasar Gambir became a hybrid meeting space and an escape from ordinary life. The hybridization process, both depicted by the architecture and by the interactions of the visitors, was a form of creative interplay, stemming from colonization, cultural interaction, and resulting in a new synthesis of cultural expression. Ultimately, both European and Indonesian visitors wanted to view modernity and experience a different social and cultural ambience.

In the case of Pasar Gambir Fair in the Dutch late colonial period, there was a dialectic that emerged when the Dutch pronounced the difference between an 'us'

(the Dutch) and a 'them' (the natives). However, there was a translation and negotiation between the mimic and those who being mimicked. Although the Dutch and the natives desired authenticity, they both participated in a mirroring that authenticity to serve their own ends. On the one hand, the Dutch mimicked the native's architecture to consolidate their agenda of power and modernity. On the other hand, the natives were conceivably attracted to appropriating the culture and knowledge of the Dutch upper class. Even though the natives struggled to achieve the Dutch higher status, and the Dutch struggled to maintain their differences, ultimately the 'constructiveness' and 'negotiation' of culture and identity were more important than their rootedness.

The politics of fashion started to gain new intensity at the turn of the twentieth century when the increasing number of natives employed on plantations, railways, and factories wore neutral outfits allowing access to these new environments. In modern offices, it was common to see the natives working as assistants and lower rank clerks. A typical outfit for local middle-class men was a white coat, white pants and *peci* or black hat, and modern dress for women. A European wore suits, and it was considered inappropriate to dress like a native, except when in the interior and far from civilization.⁹⁴ By the 1910s there were some Indonesian who dressed in the most dandyish way and tried to live and be educated like the Dutch.⁹⁵ The famous generation of 1928 Sukarno, Hatta (the first president and vice president of Indonesia) and Sjahrir (the first prime minister of Indonesia) were arguably members of the first group of native politicians who in public dressed in a Western way. By contrast, the Dutch seemingly felt tension developing with respect to clothes: This dissonance arose from the thinking that if the natives dressed in modern outfits, they no longer belonged to the class of 'natives' anymore.⁹⁶

A statement of an Indonesia dandy could be read in Mas Marco Kartodikromo's novel of *Student Hidjo* written in Malay.⁹⁷ Mas Marco, an Indonesian journalist and writer who served one of his prison terms in Batavia, wrote a story about an Indonesian young man who studied at the Technical Institute in Delft. Written in 1918, Mas Marco used Dutch words to denote how modernity streamed into manners, looks, and fashions. His novel mirrored part of the Indies culture that dictated what to wear and how to talk in modern times. Hidjo became a figure of a modern Indonesian man who traveled and spoke like a dandy. Those young Indonesians portrayed in the novel peppered their conversations with a mix of

⁹⁴ Catenius-van der Meijden published *Ons Huis in Indie*, "Our House in Indies" in 1908 as a textbook of manners and a fashion guide for the Dutch Men and women in the Indies.

⁹⁵ There were many illustrations of the modern and dandy natives like in the *Indies Journal of Nederlandsch Indië Oud en Nieuw*.

⁹⁶ Mrazek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony*.

⁹⁷ Marco Karodikromo, *Student Hidjo* (Semarang: Masman en Stroink, 1919).

Malay, Javanese and Dutch, and they emulated a modern way of life such as reading books and drinking lemonade.

During the time when Mas Marco wrote this novel, the Dutch Indies government's policy of growth and efficiency collided with the aspirations of the local middle class in realizing their new ideas and dreams. Finding their place to express themselves was hard for natives, yet they also did not want to challenge the status quo. Reluctant to voice their aspirations as boldly as Mas Marco, they feared that they, too, would be sent in exile.⁹⁸ Just as Malay had become the language of modernity, Pasar Gambir was a vehicle of modernity, novelty and experiment. The contribution of Pasar Gambir for the Dutch late colonial period was to increase the acceptance of a mixed culture accessible to both Europeans and natives and to invite each other to join in the experiment. Unlike Indonesian nationalists who evoked a clear distinction between the Dutch and the Indies, Pasar Gambir facilitated local people to incorporate modernity introduced by Dutch authority. The architecture of the fair also explored the limits and possibilities of flexibility of the Indies' own architecture and its capacity to assimilate various colonial constructions.

