HISTORY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Urban entertainment: Cinemas in the city of Medan, East Sumatra, 1909-1930s
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Abstract: This study aims to explain and analyze the existence and development of cinemas as entertainment for urban communities in Medan. The cinemas in Medan consisted of Oranje Cinema, Deli Cinema, Orion Cinema, Royal Cinema, Juliana Cinema, Empire Cinema, Rex Cinema, and Tjoeng Koen Tat Cinema. The cinema businessman competed in airing movies that attracted people to cinemas. The films came from various genres, including mystery, romance, drama, history, biography, comedy, and documentary. Although the colonial government carried out supervision and censorship of films to conform to colonial standards and imagery, the existence and development of cinemas in Medan soon became an entertainment desired by urban people, which showed the diversity and social class of the city community.

Subjects: Urban History; Social & Cultural History; Asian History

Keywords: Cinema; entertainment; colonial stratification; modernization; Medan

1. Introduction
The urban society and entertainment that developed in the big cities in the Dutch East Indies reflected the urban lifestyle in the early 20th century. Entertainment available at that time included Malay Opera, musical performances, cinema, and Stamboel Comedy. Of all the entertainment, Stamboel Comedy was quite popular in the late 19th century until the early 20th century. This entertainment was a mixture of several cultures, such as Persian, Arabic, and Chinese (Cohen,

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
The development of cinema as an entertainment for the urban community in Medan City grows along with the development of the city, social class, and interests of the urban community. This development is shown by the proliferation of city cinemas and competition between cinema entrepreneurs in presenting film shows to urban communities. In addition, the Dutch colonial government also carried out surveillance and censorship of films to conform to colonial standards and images. This paper concentrates on the development of cinema and film shows as entertainment in the social diversity of urban communities in Medan City between 1909 and the 1930s.
This entertainment was replaced by cinema in the early 20th century. The rise of modern technology superseded other entertainment types. However, not all social classes were to the same degree able to consume this new form of modernity in the Dutch East Indies.

The growth of urban society and modernization also occurred in colonial cities in Southeast Asia. This development was influenced by European colonialists, including entertainment technology and cinema in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, and Singapore. Before the Second World War, the development of cinema and film in these three countries was influenced by British colonialism. The story of cinema and film in the Malay Peninsula and Singapore is progressing rapidly. It impacts the reaction of the indigenous population to the development of this entertainment technology. The British colonial government authorities in the 1920s began to worry about the influence of western culture on the order and structure of the local community. Hence control had to be done on the development of the film and cinema business (Lent, 1991).

Unlike Thailand, Boonrak Boonyaketmala (1992) stated that in the late 19th to early 20th centuries, the development of the cinema and film industry in Thailand was influenced by the West through cooperation with local ruling elites; hence this region could be penetrated in global trade, and the local population was open to external cultural influences (Boonyaketmala, 1992).

In the Dutch East Indies, at the beginning of its development, cinema entertainment could only be enjoyed by some city dwellers. People from the urban middle class in Java had sufficient income for cinemas. Jauhari (1992) states that in colonial times, urban communities did go to the movies for entertainment and acquired social prestige. The reason was that people who watched cinema could be regarded as those who earned more than others (Jauhari, 1992). However, not all could afford to go to the cinema because some people were unfamiliar with this activity (Wijono, 2014, pp. 185–186).

Not everybody went to the cinema because of different financial means or interests in the cinema, which manifests a broader process of selective appropriation of modernity, particularly in cities. The city became an essential instrument in the colonial state, not only in the seats of government but also in the cultural development of the urban population. Local residents had absorbed modernization in the urban environment to become detached from traditional cultures. Wertheim (1999, pp. 142–143) has argued that indigenous urban communities were resilient and maintained many of their structures. On the other hand, the West achieved cultural integration with the local community, giving birth to a new urban mestizo culture or Indies culture. The urban community was just one of the symptoms of social change that globally took place due to industrialization in the world in the 20th century. Shogo Koyano (1996) observes that the global urbanization process resulted in southeast Asia integrating social and cultural issues and political ones (Koyano, 1996). In line with Koyano, Colombijn and Coté (2014) argue that the modernization in Indonesian cities was primarily caused by colonialism and urban communities in urban areas (Colombijn and Coté, 2014). Modernization in Indonesian towns gave birth to a new culture and society and its dynamics.

The rapid development of the cinema at the beginning of the 20th century played a role in these modernization processes of urban life in the Dutch East Indies. According to Dafna Ruppin (2015), the development of movies and cinemas at that time integrated the cultures existing in the Dutch East Indies with the development of the cinemas. Furthermore, film screening in cinemas was marked by capitalization and economic activity growth in the Dutch East Indies (Ruppin, 2015).

