

MODERNITY ON THE ROAD TRAFFIC OF SURABAYA IN 1920S

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the process and effects of modernization on the road traffic of Surabaya between 1920 and 1930 as reported by the newspapers. Two issues highlighted are the institutionalization of driver's license and traffic accidents. Besides newspapers, also used were films about the road traffic situation in Surabaya in the late 1920s. The modernization of the road of Surabaya implied social differences. People's appreciation of modern vehicles was demonstrated by their ability to make use of the road modernly. Riding on modern vehicles did not always mean having modern behavior. Traffic accidents also proved the social differences. Interestingly, the two newspapers reported quite differently about the social differences on the modern road of Surabaya.

Keywords: Surabaya, Road Traffic, Modernity, Colonial city.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengupas proses dan efek modernisasi pada lalu lintas Surabaya antara tahun 1920 hingga 1930 sebagaimana dilaporkan oleh koran-koran. Dua isu yang disorot adalah institusionalisasi Surat Izin Mengemudi dan kecelakaan lalu lintas. Di samping koran, saya juga memanfaatkan film tentang situasi lalu lintas di Surabaya pada akhir tahun 1920-an. Pada jalan modern di Surabaya dapat diketahui perbedaan sosial. Apresiasi orang terhadap kendaraan modern ditunjukkan pada kemampuan mereka dalam menggunakan jalan secara modern. Berkendara di atas kendaraan modern tidak selalu berarti memiliki perilaku modern. Kecelakaan lalu lintas juga menunjukkan adanya perbedaan sosial. Lebih menarik lagi, dua koran yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini melaporkan berita secara berbeda dalam menggambarkan perbedaan sosial pada jalan modern di Surabaya.

Kata Kunci: Surabaya, Lalu Lintas, Modernitas, Kota kolonial.

INTRODUCTION

Studying urban road traffic is useful to describe the process of modernization in colonial cities. More than in Europe, various kinds of vehicles run on the roads in colonial cities reflecting the different social status and income between the different ethnic groups and social classes. People from different backgrounds make use of the road in different ways. The modern road, with its traffic regulations and motor vehicles, introduce people to make use of the road in modern ways. Nevertheless, people in colonial cities adapt to modernity as reflected in modern roads, in their own ways.

By the 1920s, Surabaya already had many modern means of transportation. All kinds of automobiles as well as the steam and the electric trams were present in the city. The other means of transportation such as bicycles and animal-driven carts were also present on the city's roads. Besides road transportation, Surabaya had an established railway system. All cities in East Java were connected to Surabaya by railway. An airport

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and two harbors completed the richness of Surabaya in terms of modern means of transportation. The variety of modern modes of transportation in the city makes Surabaya a suitable city to study modernization through its transport system. The central question posed in this article is particularly to social effects of modern means transportation in Surabaya. The social effects of modernity on the road of Surabaya were answered in two important faces of the modernity on the traffic road, namely the institutionalization of driver's license and traffic accidents.

The newspapers published in Surabaya will be the starting point to answer those questions. I will use two local newspapers at the same period. One is a Malay-language newspaper, *Pewartar Surabayaia*, and the second a Dutch-language newspaper, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. *Pewartar Surabayaia* was an Indonesian-Chinese owned newspaper that had special concern to the nationalist movement in China. *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* owned by a Dutchman and it was the first liberal newspaper in Surabaya. Since this article make use particularly a Dutch-language and a Malay-language newspapers, I also posed how the newspapers reported the news on the road traffic.

The other primary sources used are census reports, export-import reports and any related statistical data. I will also use films about the road traffic situation in Surabaya in the late 1920s. Secondary sources will be used to gather more information about the road traffic in Surabaya in the period.

MODERNITY IN COLONY

To be 'modern' delineates relative achievements. One of the characteristics of the achievements is a distinctive time. People usually think that they are modern as compared to their predecessors. People who live in the 21st century must have a feeling that they are more modern than the people who lived in the 20th century. Likewise, the latter thought they were more modern than those who had lived before. In this sense, to be modern is to have a contemporary condition that differs to the past.

Modernity then is defined as the social arrangement of contemporary society as a world that has superseded its past, as a society that is not bound by traditions, customs, habits, routines, expectations and beliefs that characterized its history (Giddens and Pierson, 1998:15). Giddens and Pierson stress that although modernity is an historical condition of difference, that does not mean that the modern society leaves all the conditions of the past behind. Some of the past conditions still exist and are even mixed with the present. That is why he also names modernity a post-traditional. Giddens' comprehension of modernity implies that modernity reflects the social condition and also the mentality of people. This mixed of the past and the present conditions occur as a result of the changing world due to industrialization.

Industrialization is supported by many innovations, including technological innovations, exercising knowledge and science to fulfill human needs. Machineries in industries, communication and transportation technologies are only several examples of innovations. Those innovations sooner or later change people's traditions, customs, habits, routines and believes. For instance, mechanical and civil engineering collaborate to produce an infrastructure and means in transportation. Because of innovations on transportation, people mobilize farther and faster. This mobility is quite different when compared to traditional mobility.