Tillema's *Kromoblanda: On the Question of Living*, a six-volume work published between 1915 and 1923, exemplified this hybridity of lifestyle by discussing modern life, and other changes in the late-colonial Indies. Tillema borrowed the word *kromo*, 'natives,' and *blanda*, 'Dutch,' to suggest ways to live orderly and hygienically both for the natives (which would be natives of high rank and of the middle class) and the Dutch.⁹⁹ This book filled the gap between two different cultures and languages and translated appropriate manners in the modern time.

2.6. Pasar Gambir in Indonesian and Sino-Malay Literature

The festivity of Pasar Gambir was often used as the setting of stories in novels and magazines. For example, in Chinese-Malay monthly stories and magazines, the authors usually used Pasar Gambir as a background and a popular meeting place for friends and lovers. In the piece *Dia Atawa Boekan?*, the author began the story with Pasar Gambir:

⁹⁸ Mas Marco was arrested for his writing that was considered as sowing hate and criticizing colonial authorities. He died in 1932 in the notorious Dutch colonial exile camp on Boven Digoel, New Guinea.

⁹⁹ Kromo is the polite and formal style in Javanese language. It is used between those of the same status when they do not wish to be informal or by persons of lower status to persons of higher status, such as a subordinate to boss. John U Wolff, *Soepomo Poedjosoesarmo. Communicative Codes in Central Java* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1982).

31 August! What a crowded day. There were many flags and big buildings. Inside Pasar Gambir, the situation was more crowded. People pushed and they could only move slowly between stands. Among Pasar Gambir's visitors that day, there were two young men dressed *perlente*.¹⁰⁰

The setting of this story is August 31st, the birthday of the Dutch Queen. As there are always fireworks in Pasar Gambir to celebrate the Queen's birthday, people stream to the fair to view them. The author describes Pasar Gambir as being very crowded so that visitors can only move slowly between stands. In the story, the two young visitors are described as *perlente*, another word for a chic and dandy clothing style. These two protagonists, named Liang Hoen and Kim Djin, are close friends who fall in love with twin girls at Pasar Gambir. The author further describes the girls as wearing European clothing and arriving separately at the fair by horse carriage or taxi. On one occasion, Kim Djin and one of the girls says 'goodbye' in Dutch.

The popularity of Pasar Gambir had spread to such an extent in the colony that even common people thought they should come to fair to join in the festivities. The stories mostly described everyday life of the people of Batavia. However, in *Dua Matjem Soerat*, a collection of stories in the form of letters, there was an account of two friends exchanging letters on Pasar Gambir.¹⁰¹ In one story, Mr. A wrote a letter to his friend Mr. B to invite Mr. B's whole family to stay in his house in Batavia and visit Pasar Gambir together, just like they used to do when both men were single and without children. It had been the fourth time that Mr. B refused to come to Pasar Gambir, because he was busy and visiting the fair would be too expensive. Yet Mr. A. countered that Pasar Gambir would bring happiness to Mr. B's whole family and be relaxing. To convince his friend to come to the fair, Mr. A calculated that the cost for visiting Pasar Gambir would be around f40, f15 of which would cover the cost of transportation from Mr. B's house and the rest would cover the expense of tickets and food for a family with 4 children. Instead of agreeing to come to the 1937 Pasar Gambir, however, Mr. B argued how he could make better use of the money, which in his calculation, would be at least doubled, for his family needed to buy new clothes, food and tickets to see many shows. As a comparison, Mr. B reasoned that cultivating his farm and building a swimming pool would cost him around f300. Mr. B compared their lifestyles as being opposites. Whereas Mr. A liked to spend money for leisure and was trapped in a life of consumerism, Mr. B, who lived in a small town near a mountain, preferred to save

¹⁰⁰ Tan King Tjan, "Dia Atawa Boekan," *Boelan Poernama* June 1930. *Boelan Poernama* was a monthly Chinese Malay magazine targeted to Chinese people living in the Indies but the story was written in Bahasa Indonesia or Malay. In each edition, there was only one long story, around 50 pages, about the life of the Chinese people in the Indies.