So far, the study of the rise of cinema, and the modernization of Dutch East Indies cities in general, for that matter, has focused mainly on Java (Ruppin, 2015). In this article, we want to complement our knowledge by focusing on the city of Medan in East Sumatra. The development of Medan followed a different trajectory than cities on Java. Medan in the 20th century was a modern city continuously developed. The story of Medan city was inseparable from the economic activity of the plantations in
its hinterland in East Sumatra. The development of Medan could be seen in the city infrastructure, which was beautifully arranged and had a modern impression. At the same time, Medan had a heterogeneous population. This heterogeneity then made the culture of urban communities in Medan. One of the hobbies of urban communities in Medan was watching movies in cinemas. In addition to seeking entertainment, they also defined themselves as a group of upper classes.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, this article examines the development of cinema and movies as entertainment for urban communities in Medan. The central question is how cinema was integrated into the diverse population of Medan. Medan had a very diverse population in terms of ethnicity and income, and we can expect that different audiences reacted quite differently to this modern novelty. As we shall see, the municipal government was concerned about the negative impact the cinema could have on the indigenous population. The dynamics of urban communities in Medan in the early 20th century would be explained to answer this question. This article employed the historical method and various sources, including archives, official documents of the colonial government, newspapers, and supporting books published within and after the study period.

2. Social diversity in Medan
As mentioned in the introduction, Medan had a diverse population, arguably even by colonial standards. This diversity can be explained by its very rapid development, which attracted migrants from the rest of the archipelago and beyond. In the mid-19th century, Medan was a small village between Babura and Deli rivers. The advent of the plantation industry in East Sumatra in the 1860s transformed Medan into a prosperous plantation city (Thee, 1977, pp. 1–4). Medan was strategic because it faced the British colony, the Malay Peninsula, and Singapore, busy serving as trading ports. Plantation entrepreneurs built the city as the center of a plantation in East Sumatra. The Medan region transformed into the center of Sumatra’s Dutch colonial economy and government in a short period.

In the middle of the late 19th century, Medan was the center of colonial government and the Sultanate of Deli. The Dutch colonial government made Medan the capital of East Sumatra residency in 1887. Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Deli moved its capital to Medan, previously in Labuhan Deli, in 1879. Medan’s role was not limited to being the center of administration, and Medan also served as the economic and political center of the colonial government and the Sultanate of Deli. Therefore, the face of Medan City continued to be improved to enhance the city’s spatial layout. In the early 20th century, Medan became a busy city with the economic activities of its plantations (Loderichs et al., 1997, p. 12). Medan was indeed developing because of the need for the economic mobility of the plantations. The development of Medan was unlike other cities in the Dutch East Indies, such as Batavia, Bandung, or Semarang, which the Dutch colonial government indeed planned. Medan was established to meet the interests of plantation entrepreneurs who made this region the economic center of the plantation belt in East Sumatra. The character of Medan’s urban development depended on the interests of the plantation entrepreneurs. Office buildings, facilities, and infrastructure were constructed in Medan city to support the plantation industry (Nasution, 2018, pp. 65–83).

The plantation economy attracted a mixed group of ethnic and social class residents. The indigenous groups formed the majority but did not have the upper hand in the economy. Medan city community consisted of various nationalities. Europeans were mostly entrepreneurs or staff of plantation companies. The other Europeans were the bureaucrats of the Dutch colonial government. Europeans as plantation bureaucrats were from the Netherlands, England, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and seven other European countries (Bremann, 1997, pp. 35–36). The economic elite of Medan city was further made up of entrepreneurs (Chinese entrepreneurs, especially Tjong A Fie) and the sultan of Deli as the ruler in the Deli region (Buiskool, 2005, pp. 283–90). In addition to Europeans, there were also Chinese, Indians, and Indigenous People. The population of Medan was spread out in several areas of the city, with Esplanade and the Kesawan region as the center (Buiskool, 2005, p. 278).
From 1905 to 1930, the city population doubled every decade, and over 25 years, the people of Medan city had increased fivefold (Table 1). One of the factors was the movement of migrants from the regions around Medan (Pelly, 1998, p. 57). Dominated by Minangkabau and Mandailing people, the migrants came to the city due to the growth of Medan as an economic center for plantations.

The cosmopolitan population of Medan had changed the character and culture of the urban community in this city. From the 19th century to the 20th century, a more modern Western culture was found in Medan city than in the cities in Java. Several developments and arrangements were adjusted to the character of city residents, thus giving rise to exclusive settlements (Buiskool, 2005, pp. 289–294). For example, Europeans resided in the center of the city called Kesawan; Foreign Asians had their territories, such as Chinese living in exclusive Chinese Wijk, Indians residing in Madras villages, and Arabs living in Arab settlements. It was not different from the indigenous population who lived in villages based on their respective ethnic groups such as Minangkabau in Kampung Aur, Malay in Kota Matsum: a neighborhood the palace of the Sultan Deli, Mandailing in Sei Mati, and Javanese living on the suburbs of Medan.