Transportation in the modern era means transporting a large amount of goods over vast distances. A large number of people also moves over vast distances. Mobility was not uncommon in traditional societies when people migrated to faraway places. Nomadism and

the long-distance journeys of merchants and adventurers were common in the era before industrial revolution. But, this mobility cannot be considered similar to a modern mobility, since a large majority of population was relatively immobile and isolated as compared to the greater mobility provided by modern means of transportation and its infrastructures (Giddens, 1990:102). Thus, modernization of transportation implied wide accesses to the new means of transportation for almost each person.

This mobility endorses the changing condition in the past and recent. The presence of the horse tram in Batavia (Proudfoot, 2005:129-87), for instance, impressed the people with the feeling that they had a distinct condition from what they had been accustomed to. Furthermore, although the horse tram was only a small change in terms of technology, it influenced the mentality of the people. They became aware of the importance of time as a result of its departure and arrival schedules, their social position as a result of the prohibitive costs of the ticket and also traffic accidents as a result of its misoperation. Hence, modernization on transportation embraces the changing new ways of people to face and to expect with their life due to the impacts of the new innovation.

Trains, trams and motor vehicles undoubtedly introduced modernity as a means of transportation and new ideas emerged through its impacts. The new means of transportation were not solely accelerating movement from one place to other places, but also enlarged the capacity of the people. Despite the consciousness of time and velocity as well as modern management of transportation, they inspired people to produce terms out of them (Kato in Siegel and Kahin, 2003:91-123), political consciousness as well as motor-based organization and road hygiene (Mrázek, 2002:17-31). Trains, railway station and trams also became a new public space for people to exercise their social position by exchanging news and rumours (Mrázek, 2002:8). Trains and trams also introduced the importance of scheduling time to people (Mrázek, 2002:10; Proudfoot, 2005:164).

The simultaneous presence of motor vehicles and the initial traditional vehicles created a busy road traffic. The utility of modern means of transportation and the situation of road traffic are described in several novels written in 1920s, alongside of the description of buildings and cultural life. The busy road traffic which shows high mobility of people is imagined as one of the characteristics of the colonial cities (Kato in Siegel and Kahin, 2003:94).

Modernization on transportation, as shown on road traffic, does not merely give a visual image. It also produces noise from motor vehicles. Noise in the city is also considered a sign of modernity, besides reflecting power and cleanliness (Colombijn, 2007:255-73). The idea of road hygiene in the colonial period mainly concerned road cleanliness and avoiding air pollution from dusts. This is the reason why the modern roads were not only needed to be swept, but also to be sprayed with water. A picture of a road sprayer who was spraying the road in Batavia in 1916, shows how important the cleanliness for the modern roads (Mrázek, 2002:26). More than cleaning the modern road in order to protect from dirt and dust, the modern also produce the sound pollution. The sound of motor vehicles was considered as a sound of prosperity and modernity.

Various people make use of the road differently. The different economic capacity of people distinct people in making use of the road. Some people drive cars or motorcycles while some others walk along the road. Some people drive private motor vehicles, while some others ride on public transport (Lorenz, 2002:691-705.). People who make use of the roads are also differentiated by their social cultural background. Hence, the road is inevitably a melting pot of people from different socio cultural backgrounds. They make

use of the modern road and vehicles in their own respective ways (Mrázek, 2002:11; Proudfoot, 2005:140-2).

ROAD TRAFFIC

The road traffic of Surabaya in the late 1920s was not only modernized by the presence of the modern means of transportation on the modern road which passed through modern buildings, but also modern in term of road traffic order. A collection of mute films titled “*Soerabaia. Het Straatverkeer op Pasar Besar 15 July 1929*”, shows the very busy traffic situation in Surabaya (Atelier 2004: title 4). The road traffic in both directions was divided into two big lanes (Figure 1). *Dokars* and bicycles were in one lane, while cars, autobuses and other motor vehicles were on another lane. But bicycle riders sometimes rode on both lanes. Trams were moving to and fro. They stopped to and give the passengers the opportunity to get on or off. Autobuses were already in operation. The cars moved in one line. The policemen were standing in the middle of junctions. Traffic regulations were on their shoulders since the limitation of traffic signs installed. The film shows that, at least in the sense of the fixed-lanes, the road traffic of Surabaya was in order.

Figure 1.
The Order of the Road Traffic in Surabaya in 1929



Source : Eerste Soerabiasch Kinematografisch- Atelier, “*Soerabaia. Het Straatverkeer op Pasar Besar 15 July 1929*”, in *van de Kolonie niets dan goeds: Nederlands-Indië in Beeld 1912-1942*, uit de collectie van het Filmmuseum en het KIT Tropenmuseum de mooiste opnamen van Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes en Bali, Amsterdam: Filmmuseum. 2004. Title 4.

This situation is completely different from the situation of the road traffic of Batavia sixteen years earlier as shown in another title (Lamster, 2004: title 2). At the time, the road traffic in Batavia did not have fixed lines, a *dokar* could suddenly make a sharp turn without giving a sign. The trams were still moving while passengers got on and off. It seemed that the traffic situation with regards to the presence of the modern vehicles in Batavia in 1913 was not in order. In other words, road traffic of Surabaya was much more developed than of Batavia. Moreover, the road traffic of Surabaya was also much busier than of Batavia.