¹⁰¹ Kwee Tek Hoaij, "Saorang Pelit Jang Tida Kenal Apa Artinja Menjenangkan Diri " *Doea Matjem Soerat* 1938, pp. 276-84.

his money to renovate his house and care for his beautiful garden. Finally, Mr. B suggested that his friend buy a sewing machine, a camera or furniture for his home rather than go to Pasar Gambir that year. He said:

You, your wife and your children love to go to Kota Batu for swimming and other fun places for bathing. But I am here, and not in this year Pasar Gambir, will soon have a pool. Although the swimming pool was small and modest, it was my own property and located at the back of the house. We can swim or bathe every day, without travelling and spending a penny too! Just think, brother! Who is more loyal and who is better able to seek pleasure?

In the story of "Toendjoekkanlah Djalan, Dimana Saia Bisa Ditiitjinta," (Show Me the Way, Where Can I Find My Love) it was written that the Pasar Gambir was one of the most famous and the biggest fair in the Indies:¹⁰²

In this era, people cannot say there is not enough place for entertainment. For example: this month we visit Jaarbeurs (in Bandung, West Java), next month we will visit Pasar Gambir and in other month we can go to Surabaya to visit Jaarmarkt; besides these three fairs there are also Pasar Malam, Fancy Fair, Soirée Variée and some other fairs held in small cities. And on September 4th, 1927, around eight o'clock, I come to visit Pasar Gambir all by myself, and here, near the fountain, luckily again I can meet (this girl) whose eyes are bright and more beautiful than the Cleopatra Queen ...

Big cities in the Indies like Bandung, Batavia, and Surabaya usually had their own annual fairs. Smaller cities also held similar fairs but in a smaller scale. The story above highlighted Pasar Gambir, especially its famous fountain as the setting for the story of a young man who once again met a girl of his dream. The combination of a delightful and modern place, a beautiful person and a personal moment took place in Pasar Gambir.

A local newspaper *Pandji Poestaka* covered the annual Pasar Gambir fair, such as the covering of the 1927 Pasar Gambir:¹⁰³

How beautiful the buildings for Pasar Gambir. Undoubtedly (the fair) is crowded, even more crowded than last year. The security will be tightened and the lighting of the fair will be brighter. The spotlights will be bigger than any other previous years and these lighting will shine further. This is the place where we can see and learn about trading, companies, arts and crafts; and also a place where we can have fun. Besides all of the exhibits, there are also many shows in this place. Nevertheless we should know ourselves, when we cannot afford (to buy things or see all of the shows) do not come here so often.

¹⁰² Kwee Teng Hin, "Toendjoekkanlah Djalan, Dimana Saia Bisa Ditiitjinta." *The Beauty*. 8-9.

¹⁰³ "Pasar Gambir." *Pandji Poestaka*, 19 August 1927.

Due to the success of previous Pasar Gambir, there seemed to be some improvements for the 1927 Pasar Gambir for example the lighting, the security, the exhibitions and the shows. The last sentence that warned people not to come often if they did not have enough money emphasized that visitors would be caught up in consumerism at the fair.

One well-known newspaper in Singapore, *The Straits Times*, also covered the closing of the 1929 Pasar Gambir in detail:

Tonight the Pasar Gambir closes. For months past it has been talked of; for months work was in progress transforming one corner of the Koningsplein into a vast market of *attap* buildings. For twelve hectic days and nights the miniature Wembley has been open, and tomorrow the work of demolition will commence. Next year the whole process will be repeated.