Dafna Ruppin described the characteristics of modern Medan well:

“Deli is the most developed district throughout Sumatra, and Medan, its capital, has developed into a busy city for more than 45,200 residents. Modern hotels, beautiful homes with large courtyards and gardens, smooth car streets, fine shops, and neatly arranged highways show all aspects of prosperity and wealth. On weekends Medan is the best and sparkling city. Employees from many plantations go to Medan to have fun, once in a while, to escape their solitude and loneliness to the dance floor of De Boer Hotel or Medan Hotel to come out of from depression due to their work” (Ruppin, 2015, p. 260).

Economic and social development found expression in the city’s spatial development. Esplanade Square played a significant role as a symbol of the activities of multinational city residents. Esplanade was located in the middle of the city adjacent to the train station, post office, town hall, and offices of plantation companies. This square was used as a public space that functioned as a sports venue, city park, exhibition location, and entertainment spot (Hartono, 2005, p. 431). The presence of the Esplanade has become a means for meeting and developing an urban culture in the city.

The development of Medan as a city and cultural center for urban communities was supported by international shipping networks and adequate land infrastructure. In 1903, Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (KPM), a Dutch colonial shipping company, sailed from Singapore to Belawan once every two weeks. In addition, once every five days, a cruise line was operated from Penang, and once every
four weeks, there was a cruise from Batavia (Ruppin, 2015, p. 260). In addition to the international shipping networks connected between regions in Southeast Asian countries, show business was also supported by land transportation routes in East Sumatra, especially rail transportation. The mobility of the shipping and transportation network in East Sumatra in the late 19th and early 20th centuries invited various entertainment shows in the region, especially Medan.

3. Early cinema shows

Other forms of entertainment preceded the cinema in Medan. Most importantly, there was a kind of entertainment called tonsil. Tonsil was also called Malay Opera (Komedi Bangsawan or Stambul). Malay opera performance received widespread attention from residents in East Sumatra, especially the Malays ethnic group (M, 1992, pp. 46–47). This show was usually performed in a square-like Esplanade Square. In addition to theatrical or comedy performances, there were also music events in several hotels in Medan. One of them was the Manila Band show at Medan Hotel (Ruppin, 2015, p. 262). Besides theatrical or tonal performances previously described, Medan was also visited by opera groups affiliated with night market shows at Deli. This event was held at Esplanade Square (M, 1992, pp. 46–47).

The first cinema show was called a moving-picture show. At first, it used simple technology. The Dutch colonial residents knew this type of entertainment in the late 19th century when Louis Talbot performed in 1897 in Batavia. Louis Talbot toured shows in the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch East Indies. In November 1897, Louis Talbot staged a show at the Witte Societiet Building in Medan, probably the first movie is ever shown in Medan. The show tour continued to other cities in Sumatra, such as Binjai, Serdang to Padang. Another early show in Medan was performed by Ten Broeke’s American Biograph Society, held at the Gymnastics Club Building (Ruppin, 2015, pp. 263–264). The nature of the early performances of the cinema was to have a show at a place with available theater facilities.

Initially, the development of cinema as a show and entertainment of the colonial society was carried out in the square using simple tents. Tents were built with woven bamboo-made walls and tin roofs, and the location of the show permanently moved from one place to another (Jauhari, 1992, pp. 3–5). In subsequent developments, cinema shows were carried out in a permanent building with seating for the audience.

Unlike the regular one, a cinema show was held by setting up a tent on the Esplanade Square in October 1901. New Bioscope Abdulally Essofally first carried out this effort. The crowds around the tent became a spectacle for Europeans, especially plantation company staff or retired plantation staff (Ruppin, 2015, pp. 262). But the performances on the Esplanade Square did not always go smoothly. In August 1905, a tent was set up by Japanese businessmen. However, the situation was uncomfortable because it was hot inside (De kinematograaf, 1905). This resulted in disappointment from the audience of Europeans and indigenous people, even the Japanese themselves. In addition, there were several technical problems caused by delays in screening the movies and unclear pictures. Finally, the businessmen returned the money to the audience or gave free tickets for the next show to those still interested (Ruppin, 2015, p. 267).

In the early days of cinema shows in Medan, people did not have many business opportunities. It was different from other big cities in Java, such as Batavia and Surabaya, which could screen movies between two to three times in one night. Medan was such a difficult market in this business. Only one film could be screened in one night. The quality of shows and movies screened had to attract the audience to watch them again the following night. With such low interest of the audience, cinema businessman people had to strain a variety of movies to attract audience’s enthusiasm. This might result in high exploitation costs. In this early period, Medan did not need many cinemas to meet the entertainment needs of city residents (Ruppin, 2015, p. 270).