The film shows that the presence of modern means of transportation flourished Surabaya. People inevitably made use of the transportation on their own ways. Before and during 1919-1921, the public means of transportation in Surabaya were steam tram, *dokar*

and *kossong* (Von Faber, 1936:281; Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, 1929:47-9). Since then, people have preferred use the motorized vehicles to the traditional ones. Sometimes people were badly depended on the motor vehicles. The idea of fast movement was in the people's mind. Nevertheless, the dependency to the motor vehicles to have a much faster movement did not really work as the case below.

On 2 December 1920, *Pewartar Soerabaia* reported that Surabaya lacked an automobile ambulance (Pewartar Soerabaia, 2 Desember 1920). Actually the number of ambulances was very limited. Let alone, when a number of ambulances was in reparation. The day before, *Pewartar Soerabaia* reported that a victim of a traffic accident died on the road because the people who helped him were waiting for the ambulance (Pewartar Soerabaia, 3 Desember 1920). They were waiting for an ambulance up to three hours, while the victim was dying. In other traffic accidents, usually the victims were brought to the hospital by using any vehicles, including the traditional vehicles. The location of the traffic accident, Pasar Turi, which was close to Pasar Besar, was situated close to a big road. They should have found many vehicles moving around. Whereas, a victim of a traffic accident happened in 1925 was brought to the hospital by *dokar* (Pewartar Soerabaia, 5 Februari 1925)

The trams changed in a relatively short time. The trams were powered by horse power, steam and the electric. The horse trams¹ were introduced in 1859 to carry coolies between town and the new naval base (Dick 2002: 348). In 1874, *dokar* were provided for hire. Trams were introduced later in Surabaya than in Batavia, in 1890. It was likely that the presence of the steam trams and electric trams were almost at the same time.

The first steam tram line was opened in September 1890. It was connecting the suburban areas to the ferry harbour. The steam tram had two lines that were connecting the port to the suburban areas. The first is from Ujung to Sepanjang via Pasar Turi. The second was from Tanjung Perak to Staatsspoor.

The electric tramway system in Surabaya was completed in 1924. The main line was connecting the South and the North part of the city, from Wonokromo to Tanjung Perak via Darmo Boulevard and Willemsplein. The East-West line was connecting the residential of Bagong and Gubeng in the East and Sawahan in the West via the shopping and entertainment district around Simpang and Tunjungan. At that time, people could travel every ten minutes or less (Dick 2002:348).

There is no further information about the development of the horse tram in Surabaya. So that, it is difficult to consider whether it was used as public transports as did in Batavia or it remained as a special vehicle to carry coolies. There was a great number of horse-driven carts such as *kossong*, *dokar* and *kretek*, that was more than two thousands units, and also bicycles, that was more than 22 thousands units in 1927. Considering to the great number of, particularly, horse-driven carts that were provided for hire and also the bicycles, the horse tram in Surabaya might not be develop as public transport as in Batavia. Thus, the horse trams were only used for carrying coolies or indigenous working class. The steam and electric trams were developed to facilitate people lived on elite urban or suburban areas, although the lower class was still have opportunity to make use of it.

Table 1
The Number of Passengers of Electric and Steam Tram 1926-1929

| | 1926 | 1927 | 1928 | 1930 |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Electric Tram | 11,278,971 | 11,429,627 | 11,820,747 | 12,286,545 |
| Steam Tram | 4,680,905 | 5,223,733 | 5,724,573 | 5,797,438 |

Source: Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, *Statistische Berichten der Gemeente Soerabaja*, Jaarnummer 1929, pp. 47-9.

From 1926 to 1930, both the steam and the electric trams' number of passengers increased. The number of electric trams passengers were much higher than the steam tram's, but the steam tram grew faster (Table 1). Considering that the steam tram served the lines from the harbour to suburban areas, and the electric trams served the places in the cities, this comparative numbers show how busy the city was.

Another public transport introduced early in the 20th century was taxi. By the time the electric trams was in operation, the age of cars had arrived, particularly for the Europeans. In 1925, there were about 400 taxis in Surabaya, It was about 13 % compares to the personal cars which were more than 3 thousands. One year later, the number of taxis increased one hundred percent to be around 800 cars or around 25 % compares to the personal cars which were almost 3,300 units. It decreased to 750 or about 22 % from the number of personal cars in 1927, which were approximately 3,500 unit. The number of taxis increased again in the middle of 1929 to be around 834 or about 20 % as compare to the number of personal cars which were more than 4 thousands (Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, 1929: 9).

The autobus was also presented in the mid 1920s. The autobus or bus was considered as a cheaper public transport than tram. The first bus trajet in Surabaya was launched on 15 September 1924 connecting Willemsplein and Kaliondo (Von Faber 1936: 283). Taxis and buses were the alternative public transports that cost less than trams. While taxis competed with the trams to get passengers, bus did not really have a competition with the trams because one big tram firm in Surabaya, O.J.S., had a big fleet of bus.

LICENSE TO DRIVE

There was a growing number of people owned modern means of transportation in Surabaya, but this caused a problem. There was friction between the ownership of a modern vehicle and the necessary skill to operate it. Owning a car required adjustment to modern machinery and modern regulation. Therefore the ownership of motor vehicles demanded the issue of driver's license. Also the state went through a process of modernization and learnt that some sort of "regulation of modernity" was necessary. It took almost thirty years since the first car arrived in Surabaya to issue the driver's license. The Netherlands Indies was considered as the first country which the first time issued the driver's license.