One correspondent wrote about the festive scenes of Pasar Gambir and how the compared the fair with Wembley because of its festivities. The author also acknowledged a cyclical process of building, using and demolishing the fair ground every year. The writer continued:

Yet in spite of dislocation of traffic and the noise and the dust I confess to liking Pasar Gambir. There is always something interesting to see there; the seething masses of humanity alone are worth observing. On the first Saturday (Aug.31) 127,000 people passed through the gates; there always seem to be thousands of natives standing outside with no intention of going in; perhaps the modest entrance fee is beyond their slender means.... The bright sarongs and head dresses of Malays, Soendanese and Javanese give a picturesque touch and are in marked contrast with the somber clothing one sees in Singapore.¹⁰⁴

The writer called the fair as *attap* (or roofs) probably because Pasar Gambir was already famous for its beautiful architecture and the architect paid much attention to the design of the roofs. The writer noticed that not only did many people inside Pasar Gambir but also many natives gathered outside the fair. For him going to Pasar Gambir became a relief from the monotone kampong life. He wrote:

What do all the people do in Pasar Gambir? From the pockets of natives most of the money is probably spent at the refreshment stalls and in the amusement park; beyond that they are content to enjoy what can be seen free and to listen to the native orchestra or the wireless program. ... For European visitors the main attraction is the native art and crafts. Unfortunately this does not occupy so large a proportion of the Fair as many would like to see it do. ... There are Javanese stalls with their batik and brass,

¹⁰⁴ "The Pasar Gambir Again," *The Straits Times* 14 September 1929, p. 5.

leather and tortoiseshell silver, and wood and horn. One stall is devoted entirely to woodcarving from Tjipara. The Chinese are there with their silks old and new, lace, soapstone, wood and precious stones. From the Preager there are baskets and rattan work of every kind.

The correspondent closed his writing by noting:

This is but a sketch outline of what a Pasar Gambir is like and whence it derives its interest. There is far more than can be seen in one visit and there are few people who would not find some pleasure in wandering around the stalls and mingling with the cosmopolitan crowds on pleasure bent. But if it were more native it would be more attractive.

2.7. Pasar Gambir and the Gaze: Celebrating Colonial Modernity and Defining the 'Self'

For Indonesians, Pasar Gambir was a catalyst in portraying Indonesian culture in the form of the collection of roofs or the architecture of different ethnic groups. In fact, Indies vernacular architecture existed prior to the invention of Pasar Gambir architectural forms. As a result of Antonisse's exploration of local architectural forms, however, the fair became an important moment in acknowledging and announcing Indies local architecture to the public, and the ability of those local forms to support such a big fair. The collection of Indies architecture provided a visibility of what comprised the Indies; visitors, instead of travelling to many parts of the country to see local architecture, had the collection right in front of their eyes. The fair also exuded the idea of visibility, as a place where ideally everyone could see anyone else, or where spectacle was eventually coupled with surveillance. The open lower facades of the pavilions promised a new social contact. On the one hand, this kind of visibility conveyed a sense of a harmony besides social divisions as a whole between the public and the colonial rule. On the other hand, the power of the ruler became less obvious but more vigilant.

Pasar Gambir offered a view into the interior of the Indies and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, especially allowing a glimpse of the pattern of 'seeing and being seen', the collection of culture and the pride that Pasar Gambir elicited in its local visitors. To some part, the discussion that Pasar Gambir triggered was related to Bennet's idea of how the 'exhibitionary complex' discussed the power to order and arrange things for public display as objects and subjects of knowledge in discussing international exhibition.¹⁰⁵ Analogous to Bennet's idea, the

¹⁰⁵ I borrow the phrase 'exhibitionary complex' from Tony Bennett, whose work has been central to subsequent discussion of exhibitions and display. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*.

