HERITAGE POLITICS AND MUSEUMS
DURING JAPANESE OCCUPATION PERIOD, 1942-1945

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ABSTRACT

Before the World War II, approximately 25 museums were already established in colonial Indonesia. At that time, most of the museums were built by the Europeans to serve their interests. However, when the Dutch capitulated to the Japanese military government, what had happened to the existing museums in Indonesia were slightly known. Therefore, this research examines the history of the museum development during the Japanese occupation period in Indonesia in 1942-1945. The data gathered for this archival study are through magazine and newspaper articles published during the Japanese occupation period as well as through the archives of Arsip Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta. This research discovered that, during the Japanese occupation period, museums were used by the Japanese military government as their tool for political propaganda. This research also found out that during the Japanese occupation, politics and museums were closely entangled. Therefore, this preliminary research is important because it illustrates the history of museum development in Indonesia during the unknown period. It was also revealed that existing museums during that time had a significant impact for the museum development after Indonesian independence.

KEYWORDS: politics, museum, Japanese occupation, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Before the Japanese occupied Indonesia in 1942, there were ethnographic museums, antiquity/archaeology museums, natural history museums and city museums which were already established (mostly by the Europeans) throughout the archipelago in colonial Indonesia. The museums were served for the European interests. However, the fate of those previously existed museums was unknown during the Japanese occupation period in 1942-1945. The history of the museum development during the period was hardly written within earlier researches, either in Museum di Indonesia: Kendala dan Harapan (Akbar, 2010) or Sejarah Permuseuman di Indonesia (Tjahjopurnomo et. al., 2011). Therefore, this research questions how museums were historically
developed in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation period in 1942-1945.

The method of this research is archival studies. The data are gathered through the archives of the Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen and the Java Instituut/Museum Sonobudoyo of the Arsip Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta. Besides the archives, the data are also gathered through magazine and newspaper articles published during the Japanese occupation period. The magazine is Djawa Baroe, and the newspapers are Asia Raya, Tjahaja, Soeara Asia, Sinar Matahari and Sinar Baroe. However, the available archives and newspaper articles only provided the information regarding museums in Java. Therefore, this research will only discuss the historical development of museums in Java during the Japanese occupation period in Indonesia (1942-1945).

During their occupation period, the Japanese military government spread their propaganda to indoctrinate Indonesian people into the Japanese way of thinking and discipline. They also wanted to win over the people’s heart to take part into the Greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere. The Japanese military government also encouraged the feeling of anti-colonial, and they mobilized people to fight in the war against the Allies. Therefore, to reach those purposes, the Japanese military government established Sendenbu, or the Department of Propaganda, in 1942. In 1943, an organization named Keimin Bunka Shidosho or Poesat Keboedajaan was also established to help the Sendenbu spread the Japanese political propaganda through culture, art, and entertainment (Kurasawa, 2015).

Poesat Keboedajaan was formally established in April 1943 and divided into 5 sections: literature, music, visual art, performing art (theatre and dance), and film. Each section was led by Indonesian under Japanese direction (“Poesat Keboedajaan Melangkah”, 1943; Kurasawa, 2015). The aims and purposes of the Poesat Keboedajaan were to preserve and develop Indonesian art and cultures to support the Japanese political propaganda through art, culture and entertainment. It was also built to supervise the local cultures, local artists and cultural/artistic organizations or companies. Besides, it had a role to introduce Japanese art and culture to the Indonesian, as well as to educate and train Indonesian artists. Furthermore, it conducted and supported activities such as lectures/talks/courses, exhibitions, performances, and book publishings regarding Indonesian cultures (“Badan Poesat Pimpinan Keboedajaan”, 1943; “Poesat Keboedajaan Melangkah”, 1943).

However, museum was not stated as part of Poesat Keboedajaan. Within the book Sejarah Permuseuman di Indonesia (Tjahjopurnomo et. al., 2011) published by the Directorate of Museums, it is written that the Japanese did not pay much attention to cultural heritage and museums compared to the art, literature, music, dance, film, and language. The cultural heritage and museums were considered as less potential for political propaganda purposes (Tjahjopurnomo et. al., 2011).