"Rijbewijs pertama kali diperkenalkan di Hindia-Olanda sementara di negeri lain peraturan lalu lintas belum..." (Pewarta Soerabaia, 2 March 1920).

'The driver's license is firstly introduced in the Netherlands Indies, while in other countries' traffic regulation has not been yet'

The idea to issue the driver's license was the fact that many traffic accidents happened because there were many drivers who knew very little to drive cars. The

newspaper did not mention the number of traffic accidents, but it clearly reported that the cars were considered to be controlled by the incompetent drivers. It was very important to test the capability of driving cars for the drivers in order to decrease the number of traffic accidents. It was hoped that only those who were really skillful on driving cars who will get the driver's license.

The more critical opinion of the drivers was reported by *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. Driving cars was basically easier than driving horse-driven carts, in which sometimes the horse was uncontrollable or getting nervous. The unskillful car drivers that caused traffic accidents were considered as the disease (*die ziekte*). The editor thinks that most of the accidents happened because the cars moved fast (*De meeste ongelukken zijn het gevolg van snelrijden!*). The fast move of the cars of course occurred by the drivers. For this reason, the newspaper proposes that to get the driver's license people must not only be examined by their capability of steering wheels. Their psychological condition must also be examined, as the train drivers in France and some other countries.

“...*automobile bestuurder willen onderwerpen aan een psychiatrische keuring, zooals de locomotief-machinisten in Frankrijk en misschien andere landen*” (Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 2 March 1920).

‘... car drivers want submit to a psychiatric testing as the locomotive maschinists in France and perhaps in other countries.’

Although the police institution was already existed by 1920s, the driver's license was not issued by the police. Most of the policemen, at that time could not drive motor vehicles, that was why they could not issued the driver's license. The people who proposed driver's might thoroughly be examined by the experts of driving.

“*Moelain hari Senen di moeka ini rybewys tiada dibriken oleh politie lagi, tapi oleh satoe commissie terdiri dari orang-orang pandai. Ini ada baik, kerna politie toch tiada mengerti djalannja motor dan dengan atoeran baroe itoe tiada nanti tiap orang bisa dapet rybewys, kerna orang jang minta rybewys, aken diexamen dengan betoel-betoel*” (Pewarta Soerabaja, 15 December 1920).

‘Since next Monday the driver's license will not issue by the police department anymore, but by a comission which are consisted by the experts. This is good, since the policemen actually cannot drive and with the new regulation there will not be everyone who get the license, because those who apply for it, will be examined thoroughly.’

This comission was lead by Mr. Cobbe and Mr. De Hoog. Both of them were the managers of the taxi-service (*taxidienst*). It seems that the police department and the *taxidienst* competed with each other to get the authority to issue driver's license. One of the important reason why the *taxidienst* won this competition was because they could prove that they were capable to drive cars. Many of the policemen could not drive. This approved self interest was surely had a consequence to get more income in the *taxidienst* department. By having a right to issue driver's license, the *taxidienst* at least would get income from it. The *taxidienst* also would benefit to protect and to develop their business by helping their own taxi drivers to get the license and in some way to keep others out.

A couple of days earlier, there was news that reported how difficult it was to get driver's license in Berlin. The people were not only be examined for their ability to drive

cars slowly, stop, move backward, move forward, turn around and then turn the cars off, as it usually happened in the Netherlands Indies. They had to take a course of driving at least six times. In the course they learned to drive and had to know the machine and the traffic regulations (*Pewarta Soerabaja*, 10 Februari 1930).

In the middle of February 1930, the classification of driver's license was criticized by *Soerabiasch Handelsblad*. Initially, the driver's license was classified into two categories. The first was for motorcycle and the second was for motor vehicles in general. It is clear of the first category that the license was issued for the people who would drive motorcycle. But, the second was too general. It seemed that those who had the second categories of license could drive any kind of motor vehicles (*meester op alle wapens*). Based on this reason the newspaper proposed that the second category should be divided into two categories. The first was the license issued for those who would drive personal cars. The second was the license issued for those who would drive trucks and buses (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 14 Februari 1930).

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

The most frequent news about road traffic reported in the newspapers were traffic accidents. Both *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* and *Pewarta Soerabaia* reported traffic accidents, although in different frequencies. *Pewarta Soerabaia* reported traffic accidents much more than the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. The words “*ketjilakaan*” (accidents) and “*benturan*” (collision) came up many times in *Pewarta Soerabaia*. Meanwhile the words “*verkeer-ongelukken*” (traffic accidents), “*auto-ongeluk*” (car accident) and “*botsing*” (collision) came up in much lower number in *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. In short, the frequency of traffic accidents in *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* was relatively lower than in *Pewarta Soerabaia*. Moreover both newspapers reported the traffic accidents in their own ways, for instance in reporting the people involved in the traffic accidents. *Pewarta Soerabaia* had concern on the modernization on the road traffic of Surabaya to a wider people. The relatively diverse, detail and “outspoken” reports proved how this Malay language newspaper introduced modernization on the road traffic of Surabaya. On the other hand, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* that reported relatively lesser frequent and rarely detail tended to inform the news to a specific readers. Moreover, this Dutch language newspaper quite protective to inform the European who were involved in the traffic accidents.