Just like the audience had a mixed ethnic composition, the entrepreneurs had various ethnic backgrounds (and perhaps these ethnic differences made the competition more determined).
A cinema business that was flourishing and immediately attracting the attention of Medan residents was Oranje Cinema. It was managed by an Armenian businessman, Martherus Sarkies Michael (Verhuur Gemeentelijk Bioscoop gebouw, 1921, pp. 221–222). He came to Medan from Batavia in September 1909 to set up a show tent on Esplanade Square. The first show took place in October 1909. The tent set up by Michael was almost identical to the tents on Java. This immediately became a topic of discussion and debate of the Medan City Council because it disturbed the view of Esplanade Square. Some board members insisted on moving the show tent on a plot of land belonging to the Deli Plantation Company located opposite the Deli Horse Race Club. Other members of the council insisted on revoking the business license of Oranje Cinema. Still, this idea was deemed unsuitable because the cinema show was profitable for the revenue of the city budget (Gemeenteraad van Medan, 1909).

4. The development of film theatres

The discussion about the tent on the Esplanade triggered a debate in the city council to construct a permanent movie theatre. A few months later, the City Council proposed creating a permanent building as a city performance building. The idea was that the city government would operate the facility and lease it to a private business person. This building could be used for movie screenings and Malay Opera shows (Van der Plas, 1913). A Chinese businessman, Tjong A Fie, proposed to the city government a loan of Fl. 15,000 if the city government was willing to build a permanent cinema. Some debates among the City Council over the plans to construct a permanent cinema. Some board members proposed to apply entertainment tax for the city’s revenue rather than operating a municipal cinema. Others said that the operation of the city cinema could go hand in hand with the application of entertainment tax. Finally, the City Council approved the construction of a city cinema, as was the proposal for the loan by Tjong A Fie, with nine votes in favor and one vote against it (Ruppin, 2015, p. 272).

The cinema’s construction was realized at the meeting of Jalan Bali and Jalan Kling and was announced to the public at the end of May 1912. Deli Plantation Company, as the landowner stated that the land would be leased for 30 years. The initial construction costs reached Fl. 3,000. This cost did not reach 10 percent of the estimated construction cost, Fl. 35,000 (Ruppin, 2015, p. 273). The construction of the city cinema took approximately three years, from 1911 to 1913. This construction was carried out along with the Deli association building and the stage making, which cost Fl. 55,000 (Verhuur van het Gemeentelijk Bioscoopgebouw, 1918, pp. 105–107).

The municipality hoped to recover the investment by leasing the building to an entrepreneur interested in exploiting the structure. In addition, to increase government revenue, a 10 percent city entertainment tax was implemented in 1911. This tax implementation was inspired by the entertainment tax policy adopted by the colonial government in Java. The initial revenue from leasing and building utilization in 1913 was estimated to reach Fl. 9,200, and still added with the 10 percent entertainment tax applied (S. Ruppin, 2015; Van der Plas, 1913).

This entertainment tax impacted the decline in entertainment shows in the city because some show businesses, including musical operas, magic shows, and circuses, were reluctant to do shows in Medan (Ruppin, 2015, p. 272). Also, the businessman behind the Oranje Cinema was affected by implementing the entertainment tax policy. On 1 October 1911, the Oranje Cinema businessmen raised the entrance ticket price by 10 percent.

However, the implementation and cooperation made with the city government did not go well. Some City Council members began to question the effectiveness and function of constructing a permanent cinema. They proposed to change the role and function of the building not only for shows but for a broader utilization by the city government. However, it should be underlined that the City Council had approved the construction of the city cinema. The utilization of the cinema building had also collaborated with the Oranje Cinema businessmen by entering into a contractual agreement. In the end, the building maintained its function as a movie theatre.
During the city cinema construction, the government kept rejecting requests for permission to screen movies one by one for various reasons. The municipal refusal to permit more entrepreneurs to show movies restricted the competition for the cinema built and leased out by the city government. This made the potential for competition in the cinema show business closed completely. In early 1911, a cinema businessman from Batavia, P.A.C. Abalain, was refused to establish a cinema show by renting land to the city government for ten years with an investment value of Fl. 27,000. The city government stated that they did not own land. In the case of private land use, such as Oranje Cinema at Esplanade Square, the government only gave permits for one month and did not guarantee that tents would not be demolished at any time (Ruppin, 2015, p. 274).