On the contrary, research conducted by Bloembergen and Eickhoff (2011 & 2015) revealed that the Japanese continued to do archaeological excavations. They also conducted
conservation/reconstruction works within archaeological sites that had been done before by the Dutch colonial Archaeological Service. Furthermore, this research then discovered that museums were strongly used by the Japanese military government as their tool for political propaganda.

The Japanese itself firstly developed the idea of building “Western museums” in 1872 when they first established the Tokyo National Museum. Previously, in the 1860s, during the Meiji restoration, Japan was first officially participated in the World Exposition. The concept of World Exposition and Western museum were then adopted by the Japanese to legitimize their own colonial effort for purposes of political legitimation, both in Japan and within their colonies. Museums were also seen as a path towards modernization (Wang, 2017).

Therefore, in my point of view, the Japanese military government then continuously ran the existing museums in Indonesia and transformed them to suit the Japanese’s political purposes. Old and newly built museums were used to increase the anti-colonial feeling and to politically show the racial equality, particularly to suit the idea of the Greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere. Museums were also performed as a political tool to enhance the Indonesian people’s self-esteem, pride, sense of belonging, patriotism and nationalism in favor of the Japanese political purposes.

THE POLITICS OF HERITAGE

During the Japanese occupation period, the monuments representing Dutch heroes and colonialism were destroyed (“Semoea ‘barang peringatan’ Belanda dikikis!”, 1944). Rumour has it that museums were also looted and closed during the occupation (Tjahjopurnomo et. al., 2011). However, although a number of museums were permanently closed after the World War II, half of the museums established during the Dutch colonial period still exist up to the present day. It means that those museums survived the Japanese occupation period. The table below shows the museums established during colonial Indonesia. It also shows what museums exist up to the present-day.

Table 1
Museums in Indonesia established during the Dutch colonial period

| No. | Museum                                             | Year of Establishment | Location      | Type of Museum                        | Present Day Existence |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1   | Museum of the Batavian Society of Art and Sciences | 1778                  | Batavia (Jakarta) | Ethnography and Archaeology / Antiquities | V                     |
| No. | Museum Name                                  | Year   | Location          | Department                  | Status |
|-----|---------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| 2   | Radya Poestaka Museum                       | 1890   | Surakarta (Solo)  | Archaeology / Antiquities   | V      |
| 3   | Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium           | 1894   | Buitenzorg (Bogor)| Natural History             | V      |
| 4   | Herbarium and Botanical Museum              | 1903 (?)| Buitenzorg (Bogor)| Natural History             | V      |
| 5   | Borneo Museum                               | 1907 (?)| Banjarmasin       | Ethnography                 | X      |
| 6   | Celebes Museum                              | 1908   | Makassar          | Ethnography                 | X      |
| 7   | Museum Modjokerto                           | c.1910 | Mojokerto (East Java)| Archaeology / Antiquities | V      |
| 8   | Atjeh Museum                                | 1915   | Koeta Radja (Banda Aceh) | Ethnography | V      |
| 9   | Maloeka Museum                              | 1918   | Ambon             | Ethnography                 | X      |
| 10  | Mangkoenegaran Museum                       | 1918   | Surakarta (Solo)  | Archaeology / Antiquities   | V      |
| 11  | Anatomical Museum & Pathological Anatomy    | c.1920 | Batavia (Jakarta) | Natural History / University Museum | V      |
|     | Museum of STOVIA                           |        |                   |                             |        |
| 12  | Batak Museum                                | c.1924 (?)| Pematang Siantar (North Sumatera) | Ethnography | X      |
| 13  | Geologisch Museum                           | 1929   | Bandung           | Natural History             | V      |
| 14  | Soerabaiaesch Museum                        | 1931   | Surabaya          | Ethnography                 | X      |
| 15  | Veldmuseum Trowulan                        | c. 1931| Trowulan (East Java)| Archaeology / Antiquities | V      |
| 16  | Oudheidkundig Museum Malang                 | 1931   | Malang            | Archaeology / Antiquities   | X      |
During the beginning of the Japanese occupation, the museums were closed, but the Japanese military government gradually reopened them. For instance, the *Sana Boedaja Museum* – an ethnographic/antiquity museum in Jogjakarta was reopened in August 1942 (“Moeseoem Sana Boedaja Diboeka Lagi”, 1942). The Museum of the Batavian Society of Art and Sciences in Jakarta (now the National Museum of Indonesia) was reopened in October 1942 (“Gedoeng Artja Diboeka Kembali”, 1942). The *Geologisch Museum* in Bandung was reopened in January 1943 (“Moeseoem Geologi diboeka oentoek oemoem”, 1943), and the *Provincial en Stedelijk Historisch Museum Surabaya* – a city museum in East Java, was reopened in May 1943 (“Koendjoengan Para Wartawan Pada Moeseoem Kota”, 1943).