Soerabaiasch Handelsblad and *Pewarta Soerabaia* reported traffic accidents although in different ways. While *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* reported the people involved in the traffic accidents with the initial names, *Pewarta Soerabaia* mentioned complete names. “*den heer D*”, “*de heer B.H.*”, “*de heer J.M.W*”, “*den heer C.M.C.H.*”, “*mejuffrouw P*”, “*de heer D*”, “*Mevr. De S*” and so on written in *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 7 Februari 1920; 1 Maart 1920; 2 Maart 1920; 13 Februari 1925; 12 Maart 1925), instead of clear or complete names. Nevertheless, the initial were usually followed by the place where they lived. It seems that *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* covered Europeans or Dutchmen involved in traffic accidents. The initial western names were mentioned as the guilty party or as the victim in the traffic accidents. From all the newspapers that I have read, I only found once the newspaper mentioning a full Dutch name in *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* news for a traffic incident. “*J.D.L. van Bekkum*”, a marine officer reported in the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* after he collided with a *dokar* in which an indigenous woman passenger was badly injured in Genjeran (presently Kenjeran) (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 5 Maart 1930).

Other ethnic groups were reported differently in *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. Indigenous people's names were never mentioned in the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. The indigenous names were reported as "*inlandsche vrouw*" or "*inlander*" (Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 7 Februari 1920; 5 Maart 1930). However, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* mentioned Chinese names. "*De Chinees Kwee Poo Kwie*" reported in the *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* because he/she left her/his camera in an unknown *dokar* (Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 18 Februari 1925). Chinese names were also mentioned in a traffic accident. "*Teng Sioe Hie*" was reported as a victim of a traffic accident in Surabaya on 11 March 1930 (Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 11 Maart 1930). Subsequently, the day after she was reported dead because of the accident (Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 12 Maart 1930). This is probably a special news of a traffic accident for *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. As reported on 12 March 1930, Teng Sioe Hie was actually the daughter of the Chinese head in Pasuruan (*een dochter van den kapitein der Chineezzen te Pasoeroean*). In this case, Teng Sioe Hie was an important Chinese. Therefore, her complete name was mentioned clearly. Moreover, subsequent news about her condition after the accident was reported the day after.

The way of *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* reported the news about the traffic accidents seemed to apply racial segregation. It more or less protected the European involved in traffic accidents by only writing the initial then the real names of the European. *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* still showed its respect to the European by adding the words "*den heer*", "*mejuffrouw*" or "*mevrouw*" before mentioning the initials. In the case of the Chinese, which was formally in the second position on the hierarchy of the colonial society, the newspaper mentioned the complete name. This Dutch language newspaper did not care of mentioning the complete Chinese name and her family relation. While the Chinese was respected as an individual by this newspaper by mentioning their names, the indigenous people were only "respected" as a community. No initial nor complete names reported for the indigenous people, there were all the same. Mentioning as "*inlander*" or "*inlandsche vrouw*" were enough to show that they were the people at the lowest hierarchy of the colonial society. The indigenous people were not even respected as an individual. The way of *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* reported the people involved in the traffic accidents was different than the Malay language newspaper, *Pewartas Soerabaia*.

Even though *Pewartas Soerabaia* also mentioned people involved in the traffic accidents as *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* did, *Pewartas Soerabaia* mentioned complete names more frequently. In the period between 1920 to 1930, *Pewartas Soerabaia* mentioned unknown or initial names for instance "*Bumiputera*" (the indigenous) or "*toean C*" (mister C). But, at least since 1925, *Pewartas Soerabaia* usually mentioned complete names such as "*..seorang Belanda, J.F. Ech..*" (a Dutchman, J.F. Ech...) (Pewartas Soerabaia, 2 Januari 1925), "*..dikandarken oleh hadji Abdoelrachman..*" (driven by Haji Abdoelrachman) (Pewartas Soerabaia, 3 Januari 1925), "*..dikandarken oleh Doel-Achmad*" (drove by Doel-Achmad) (Pewartas Soerabaia, 31 Januari 1925), "*Wagimin, sopir mobil..*" (Wagimin, a car driver..) (Pewartas Soerabaia, 6 Februari 1925), "*seorang anak dari Mr. von Elgg*" (a child of Mr. von Elgg) (Pewartas Soerabaia, 20 Maart 1925), "*J.P. van der Wal berkendarahan speda*" (J.P. van der Wal) (Pewartas Soerabaia, 10 Februari 1930) and so forth. Those people were the people involved in traffic accidents. They could be the people who caused the accident or the victims. *Pewartas Soerabaia* did not cover the names of people involved in the traffic accidents.

Traffic accidents inevitably happened because of the chaotic condition on the road. So many different kinds of vehicles as well as pedestrians were present on Surabaya's

roads. The Statistic Office of Surabaya reported that in the years of 1927 to 1929, the number of traffic accidents in Surabaya tended to rise. It was reported that the number of traffic accidents in 1927 was 1,384 times. In 1928, it went up to 2,048 times. It grew again to 2,349 times in 1929. Traffic accidents in Surabaya decreased to 1,922 times in 1930 (Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, 1929:66; *Statistische Berichten der Gemeente Soerabaja* 1930:62; Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, 1931:5).