In 1913 another cinema businessman, D.A. Kaathoven, who had initially been guaranteed to obtain a permit for cinema shows, had to wait for Oranje Cinema to move to the new city cinema in April 1913. Kaathoven protested such a decision to several city government officials and even went to Batavia to bring his case to the Governor-General. Some people, including Kaathoven himself, suspected that the City Council's decision was influenced by Martherus Sarkies Michael, the owner of the Oranje Cinema. Through the Resident van der Plas, the city government argued that the cinema monopoly was for the sake of the public interest. The state reasoned that competition in the movie show would reduce the quality of the film screened. In addition, the cinema also had to compete with other show sectors such as traveling circus shows, Malay opera, and so forth. This state argument was strengthened because Oranje Cinema was not very profitable regarded from previous cinema business experiences (Ruppin, 2015, pp. 274–275).

At the end of May 1913, Oranje Cinema officially moved to the city cinema, a cinema with more than 800 audiences. The interior of the building was well laid out. Some facilities for the audience's comfort were fans and neatly arranged seats. City residents of both European and indigenous people were very enthusiastic about the early performances of Oranje Cinema. Several attractive flower pots and plants were placed to enliven the atmosphere of the cinema.

After Oranje Cinema had been established at the permanent building for cinema shows, the city government allowed other cinemas to be found by cinema businessmen. In July 1913, two theaters were established concurrently, competing with Oranje Cinema. Kaathoven finally obtained permission, and his business was given the name Deli Cinema. His company used a performance tent located at Hindoe Road and Huttenbach Road. Kaathoven promised comfort and accompaniment of high-quality music and movies. On the opening night of 22 July 1913, the audience felt well served. The cinema staff was in white uniforms with red decorations. He distributed movie programs with various seating classes. The movies also played varied, with a short interval between a film and one that would be screened next.

Another cinema that was established was Orion Cinema. This cinema was located on Luitenant Street, near the Chinese residential area. The quality provided by this cinema was lower than that of Deli Cinemas. The cinema was deliberately placed near the Chinese settlements to attract audiences from Chinese and indigenous people (Ruppin, 2015, pp. 279–80). In addition to these cinemas, there were also Tjoeng Koen Tat Cinema located on Canton Street (M, 1992, p. 151) and other cinemas such as Juliana Cinema, Royal Cinema, Empire Cinema, and Rex Cinema.

In 1918, the rental contract of the city cinema with Oranje Cinema businessman, Michael, ended and the city government had to search for a new occupant. Sjech Ali Baschola, an Arab businessman, applied to the city council to rent a cinema with an offer Fl. 600 per month (Bioscoop Baroe, 1918). For the past five years, from 1913 to 1918, Michael had rented the city cinema with a price of Fl. 500 with an additional entertainment tax of 10 %. Sjech Ali Baschola and Michael's demand for a contract extension was discussed at a city council meeting. Sjech Ali Baschola offered a higher rent, but according to the city government, while Michael was leasing the city cinema, he was a tenant who always took good care of the property and city cinema. Money was not everything. The debate in the city council finally decided the city movie theater was leased to Michael. The lease agreement was valid for three years by the city council's decision on 20 April 1918 (Verhuur van het Gemeentelijk Bioscoopgebouw, 1918, pp. 105–107).
The new contract agreement in 1918 would expire on 31 July 1921. The city cinema building had been leased to Oranje cinema since 1912 for Fl. 500 every month. On 19 May 1921, the mayor consulted with the financial committee to propose to the city council to hold a tender for new leases of the city cinema. Like the previous tenant (Oranje cinema), some businessmen were interested in an offer Fl. 600 every month, and Cy Trading Oriental company with an offer Fl. 760 every month. Because the previous tenant had run a good and accessible business in all matters, especially about the unrestricted use of the building for meetings, and the movies screened were of better quality than other cinemas, the government decided on a 3-year contract again Oranje cinema for a lease Fl. 500 every month (Verslag betreffende de Gemeente Medan over het jaar, 1921).

Annually, the city cinema was jointly repaired and maintained between Michael as the tenant and the city government. In 1918, with a letter dated 30 October 1918, the city council proposed improving and expanding the cinema to the government. However, this activity had not yet begun in that year (Verslag van de verrichtingen van den Gemeenteraad van Medan over het jaar, 1918). In 1919, the cinema underwent a significant renovation, including constructing a building separated from the main building. The toilets were built on the south side of the building. The room for projecting and storing movies was improved, and the entire building was painted white (Verslag betreffende de Gemeente Medan over het jaar, 1919). The roof of the cinema building was also repaired. In addition, ceiling, seating, floor, and light ventilation were frequently repaired and maintained, such as in 1920, 1924, 1926 and 1929 (Compiled from Verslag betreffende de Gemeente Medan over het jaar, 1919, p. 112, 1929, p. 124; Dienstrapporten over de maand November, 1926b: 389; Dienstrapporten over de maand December, 1926a: 406; Oranje Bioscoop, 1929a, pp. 452; Oranje Bioscoop, 1929b, pp. 812).