At that time, as part of the Japanese political propaganda to increase the feeling of anti-colonial, European languages (such as Dutch or English) were prohibited. Therefore, names of
companies and/or institutions in European languages should be changed into Japanese or Indonesian names (“Bahasa Moesoeh Kita Haroes Dilenjapkan”, 1942). The Museum of the Batavian Society of Art and Sciences which was formerly called the Museum van het Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen was changed into Japanese name: Gunsei Kanbu Hakubutsukan (“Gedoeng Artja Diboeka Kembali”, 1942). Meanwhile, the name of the Oud Batavia Museum – a city museum in present-day Jakarta, was changed into Museum Betawi Lama or Museum Sedjarah Djakarta Lama (Djajadiningrat, 1947; “Sedjarah Djakarta Lama”, 1943). Moreover, the name of the Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium in Bogor was translated into Museum Hewan. The names of the animals within the museum were also translated into Japanese (“Moeseoem Hewan”, 1943).

Not only the names of the museums were translated from Dutch to Japanese or Indonesian, but the labels of the museums were also translated into Indonesian. For example, the labels of the Sana Boedaja Museum were translated into Indonesian language before the museum was reopened (“Moeseoem Sana Boedaja Diboeka Lagi”, 1942).

To create the anti-colonial feelings, the Japanese did not only change the language (the names and the labels) of the museums. Museum exhibitions were also expected to illustrate more on how the Dutch were disgracing the Indonesians. For instance, the Oud Batavia Museum (established in 1939) was stated as a museum that exhibited J.P. Coen’s heritage and illustrated the grandeur of the Dutch. In contrast, the Oud Batavia Museum also exhibited a chair for the slave that disgraced the Indonesians. Therefore, the Japanese believed that such exhibits were important (and need to be increased in numbers) in order to shape the Indonesians to become more anti-colonial towards the Dutch. Hopefully, the Indonesian would then believe that they would have a better life within the Greater East Asia community (“Sedjarah Djakarta Lama”, 1943). Furthermore, museums during the new Japanese occupation period were also expected to help the Indonesian to increase their self-esteem, for examples, through organized courses, talks, and exhibitions about the grandeur of the pre-colonial history and heroes (Darmawidjaja, 1942).

Not only enhancing the anti-colonial feeling, museums were also politically used to show that all Asians were equal. This propaganda was clearly stated in the Sinar Matahari newspaper. The newspaper wrote that “in the past, the museum’s entry ticket was divided based on one’s race. In the present day, it has changed. The ticket price of the Radya Poestaka Museum for all Asians is the same: 2 cent per person.” (“Moeseoem Radya Poestaka”, 1942). In addition, the ticket price of Sana Boedaja Museum also changed. During the Dutch colonial period, the ticket for the Europeans and Foreign Orientals (Chinese, Arabs and India) to enter the Sana Boedaja Museum was 0.25 Gulden, while for the Native 0.05 Gulden (Margana, 2018). Then, during the Japanese occupation, the ticket for all Asians’ adult was 5 cent and 2.5 cent for children (“Moeseoem Sana Boedaja Diboeka Lagi”, 1942).
The Japanese military government also encouraged Indonesians to visit museums. Museum visits were intended to increase the people’s knowledge about Indonesia and to enhance admiration and pride for their own country’s culture and history (“Moeseoem Soerabaia mendapat perhatian besar”, 1943). During the early Japanese occupation period, it was common to read newspapers stating that museums were visited and appreciated more in the new Japanese period compared to the previous Dutch colonial one (“Moesioem Binatang. Banjak mendapat koendjoengan”, 1942; “Moeseoem Sono Boedojo. Banjaknja jang Mengoendjoengi”, 1942; “Moeseom Radya Poestaka. Banjaknja Koendjoengan Tamoe”, 1942; “Gedoeng Moeseom. Perhatian Amat Besar”, 1943).