Generally, the number of victims in traffic accidents continued to grow from 1928 to 1930. In the introduction of the *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek der Gemeente Soerabaja* published in 1928, mentioned that in 1927 the number of victims were about 316 people. In 1928, the number grew about 43 % to be 451 people. One year later, the number of victims raised only about 19 % to be 536. There is no further As a result of the founding of driving schools and of the installation of traffic signs, the number of traffic accidents as well as the number of victims decreased in 1930. The number of victims in the traffic accidents in 1930 decreased to become 533 (Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, 1931:3 & 15).

Table 2
The Number of Victims on the Traffic Accidents per “racial” category

| | European | Chinese | Foreign Asiatics ^{*)} | Indigenous | Total |
|------|----------|---------|--------------------------------|------------|-------|
| 1928 | 60 | 31 | 10 | 350 | 451 |
| 1929 | 60 | 36 | 8 | 432 | 536 |
| 1930 | 36 | 23 | 2 | 472 | 533 |

*) Excluding Chinese

Source: Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek der Gemeente Soerabaja*, jaaroverzicht 1930, ‘S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff: 1931. p.15

The number of “racial” composition of the victims on the traffic accidents was similar with the ethnic composition of the population. The indigenous people were always the majority in the sense of the number of population and of victims on the traffic accidents. On the other hand, the foreign Asiatic always the least. In 1930, the number of the indigenous people in Surabaya was almost 80 % of the whole population (Table 2). Similarly, the number of the indigenous people who were the victims on the traffic accidents almost 90 % among all other ethnics. The number of the Foreign Asiatic in 1930 was 1,6 %, and the number of victims on the traffic accidents was no more than 0,5 %. It was around 6,8 % of the European who were the victims on the traffic accidents in 1930. While the number of the European population at the same year was around 7,6 %. The victims who were the Chinese was 4,3 %, and the number of the Chinese population was about 11,4 %. Those numbers shows that the ethnic composition of the population and the victims ethnic composition on the traffic accidents have the same order. The highest was the indigenous, followed by the European, the Chinese and the Foreign Asiatic.

The Office of Statistics of Surabaya also reported the number of the victims in traffic accidents based on four big “racial” categories. Table 3 shows the number of victims in traffic accidents in Surabaya in four ethnic groups between 1928 and 1930. In terms of “race”, the number of victims of traffic accidents from 1928 to 1930 show that the indigenous was always the highest. Europeans in second position followed by Chinese and *Foreign Asiatics*.

Table 2 shows that only the number of Indigenous victims went up, while the figure for other ethnic groups decreased. As the majority population in Surabaya, they filled Surabaya in different parts of the city, including on the road traffic. They were on the road as pedestrians, passengers of the public transport, taxi drivers or perhaps driving their own cars. Regarding the news about traffic accidents reported both by *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* and *Pewarta Soerabaia*, most of the indigenous made use of the road as pedestrians, bicyclists or and rode on public transports passengers. The indigenous people became victims of traffic accidents when they were present on the road as pedestrians, riding bicycles or as the passengers of the public transport such as *dokar* or trams.

Table 3
The cause of Traffic Accidents, 1928-1930

| The Causes of the Traffic Accidents | 1928 | | 1929 | | 1930 | |
|---|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|------|
| | Numerial | % | Numerial | % | Numerial | % |
| Movement errors of vehicles by the driver | 1,832 | 89.45 | 2,109 | 88,78 | 1,619 | 88.4 |
| Movement errors of pedestrian | 73 | 3,56 | 97 | 4,13 | 89 | 4.63 |
| Movement errors not by driver or pedestrian ^{*)} | 73 | 3.52 | 79 | 3,36 | 75 | 3.9 |
| Other and unknown causes | 71 | 3,47 | 64 | 2,73 | 59 | 3,07 |

*) for instance skids, technical lack of vehicle; uncontrolled or scared horse.

Source: Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek der Gemeente Soerabaja*, jaaroverzicht 1929, 'S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff: 1930, p. 17; Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek der Gemeente Soerabaja*, jaaroverzicht 1930, 'S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff: 1931, p. 17.

It is interesting to see traffic accidents from the reason why it happened. Between 1928 and 1930, almost all traffic accidents (90 %) were caused by driving errors. It was primarily because of the drivers were not skilful enough to drive. "*De meeste ongelukken zijn het gevolg van snelrijden*" (most of the accidents are the result of speeding), reported *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* on 2 March 1920.

"Van morgen om half 6 had te Simpang een ernstig automobile-ongeluk plaats, dat voorkomen had kunnen worden als door beiden partijen niet zo snel was gereden. Auto L 910 van den heer C.M.C.H. reed om onmiddelijk de overzijde te bereiken, waar zij zich aan de linkerkant der straat zou bevinden om dan verder naar het station Soerabaja-Goebeng te rijden; plotseling verscheen echter van den anderen Kant auto L 2295 van het Simpang Hotel, die niet dezelfde vaart reed en geen signalen had gegeven bovendien de rechterzijde dan den weg had ingenomen."

'In the morning at 5.30, there was a terrible car accidents in Simpang, that could have been avoided if both parties was driven not so fast. Auto L 910 van den Mr CMCH immediately drove to the other end, where they adhere to the left side of the street would find to be directed to the station Surabaya-Goebeng driving; suddenly appeared, however, van den others kant L 2295 car of the Simpang Hotel, which does not have the same speed and no signals had also rechterzijde than den had taken away.'