Changes in technology in the film industry improved the function of the cinema that supported the quality of the movie’s screen. When the city cinema was built, it was not equipped with facilities for sound movies. Cinema facilities only considered the quality of light so that the pictures would be good. In 1930, good movies slowly replaced the movies that had existed previously, namely silent movies with “moving pictures.” In 1930, Michael, the owner of Oranje cinema, asked the city government to renovate the building of the Oranje cinema. The renovation included walls, ceilings, and a display of the screening room. Michael suggested changing the top by covering it with latex, a soundproofing board. Previously, Michael tried to improve the sound quality of movies by inviting recording experts and improving cinema equipment. In Singapore, the cinema wall was covered with latex or soundproof material and coated with delicate watercolors. The quality of sound movies screened in cinemas was very satisfying (Aanbrengen verbeteringen in de Oranje bioscoop, 1930, pp. 527–529).

Renovating the ceilings of the cinema building using Colatex was estimated to cost Fl. 1,340. In addition to repairing roofs, the renovation costs would also still include Fl. 450 used for painting with delicate watercolors. Such changes in the cinema that could be used to screen silent movies and sound movies were crucial due to the intense competition in the movie industry. It was assumed that the films produced were only sound movies among the cinema business, so it was necessary to change the place or building to watch cinema (Aanbrengen verbeteringen in de Oranje bioscoop, 1930, pp. 527–529).

After the renovation plan was proposed to the city government, Oranje cinema was finally renovated at the end of 1930. The city government provided latex and wall paint (Oranje bioscoop, 1930, p. 754). The renovation began in 1931 by painting the outside of the building. It also repaired doors and windows. The drainage system was also improved under and around the building (Oranje bioscoop, 1931a, p. 117). The city council appreciated the improvement related to the sound movies. The quality of sound resulting from the renovation of the city cinema was excellent (Oranje bioscoop, 1931b, p. 28).

5. The film programs
Each cinema had its program of movies that were screened. They screened various genres of film. Like the cinema businessman from multiple nations outside the Dutch East Indies, most movies shown in cinemas in Medan were imported by film importers. In 1915, film importers acquired
films from abroad at a total cost of Fl. 5,685. The details of the cost of importing films to Medan were; Fl. 1,754 from India, Fl. 1,430 from Singapore, Fl. 1,035 from the Netherlands, Fl. 600 from Penang Peninsular Malaya, Fl. 375 from France, Fl. 253 from the United Kingdom, and Fl. 238 from America (De vrijwillige plaatselijke bioscoop–commissies, 1910–1918).

Three cinemas received these films in Medan at that time; Oranje Cinema, Deli Cinema, and Orion Cinema. Before these films reached the cinema businessman, an official cinema commission in Medan supervised and censored the movie. Before the cinema commission existed, local government and police were the two institutions that carried out surveillance and censorship of films deemed incompatible with the government's views (De vrijwillige plaatselijke bioscoop–commissies, 1910–1918).

Within the boundaries set by government surveillance and censorship, cinemas tried to show different films to attract audiences of various genres. In Deli Cinema, there were more than 25 types of movies with hundreds of movie titles screened throughout 1915–1920. The often screened movies were drama, comedy, romance, American and Spanish films, war recordings, and documentaries. In Oranje Cinema, there were more than 30 genres of movies and hundreds of titles screened throughout 1915–1920. Among the genres of films that were often screened were drama, history, detective, romance, horror, American, Dutch, and Russian comedy movies, and biographical movies (Compiled from De Sumatra Post, 1915–1919; Benih Mardeka, 1918, 1920).

Royal, Juliana, and Empire cinemas did not screen as many movies as the two cinemas mentioned above. Royal Cinema in 1916–1918 and 1920 screened more than ten genres of movies with dozens of titles. The genres that were often screened were drama, comedy, Turkish and Bulgarian movies, and American war. Juliana cinema between 1919 and 1920 screened more than ten genres of movies with dozens of films. Among the movies that are often screened are American films, witty, drama, romance, and acrobatics. Meanwhile, Empire Cinema, between 1919 and 1920, screened more than ten genres of movies with dozens of titles. The most frequently screened movies were drama, comedy, romance, mystery, and humor (Compiled from De Sumatra Post, 1916, 1918, 1919; Benih Mardeka, 1918, 1920).

There were also movies series that were divided into several parts. In 1920, Juliana Cinema screened a movie with 15 series divided into 30 parts. The movie was entitled “Resia Besar,” starring Francis Ford (Juliana bioscoop, 1920). In the same year, Royal Cinema screened the Universal Film series. The movie was The Redium Mystery. The screenings consisted of 18 series divided into 36 parts. 2 or 4 pieces were screened within one week (Royal Bioscope, 1920).