architecture of Pasar Gambir reflected the idea that museums transformed private art collections into open spaces in which the lower classes would be exposed to middle-class behavior.¹⁰⁶ In Pasar Gambir, it was not private art collections that were transformed into open spaces, but rather the collections of Indonesian vernacular architecture. The lower society might have admired the architecture and the electric lights of Pasar Gambir from afar, since these people could not afford the admission tickets. But the Indies middle class was able to come to the fair and could learn how to socialize, behave, and wear clothes like the Dutch master. In other words, at Pasar Gambir Indonesian middle classes would be exposed to and learn to emulate Dutch middle-class codes of behavior.

The pattern of seeing and being seen in Pasar Gambir allowed the individual to circulate between the object and subject positions of the dominating vision the fair afforded over the city of Batavia and its inhabitants. Here, visitors were positioned as collective individuals who were invited to undertake an incessant updating or modernizing of the self. Through updating the self or changing the object and subject positions, middle-class Indonesia was able to negotiate social divisions and create 'modernity', allowed to a high degree in the colonial world. Even though middle-class Indonesia neither aimed to change their social position nor wanted to be their Dutch counterpart, these people did wish to participate in modernity in a sense that visitors were part of cultural citizenship. Contrary to the nationalists, there was also another faction of local people who were not political per se but who wanted to adopt a modern lifestyle and create their own definition of modernity.¹⁰⁷

Pasar Gambir also connected native people together and allowed them to identify themselves as part of an imagined community, where this idea never previously existed. Pasar Gambir, with its presentation of the Indies vernacular architecture, offered a spectacle of the archipelago and evoked pride to native people. Such contexts, though indirectly and unintentionally, had opened a way for native people to imagine 'Indonesia' as a nation. Voluntarily, individuals and groups from different social strata brought various group of people together. Since Pasar Gambir had more audiences than any fairs or museums in the Indies, and the audience could directly experience a changing position of ruled and ruler, for Indonesians Pasar Gambir became one of the stages that provided a provocative embryonic model of a potential autonomous nation.

As put forth by Anderson in *Imagined Community*, most Indonesian historiographic writings usually relate modernity and nationalism by contending that nationalism was a product of modernity made possible by printed media, adjusted

See also Sharon Macdonald, *Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷ Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An Illustrated Hypothesis," pp. 435-57.

to local context, in order to maximize the effect.¹⁰⁸ As a result, a common discourse emerged and believed that nationalism were products of modernity as a means to political and economic ends.¹⁰⁹ It was true in Pasar Gambir that this idea of creative imagery as well as 'invented culture' as a symbol played a crucial role in constructing narrative about a nation. Nevertheless another interpretation of the visitors of Pasar Gambir led to the opposite: the local middle classes had their own aspiration to participate in modernity.

Colonial exhibitions like Pasar Gambir promoted a trading as well as experimentation with ephemeral buildings that reflected an air of modernity. Pasar Gambir also fostered a discussion on social and cultural changes in the context of urban modernity in the colony. It was through hybrid architecture – the *lingua franca* of Indonesian vernacular architecture that allowed participation of local people - that caused 'modernity' to spread throughout the colony. The formation of modernity in the Dutch East Indies was not only the product of colonialism and capitalism but it was strongly modified by the localized modernity. Middle-class Indonesians, as the majority of the fairgoers, ended up convincing themselves of being modern by contemplating themselves in their new urban spaces, hybrid architecture, and practicing a new standard of behavior. The most valuable commodity in Pasar Gambir was not the consumer's goods but the unique social contacts between the Dutch and natives.

¹⁰⁸ Benedict Anderson, "Cartoons and Monuments: The Evolution of Political Communication under the New Order," in *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Jakarta Equinox Publishing, 2006).

¹⁰⁹ Anderson used Indonesia as one of his case studies in explaining imagined community. Abidin Kusno, Anthony King also to some degree built their ideas on power and architecture using the idea of imagined community.

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