Fig. 1
Japanese higher officials visiting the Museum of Batavian Society of Art and Sciences in 1943 (Source: Sinar Matahari, Mei 7 2603)

Moreover, the Japanese military government believed that one of their problems was that the youth in Indonesia – particularly the ones who had Western education – did not understand their own culture. The youth spoke Dutch and saw themselves better than the commoners. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the Japanese to help them increase their sense of belonging and pride for their own culture (“Keboedajaan Koentji Kebangsaan”, 1942). Kurasawa (2015) claimed that the Japanese propaganda through entertainment was more effective to indoctrinate the less educated people from the rural areas rather than the well-educated ones. Thus, I argue that museums were purposely used by the Japanese particularly to indoctrinate the well-educated Indonesians.
In the Dutch colonial period, museums were strongly related to the upper-class societies. Then, the Japanese continuously used museums to increase a sense of belonging and pride (regarding Indonesian culture) for the middle/upper-class Indonesians. In addition, in Taiwan, as one of Japan’s colonies, the Japanese did establish museums and adopted different exhibition strategies to show Japan’s colonial power to various audiences (Wang, 2017). Therefore, it is possible that the Japanese conducted similar approach in Indonesia.

This argument is, perhaps, best illustrated within the programs of Radya Poestaka Museum, Solo. The museum was built in Solo (Surakarta) by K. P. A. Sosrodiningrat IV, a regent (patih) of Kasunanan Soerakarta in 1890. The museum (and library) were parts of the learned society, the Paheman Radyapoestaka. This institution was independent, and it was supported and funded by the Kasunanan Soerakarta. The museum, which housed Javanese antiquities, was first located within the private house complex of K. P. A. Sosrodiningrat IV himself. Later, in 1913, Sri Susuhunan Paku Buwana X (King of Soerakarta) bought a house of a Dutch and moved the museum there. Since then, it has been the museum’s location. The Radya Poestaka Museum was also run by the Javanese nobles themselves who were educated in Western education system (Radyapustaka, 1990; Wiromanggolo, 1990).

Since the Dutch colonial period, the Radya Poestaka Museum and the learned society Paheman Radyapoestaka regularly held courses such as shadow puppet master (dalang) course and gamelan course (Radyapustaka, 1990). During the Japanese occupation, those activities continued and were supported by the Japanese as they suited the Poesat Keboedajaan’s works and mission. In fact, besides the shadow puppet master and gamelan course, the Radya Poestaka Museum also organized courses on Javanese temples, dances, literature and customs for school teachers (“Koersoes Radya Poestaka”, 1943). In addition, it held public lectures on Javanese traditional house for its members (“Bangoenan Roemah Djawa”, 1943). Furthermore, the management of the museum also stated that they were ready to answer any questions on Javanese culture, particularly, to be published by the press (“Pertemoean di Kantor Radya Poestaka”, 1943).

Another example showing that museums were used by the Japanese as their tools for political propaganda was an art exhibition held in the Sana Boedaja Museum on July 1945. The exhibition showed paintings of Indonesian heroes and leaders. It was purposely organized to increase the Indonesian people’s spirit to help the Japanese defend the country against their enemies – the Allies (“Pertoendjoekan Seni Lukis”, 1945).

The Sana Boedaja Museum itself was inaugurated in 1935 in Yogyakarta. The museum was founded as a collaboration between the Java Instituut (a learned society established in 1919) and funded by the Kasultanan Yogyakarta, Pakualaman, Kasunanan Surakarta, and Mangkunegaran. The Java Instituut and the Sana Boedaja Museum were both founded and managed by Javanese and Dutch scholars to study the languages and cultures of Java, Sunda, Madura, Bali and Lombok (Margana, 2018). During the Japanese occupation period, the museum’s
management was transferred to the Jogja Koci (the provincial government/municipality) in 1944 (Priyanggono, 2018). After that, an Indonesian art teacher, R. Katamsi Martorahardjo, was also appointed as the head of the Sana Boedaja Museum. Katamsi was supported by another Indonesian named Zoebir (Martorahardjo, 1945).