Cinema businessmen advertised various genres and types of films shown in theaters in Medan through newspapers. In addition to this method, the cinema companies traveled around the city by using a van. They used loudspeakers to promote the movies played in their cinema to the people. To further attract attention, the side of the car was attached with an advertisement sign with an image of the movie that would be shown (De reclameverordening van de gemeente Medan, 1932–1937).

Advertisements put by cinema businessmen also made people enthusiastic about watching movies. In September 1916, De Sumatra Post newspaper reported the atmosphere in the Deli cinema. Cinema-goers were excited about the shows. The atmosphere was boisterous and full of enthusiasm while the Dutch national anthem, Wilhelmus, was played. The audience stood to sing along with the music (Deli-bioscoop, 1916). Deli cinema was popular with the indigenous people due to its massive advertisement. Movie screenings were advertised in several newspapers published in Medan. Cinema business people attempted to attract people’s enthusiasm to watch movies by advertising or presenting a synopsis of the film screened in cinemas. The actors and actresses who played in the movies also attracted people’s interest in watching (Bioscopen, 1916).
6. Multiple audiences
The cinema appealed to people from all ethnic groups and different social classes. However, they must have had other preferences as one's background impacts one's choices, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls one's cultural capital. Going to the cinema was then also a way to gain cultural capital. Conversely, the colonial elite could be worried that people lower in the social hierarchy consumed movies considered inappropriate for the lower class people.

People were very class-conscious when they went to the cinema, and shows at the cinema consisted of several classes indicating where the audience sat. For example, in one of the big cities in Sumatra, namely Padang, the rows of seats at the front were called the goat (kambing) class, and they were, albeit not formally, meant for indigenous people. Eurasians who could not afford the more expensive ranks were embarrassed to occupy the goat class seats and sneaked in after the beginning when the lights had gone out. Because there were mixed audiences from various types of population groups in one line, which consisted of indigenous residents and poor Indo-European youth. The best class seats were given only to the European group; when wealthy Chinese residents sat there, arrogant or racist upper-class Europeans left the centers around him empty in a show of contempt (Colombijn, 2006, pp. 101–102).

Similar subtle social distinctions were found in Medan. Not only for watching movies but other shows held in the permanent building were also divided into classes at a specific price. For example, the Keroncong show in Oranje Cinema in 1919 was Fl 0.50 for class 3, Fl 1.00 for class 2, and Fl 1.50 for class 1 (Krontjong-concours, 1919).

The reports from the 1920 city gazette, which was a research conducted by city government officials, stated that the visits of cinema audiences were highly dependent on the circumstances and situation of the city. In detail, the audience's interest was also based on the choice of movies, the opening of programs, and the new programs offered (De cijfers van het bioscoop-bezoek, 1920, pp. 29–31). Cinema businessmen also competed to show films with good quality but at affordable ticket prices due to competition in this entertainment business. The establishment of several cinemas resulted in competition in this business. At least three movie shows were screened simultaneously in Medan in one night. Such competition was measured by the quality of the film screened and the price of the entrance ticket to the cinema. This was because Europeans who mostly worked on plantations did not have enough salary to watch movies every time (Ruppin, 2015, p. 274).

In the annual report of Medan, the number of audiences was recorded from 1917 to 1924. However, there were only audience records from among the indigenous and Chinese people in several years. For example, in 1917 to 1919, 1921, and 1922. The data in 1920 classified the audience based on the seats in the cinema. Data dividing European, indigenous, and Chinese audiences were in 1923 and 1924.

The audience of indigenous and Chinese residents from 1917 to 1919 were 287,100, 355,800, and 400,850, respectively. The numbers in 1917 and 1919 come from Oranje Cinema, Deli Cinema, and Orion Cinema. In 1919, the numbers increased significantly, one of which was the addition of the number of cinemas from three to five cinemas. The numbers came from Medan residents and outside the city who regularly went to cinemas (De cijfers van het bioscoop-bezoek, 1920, pp. 42–43).

In 1920, there was 574,712 audience classified based on where they sat. The details of the number were 42,207 for balcony seats, 49,341 for loji seats, 63,766 for first row seats, 159,212 for second-row seats, 151,899 for third-row seats, and 108,287 for fourth-row seats (Verslag betreffende de Gemeente Medan over het jaar, 1919, p. 21). The number of audience from 1921 to 1924 decreased compared to the previous year. There were 355,400 audience consisting of indigenous and Chinese residents in 1921, 214,400 in 1922, 343,591 in 1923, and 250,603 in 1924. Interestingly, there were
data on the audience from European residents, which were 39,259 in 1923 and 35,635 in 1924. This data also showed a decrease among the European population. This fluctuation was caused by several things, namely the economic crisis that occurred since 1920, which caused the purchasing power of the city population to decrease. Another factor was competition from other types of entertainment such as night markets, Chinese puppets and dance parties in hotels (Verslag betreffende de Gemeente Medan over het jaar, 1919, p. 35, 1923, pp. 18–19).