Another traffic accident was between a *dokar* and a taxi. A *dokar* in which a Dutch lady was riding on were passing through a street *Gang Butteweg*. Around Tunjungan, a taxi was moving fast that then collided the *dokar*.

“De chauffeur van dit vehikel reed zoo snel, dat hij niet tijdig voor de aan den goeden kant van den weg rijdende dogcart kon uitwijken. De botsing was hevig; de dogcart werd een eind weg geslingerd en mejuffouw C bekwam eenige bloedende verwondingen aan knie en mond” (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 19 Maart 1927).

‘The driver of this vehicle drove so fast, that he was no time to take a good side that could move away from the *dokar*. The collision was fierce; the *dokar* was swung and miss. C got bleeding injuries on her knee and mouth.’

Besides reported that the traffic accidents were as a result of “high speed” of driving, *Pewartar Soerabaia* reported that they happened because many drivers were not capable of driving cars. For instance, on 7 February 1920 *Pewartar Soerabaja* reported that a car which was driven by less capable driver collided *dokar* and *kosong*.

“Kemaren pagi, chauffeur auto, jang rupanja belon begitoe pandei djalanken, soedah bentoerkan kendara’anja dengen satoe dokar dan satoe kosongan, hingga doea kendara’an jang blakangan ini pada djadi roesak.”

‘Yesterday morning, a car driver, who actually does not capable to drive, collided his car with one *dokar* and one *kosong*, until the latter vehicles were broken.’

Both *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* and *Pewartar Soerabaia* reported that the accidents happened because many car drivers did not have a driver’s license. The main causes of traffic accidents as reported by both newspapers is explained on Table 3. The presence of cars in Surabaya was not always accompanied by the presence of well-trained drivers.

The *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek* highlighted the movement errors of pedestrians in its foreword of the book. The movement errors of pedestrian were actually the second cause of traffic accidents between 1928 and 1930 (Table 3). But the number was much lower than the first cause. The fourth title of the film *van de Kolonie niets dan goeds*, “Soerabaia. Het Straatverkeer op Pasar Besar 15 July 1929”, shows how chaotic the traffic on Surabaya’s roads was. A pedestrian with a “*pikulan*”² on his shoulder tried to walk across the road on a hot afternoon. Two other pedestrians also tried to cross the road (Figure 2). Three of them were indigenous. Many vehicles, particularly cars, were running fast in both two lanes. There was no zebra crossing nor a policeman to help him to walk across the road. Only the pedestrian with a “*pikulan*” succeeded crossing the road. In another angle around the Pasar Besar Surabaya, as shown in the film, several pedestrians crossed the road where a policeman was standing in the middle of the road. The policeman only focused on the vehicles, while the pedestrians found it difficult to cross the road. But no sooner than that, they ran a half way and stood close to the policeman in the middle of the road. The chaotic traffic in Surabaya made pedestrians confused. In this case, if the pedestrians caused the traffic accidents, it was probably because of this chaotic situation.

Figure 2
Pedestrians who would cross on the traffic road of Surabaya



Source : Eerste Soerabiasch Kinematografisch - Atelier, “Soerabaia. Het Straatverkeer op Pasar Besar 15 July 1929”, in *van de Kolonie niets dan goeds: Nederlands-Indië in Beeld 1912-1942*, uit de collectie van het Filmmuseum en het KIT Tropenmuseum de mooiste opnamen van Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes en Bali, title 4.

Under the title “*Satoe Toebroekan. Kaloe orang Blanda di blakang stuur*” (A collision. When a Dutchman is behind the steering wheel), *Pewarta Soerabaia* criticized the way the Dutchman collided with an Indigenous person (4 Maart 1930). The newspapers criticized how sloppy the driver was, because he did not consider the width and the situation of the road. He probably could have avoided this collision by driving slower before passing the Indigenous man who was walking by pulling a cart. This criticism did not mean that *Pewarta Soerabaia* attacked the Dutch in general. In several other stories, *Pewarta Soerabaia* also reported that some indigenous people crashed into Europeans (*Pewarta Soerabaia*, 13 Januari 1930; 4 Februari 1930; 8 Februari 1930).

Table 4
Total number of involved vehicles and pedestrians at the traffic accidents on Soerabaja 1928-1930

| Vehicles | 1928 | | 1929 | | 1930 | |
|---------------------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | Numerial | % | Numerial | % | Numerial | % |
| Trams | 186 | 4.68 | 182 | 3.93 | 126 | 3.38 |
| Trucks | 125 | 3.14 | 170 | 3.79 | 206 | 5.52 |
| Bus | 54 | 1.36 | 135 | 2.96 | 108 | 2.9 |
| Personal Cars | 1,746 | 43.91 | 1,949 | 42.74 | 1,611 | 43.18 |
| Motorcycle | 131 | 3.26 | 175 | 3.84 | 175 | 4.68 |
| Bicycle | 622 | 15.65 | 753 | 16.51 | 627 | 16.81 |
| Animal-driven carts | 856 | 21.53 | 891 | 15.54 | 639 | 17.13 |
| Handcart (barrow) | 32 | 0.44 | 20 | 0.44 | 21 | 0.44 |
| Trams' passengers | - | - | 2 | 0.04 | - | - |
| Pedestrian | 224 | 5.63 | 283 | 6.21 | 218 | 6.21 |

Source: Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek der Gemeente Soerabaja*, jaaroverzicht 1929, ‘S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff: 1930, p. 17; Soerabaja Bureau van Statistiek, *Verkeersongevallen/Statistiek der Gemeente Soerabaja*, jaaroverzicht 1930, ‘S-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff: 1931, p. 17.