In my point of view, the involvement of the Japanese in the Javanese royal museums of Radya Poestaka and Sana Boedaja is a clear example of the attempt of the Japanese to politically indoctrinate upper-class Indonesian society through museums. However, the most prominent example of museums being the tools for political propaganda was, perhaps, the establishment of the new museum: The Java War Memorial Museum in Bandung.

The Java War Memorial Museum or Djawa Sakusen Kinen Siryo Hozonsho (Gedung Peringatan Perang di Jawa) was located at the Villa Isola Bandung. Villa Isola was purposely chosen as the location of the museum because it was the place where the Dai Nippon Army and the Dutch East Indies Army held a meeting before the Dutch surrendered on March 1942 in Kalijati. The museum was established by the Department of Propaganda (Sendenbu) and inaugurated in November 1943. It illustrated the victory of the Dai Nippon Army over the Dutch East Indies Army in Java. The collections in the museum were photographs of historical events of the arrival of Japan in Java, the Java war scenery, Dutch newspapers, Dutch military uniforms and flags, Dutch and Japanese weapons, tank, and Dutch aircrafts that were shot down by the Japanese (“Gedong Peringatan Pertempoeran di Poelau Djawa”, 1943; “Java to Build War Museum”, 1943; “Pemboekaan Gedoeng Peringatan Peperangan dipoelau Djawa”, 1943; “Moeseoem memperingati perang di Djawa”, 1943).

On the museum’s opening ceremony, Oto Iskandar Di Nata, an Indonesian leader of a Japanese newspaper in Bandung, Tjahaja, gave a speech on the importance of the museum for Indonesians. He stated that it was an honour to have such museum. The museum was important for educational purposes and a perfect means to transfer the heroic spirit of the Japanese to the locals (“Pemboekaan resmi Gedoeng Peringatan peperangan di-Poelau Djawa”, 1943).
Fig. 2
The Java War Memorial Museum at Villa Isola Bandung in 1943
(Source: *Djawa Baroe*, No. 22, November 15 2603)

Fig. 3
Inside the Java War Memorial Museum at Villa Isola Bandung in 1943
(Source: *Djawa Baroe*, No. 22, November 15 2603)
After the Java War Memorial Museum was opened, the Department of Propaganda of Bandung started to collect objects and rearranged the house at Kalijati. The house would be transformed into a museum in order to commemorate it as the place where the Dutch surrendered to the Japanese (“Mengoempoelkan Barang2 Jang Mengandoeng Riwajat”, 1943; “Tempat
Poetjoek Pimpinan Tentara Belanda Menjerah”, 1943).

It was never known before that the Japanese established museums during their reign in Indonesia (Tjahjopurnomo et. al., 2011). Therefore, this research revealed new information regarding the history of the museum development during the Japanese occupation period. The Japanese military government, under the Department of Propaganda, did establish new museums for their political purposes. The table below illustrates the museums established during Japanese occupation period in Indonesia.

Table 2
Museums in Indonesia which established during the Japanese occupation period

| No. | Museum | Year of Establishment | Location | Established by | Present Day Existence |
|-----|--------|-----------------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1   | Gedung Peringatan Pertempuran di Jawa (Java War Memorial Museum) | 1943 | Bandung | Department of Propaganda (Dai Nippon) | X |
| 2   | Kalijati Historic House Museum | 1943 (?) | Kalijati | Department of Propaganda (Dai Nippon) | V |

MUSEUMS AND POLITICS ENTANGLED

Museums and politics are also closely entangled. During the Japanese occupation period, the Europeans were captive in interned camps. The museums’ curators were no exception. Dr. J. Th. Vermeulen, the curator of the Oud Batavia Museum and Ir. J. L. Moens, the curator of the Sana Boedaja Museum, were interned within Japanese camps in Batavia and Yogyakarta (van der Hoop, 1942). Henri MacLaine Pont, the founder of Veldmuseum Trowulan, was also interned in Surabaya (Tjahjopurnomo, 2011). However, due to the political situation, the Germans were allowed to remain working at or newly appointed to help in the museums.