The existence of research and data recorded in annual reports and city gazettes shows the attention of the city government to the cinema as entertainment for this urban community. This research and data are used to analyze tax revenue information from entertainment and to measure the purchasing power of urban people during the economic crisis of the 1920s. Although the information available is only limited to audiences from among the indigenous population and Chinese only.

7. Cinema as a controlled site of modernization

The cinema offered the state a venue to modernize the colony's population. However, not all images were deemed appropriate for the indigenous people, and the colonial government became concerned about the possible negative impact the films could have on the colonized peoples. The existence of cinemas and movies was indeed able to change the behavior of the indigenous people who were illiterate and lack of knowledge at that time. The indigenous people usually considered what they watched in the movie was a truth. Therefore, it was not uncommon that their moods could be sad, angry, or afraid after watching the film according to the genre of film they had just watched. For instance, the following situation occurred in Medan:

“At that time, King Kong the movie was screened at Deli. Many people watched, but very few believed that all the scenes on the screen were merely fictitious. Most even supported the idea that the giant monkey existed and roamed at night. He reportedly often appeared suddenly beside the divan of women. This made people uneasy so that amulets to refuse such disaster were selling well” (Jauhari, 1992, p. 23).

The colonial government was concerned about people taking fancy stories for real but even more about a possible negative image of white people, which might erode the status of the colonial overlords in the colony. It, therefore, felt that it had to control what people would get to see. Regarding the rapid development of cinema and movies, the colonial government regulated movies in the Dutch East Indies. In 1916, a Film Regulation was issued for the entire region of the Dutch East Indies. This regulation required each area to have a film or cinema commission. This commission was assigned to filter and censor movies that would be screened in cinemas (De vrijwillige plaatselijke bioscoop-commissies, 1910–1918). This regulation was revised several times and amended by Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indie 1919 no. 337, 742 and Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indie 1922 no. 668. The regulation-controlled movies would be screened in the Dutch East Indies, mainly imported movies.

Movies imported from Europe and America were deemed to show things that could affect the indigenous people and change their views of colonialism and white people. For most cinema-goers, what they saw at the cinema was a superior foreign culture that had succeeded in controlling the Dutch East Indies. As a result, this fact made the colonial government worried that the movies would change the behavior of the indigenous people.

In addition to behavior change, the colonial government also seemed to be concerned about people’s views of Europeans. Cinemas and movies had indirectly opened the eyes of indigenous people about the original characters of the white people. To anticipate this, the government issued laws or regulations to regulate movies and cinemas through Ordonnans Bioscoop in 1916. This regulation granted the right of movie inspection to a regional commission which the Governor-General appointed. This regulation allowed the cinemas to develop and bring movies
they liked because the rule emphasized supervising licensing mechanisms before a film was screened. There were no clear restrictions that a movie was supposed to be allowed or rejected. Hence, people thought that the government regulation was only concerned with import duties, show taxes, and government revenue (De vrijwillige plaatselijke bioscoop-commissies, 1910–1918).

Cinemas increasingly developed and brought influence in the lives of Dutch colonial society. Made and loosely implemented by the colonial government, the regulations made many people think that cinema negatively affected the indigenous people. It also affected the indigenous people on viewing the ruling white nation. Regarding the adverse effects of movies and cinema, especially those that the colonial government threatened the colonial authority, the cinema regulation of 1916 was amended many times as stated in Staatsblad 1919 no. 337, 1919 no. 742 and 1922 no. 668. However, the regulation amendment still did not include in detail the restrictions for movies that were allowed or rejected.

In the Ordonnansi Film 1925, which took effect on 1 January 1926, the Film Commission was updated from regional to central for the entire Dutch East Indies. The Commission had 15 members, including 4 European women, one indigenous woman, four non-Europeans. It also included Sinologists and Japanologists who specifically examined Chinese and Japanese movies. The right to appoint this commission was in the hands of the director of the domestic government (Jauhari, 1992, p. 19).

Movies screened in Medan cinemas were also similar to those screened in cinemas in other cities of the Dutch East Indies. Like today, some films were subject to censorship and were not filtered by the government because they conveyed messages of rebellion, youth movement campaigns, worker trafficking, robbery, and crime. The policy of censoring movies screened in Medan reflected the events in Java that the contents of films that could potentially contain violence and political interference were edited and cut (Ruppin, 2015, pp. 281–282).

We thus see that the cinema also played an essential role in the modernization of city life in Medan, as it did in other cities in the Dutch East Indies. The state saw the cinema as a tool to modernize the urban population, but it certainly could not do so at will. People used the cinema in various degrees, according to their interests and financial means. The cinema just as much united the urban population in a shared pastime as it redrew and reconfirmed the old dividing lines between ethnic groups and, just as important, social classes.

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