Driving horse-driven carts is more difficult than driving cars, according to *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* in 1920 (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 2 Maart 1920). Horses could be nervous, so that they sometimes were uncontrollable. On the other hand, Cars are machines that are supposed to be easier to control. The simultaneous presence of traditional and modern vehicles on the city's road traffic demanded an understanding among both kinds of vehicle drivers. Otherwise, the drivers would misunderstand the movement of other vehicles that could result in traffic accidents.

Besides the lack for regulations on the road traffic, misunderstanding of other vehicles movement was another important cause of traffic accidents. As shown in Table 4, animal-driven carts were in the second position in terms of involvement in traffic accidents. The reports about traffic accidents involving horse-driven carts (*dokar*) and cars are numerous in both *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* and *Pewarta Soerabaia*. These kinds of traffic accidents were relatively frequent. For example, on 10 December 1920, *Pewarta Soerabaia* reported one such traffic accident (*Pewarta Soerabaia*, 10 Desember 1920). This is an interesting report with regard to the comprehensiveness of traffic regulations for the traditional and modern vehicle drivers. A *kosong* wanted to make a turn. The driver (*kusir*) gave a sign by raising his whip. A car in high speed passed the *kosong*. The car was still running fast. The *kusir* tried hard to control his horse. Finally, the car collided with the *kosong* and it darted away. The news then continued with this report:

“Sesoedahnja itoe ketjilakaan terdjadi baroe itoe chauffeur tjobah boeat bikin brenti autonja, tetapi satoe orang koelit poetih, jang toenggangin itoe auto bertreak, soepaja itoe chauffeur berdjalan teroes.”

‘After the accident, subsequently the driver tried to stop his car, but a white man, who was sitting in it shouted to the driver, to continue driving.’

In this case, the car driver was a good driver. He felt responsibility for what he had done. But, another man that was supposed to be the owner or the boss of the driver did not behave responsibly. The car continued running, leaving the *kosong* behind, and hence the perpetrator of this accident was safe. The news then ended with the sentence:

“Tetapi diharep sadja soepaia besok atau loesa, orang-orang jang begitoe kedjem dan jang tiada mempoenjain perasa’an manoesia, bisa dapetken pembalesan jang lebih hebat, sebab orang-orang demikian itoe, tiada mempoenjain lain hoekoeman jang lebih berat daripada hoekoemannja Allah.”

‘Hopefully tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, these cruel and inconsiderate people, will get a worse vengeance, because this kind of people, will not get a punishment that is more severe than the punishment of God, in their afterlife.’

Running away from a traffic accident was not a monopoly of car drivers. Drivers of traditional vehicles also did a hit and run (*Pewarta Soerabaia*, 8 Januari 1925). For instance, a *kusir* did this after colliding with a woman. The woman died because of this collision. But this *kusir* did not escape successfully since a telegraph officer who witnessed this accident ran after and caught him.

CONCLUSION

Modern road and modern vehicles affected to the 'modern' behavior of passing by the asphalted road. As the biggest city in the Netherlands Indies, Surabaya was the first city which institutionalized driver's license. Even though the driver's license was firstly introduced in the Netherlands Indies in the first half of 1920, many policemen could not drive. The police department which supposed to be the institution to issue the driver's license then was criticized on its duty on issuing the driver's license. The taxi department benefitted to this situation by installing its former leaders to conduct and issued the driver's license. It was only in the early of 1930, the driver's license was categorized in a more proper categorization.

Nevertheless, driving modern means of transportations on the modern road did not imply modern behavior in the sense of driving on the road. Most of the traffic accidents in Surabaya in 1920s was as a result of the sloppy drivers. They were not only unskilled, but also most of them did not have driver's license. Although the road traffic was modernized by the presence of the motor vehicles, but it was not followed by modernizing the drivers. The car drivers were reported to drive very fast until they could not control their cars. The case of *kusir* who obeyed the traffic regulation to make turn above, shows that in this case the driver of the traditional vehicle was more modern than the driver of modern vehicle.

The two newspapers reported the traffic accidents differently. *Pewarta Soerabaia* was more open than *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. The Malay language newspaper concerned about the modernization of the traffic road to a broader readers than the Dutch language newspaper that reported for a specific group of readers. Let alone, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* was reported on mentioning the names of the people involved in the traffic accidents. The latter newspaper to some extent protected the European by using the initials after the respecting titles, letting the Chinese as they were by mentioning the complete names and considered the indigenous as a community, not as an individual.

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- 1 Horse tram is an omnibuss pulled by horses along fixed rails. The commercial horsetram operated in a fixed schedule.
- 2 Two loads carried on the shoulder. The two loads are connected by a bamboe or wooden pole. This pole is actually put on the shoulder. On figure 2, the man carries birds or chickens in his load.