For instance, a German descent born in Surabaya, Godfried Hariowald von Faber (1899-1955) was allowed to continue working as the director of the Stedelijk Historisch Museum Soerabaia. Stedelijk Historisch Museum Soerabaia was a city museum of Surabaya founded by von Faber himself in 1933 (“Koendjoengan Para Wartawan Pada Moeseoem Kota”, 1943; “Gedoeng Moeseoem”, 1943). The museum displayed historical artefacts of the city and its inhabitants. The collections were varied from stone burial of the Megalithic period, old photographs, old saving book to model of Indische house (“Stedelijk Historisch Museum”, 1934;
“Stedelijk Historisch Museum”, 1935).

Moreover, in 1943, a 68-year-old German, Friederich Carl Drescher was also appointed to work as the curator of entomology at the Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium in Bogor. After Drescher (1874-1957) became an insect (beetle) collector. During the Japanese occupation, Drescher had to bestow his insect collections for the Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium. He then managed to appointed to work at the Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium rather than to go to an intern camp. He continued to work at the museum until the post-independence period. After the independence of Indonesia, his insect collections were then bought by the museum (“Memperkaja moesioem chewan di Bogor, 1943; Lieftinck, 1958).

The Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium itself was a scientific institution established in 1894 in order to map Indonesia’s fauna. It was located inside and managed under the Bogor Botanical Garden (’s Lands Plantentuin). It had collections of skeletons and animal offsets from Indonesian archipelago, acquired mostly through scientific expeditions and private donations (Kadarsan, 1994).

During the Japanese occupation period, it seems that the Zoologisch Museum en Laboratorium gathered specimens from the Europeans collectors who became prisoners of war under the reason of “scientific research”. During the war, the collections were taken to be put in the museum. Besides Drescher’s insect collection, M. Bartels’ collections of mammals, birds, and their eggs were ordered to be put in the museum by the Head of the Botanical Garden at that time, Professor Nakai (Kadarsan, 1994). The list went on with butterfly collections of Jan van Groenendaels, a Dutch General Practitioners and a prominent butterfly collector in colonial Indonesia (Miracle, 2018).

Another example to show that museums and politics are entangled is perhaps the case of Dr. Gustav Heinrich Ralph von Koenigswald (1902-1982). Although von Koenigswald was a German born, he did experience imprisonment because of his Dutch nationality (Bernet Kempers, 1982; Marks & Drooger, 1983). On the contrary, based on a Japanese newspaper article, it was stated that von Koeningswald, a German-Dutch palaeontologist and geologist, was appointed to help and work at the Geologisch Museum in Bandung. At that time, the Geologisch Museum was led by a Japanese geologist, Ikebe (“Moesioem Geologi diboeka oentoek oemoem,” 1943).

The Geologisch Museum itself was opened in Bandung in 1929 to exhibit the geology and mineralogy specimens of the Dienst van de Mijnbouw, or the Mining Service (Supardi, 2017). In fact, von Koenigswald was appointed to work at the Dienst van de Mijnbouw in Bandung during 1931-1935. A palaeontologist at that time, he had to do geological mapping of the Island of Java. However, due to the financial crisis, the Java survey was stopped in 1935 and von Koenigswald lost his job. Later, he came back to Java in 1937 as a research associate of the Carnegie Institution (Bernet Kempers, 1982).
The period of 1937-1942 was the highest achievement of his scientific career as human palaeontologist before it was temporarily stopped during the World War II (Marks & Drooger, 1983).

Fig. 6
Dr. G. H. R. von Koenigswald in Java circa 1938
(Source: Collectie Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen / Wikipedia)

Besides, during the Japanese occupation period, the Japanese military government tried to maintain a good relationship with the Islamic leaders and community for their political purposes (Formichi, 2012). From newspaper articles, the Japanese had permitted and supported the Sekolah Guru Moehammadijah (Muhammadiah’s school for teacher) to establish a museum within the school complex in Yogyakarta. The museum was to be opened in November 1942 every Friday inside the school building, particularly for school pupils in Yogyakarta (“Moesioem Sekolah Goeroe Moehammadijah”, 1942; “Moesioem Sekolah Goeroe Moehammadijah. Moe diboeka bersamaan dengan tentoonstelling”, 1942).

The collections of Sekolah Guru Muhammadiyah Museum were cap from Persia, lontar manuscripts from Java and Bali, batik, ancient statues, spears from Papua and other ethnographic objects from Kalimantan and Sulawesi. There were also the feathers of cendrawasih (birds of paradise), starfish, and camel’s fur (“Moesioem Sekolah Goeroe Moehammadijah”, 1942; “Moesioem Sekolah Goeroe Moehammadijah. Moe diboeka bersamaan dengan tentoonstelling”, 1942; “Moesioem Moehammadiah ‘pindah’ ke Bandoeng”, 1943).

For the Japanese, the museum was considered significant because a school-museum was never existed before and it had a role to educate the Indonesian, particularly the school pupils. It was also served as a pioneer within the new period – the Japanese one (“Moesioem Pergoeroean”, 1942). The Sekolah Guru Muhammadiyah Museum was allowed to be established because it suited the Japanese political propaganda: to educate the Indonesian on their own culture. However, the
establishment of the museum was interesting. It showed the initiative of the Indonesian to build a museum without any Dutch colonial interventions, despite its concept of collections of antiquities and ethnographic objects inherited from the European’s perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Through the archives and newspaper articles, this research revealed that during the Japanese occupation period in Indonesia (1942-1945), the museums established in the Dutch colonial one, particularly in Java, continued their existence and run their usual businesses while perform as political tools. This research challenges the argument of the Directorate of Museums of Indonesia which stated that during the Japanese occupation, the Japanese did not pay much attention to cultural heritage and museums because it was considered as less potential for political propaganda. In contrast, this shows that museums and politics during the Japanese occupation were closely entangled. Museums were used by the Japanese military government as a tool for their political propaganda. This research also discovers that the Japanese military government did establish new museums during their reign.

Both the existing and newly established museums were used to enhance the anti-colonial feeling and racial equality to suit the concept of the Greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere. Through culture and art, the ethnographic and historical museums were used to develop the sense of belonging and pride of the Indonesian regarding their country’s culture, history, patriotism, and nationalism. For the sake of scientific research, the natural history museum during the Japanese occupation period was a place to (forcedly?) safeguard the collections of the Europeans when the Europeans were interned in camps as prisoners of war.

Furthermore, as the museums in the Dutch colonial period were related to the middle/upper class society, the Japanese continuously used them to indoctrinate those well-educated Indonesians. Moreover, when the Dutch curators were interned, the Germans were allowed to remain working at the museums. Then, since the Japanese military government also tried to maintain a good relationship with Indonesian’s Islamic leaders and communities, they supported the establishment of a school-museum by the Sekolah Guru Muhammadiyah.

As a closing statement, this research regarding the historical development of museums in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation period is important. First, museum development during the period has not been widely researched within Indonesian’s museum studies. This research also contributes to the discussion on global history and museological discourse. The attitude of the Japanese towards museums, politics, and power within their colonies in Asia during the World War II was a rarely discussed subject regarding Japanese imperialism. Thus, this research contributes to the discussion.
Furthermore, this research shows new fact that the heritage politics during the Japanese occupation period was, somehow, important for the post-independent Indonesia. For instance, the concept of anti-colonialism and enhance nationalism through museums was continuously adopted within the post-independent period, particularly during the New Order reign. Last but not least, when museums were exclusively established for the upper-class society during the Dutch colonial period, museums during the Japanese era were intended to be visited by the general public. It was a huge change for the next period, the post-independent Indonesia. To compare, the post-colonial museums in Zimbabwe continued to be managed similarly as their colonial era. As a consequence, unlike Indonesia, Zimbabwe’s present-day museums are remained exclusive for the elites, and not served the needs of common Zimbabweans (Mawere and Mubaya, 2015).

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