Hans Pols, *Nurturing Indonesia: Medicine and Decolonisation in the Dutch East Indies*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018, xx + 285 pp. ISBN: 9781108424578, price: GBP 75.00 (hardcover).

Hans Pols' *Nurturing Indonesia* leaves us with a spectrum of striking vignettes about colonial life as experienced by Indies physicians over the course of the twentieth century. Sitting alone in a laboratory at the Batavia Medical College in 1923, an Indonesian student peers into a microscope and loses himself in the lens-pressed world of microorganisms. Filled with a sense of wonder and excitement, he reflects on the beauty of their diversity and considers the very power of the microscope to render "the previously invisible world of life" visible (p. 56). In another, earlier vignette, a graduate of the Batavia Medical College sets out for Holland at the turn of the century with dreams of attaining a European medical degree. In Amsterdam, he cuts a dashing figure in a three-piece suit, having long abandoned his traditional Minangkabau dress, and later returns to the Dutch East Indies with a Dutch wife to serve, for a time, in the colonial medical service. In the rural region of Banyumas, where the Rockefeller Foundation established public health demonstration projects in the 1930s, a man in traditional Javanese dress leans over yet another steely microscope to see up close the dense outlines of hookworms floating on a slide of glass. In another, an Indies physician, outraged by claims of colonial psychiatrists about the minds of "the Malay" or "the Javanese," writes back, asking sardonically who indeed best represents the psyche of the Dutch: "the Freezian, the Hollander, or the Limburger, or maybe the tropical-Dutch" (p. 128). Throughout *Nurturing Indonesia*, these stories and images, captured in black and white photographs as well as in the voices of Indies physicians who penned countless articles in Dutch and Indonesian, leave a lasting impression of both the affinities and the tensions that bind together the history of western colonial medicine and modernity with the history of nationalist politics in the Dutch East Indies.

For decades, historians have observed in passing that many of Indonesia's nationalist figures were trained as doctors or physicians under colonialism. For many readers, the names Soetomo and Wahidin Soedirohoesodo—medical students who founded Indonesia's first nationalist organization, Boedi Oetomo—will ring with as much familiarity as the names of other nationalist luminaries like Abdul Rivai, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, and Soewardi Soerjaningrat. The uncanny role Indies physicians played in national movements is now well known, and Hans Pols, a historian of science and medicine, uses this as a starting point to propel these figures forward in a new and a more interesting light. In his book, they are no longer political actors with a back-

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ground in medicine, but medical practitioners who, precisely because of their training and experience in colonial medicine, came to dominate the colony's nationalist politics. Medical training is used not as a convenient biographical background to a national narrative but as a formative experience—of modernity and mobility, of language, the psyche and the body—that shaped the scale and scope of colonial and anticolonial politics in the Dutch East Indies. Pols not only establishes a connection between medicine and nationalism but sustains it through the rough and tumble of twentieth-century Indonesian history, tracing the historical arc of how medicine and medical practitioners shaped and defined Indonesian nationalist movements, from colonial to postcolonial times.

Nurturing Indonesia presents the history of colonial medicine and the history of Indonesia's national awakening as two sides of the same coin, two historical strands so tightly entwined that one cannot understand the experience of one without the other. At the heart of the book lies the argument that, for Indies physicians, the practice and the understanding of colonial medicine spurred a unique experience of modernity, one that was fostered in the spaces of classrooms and laboratories in colonial medical colleges and was intensified as these very students entered colonial society as Indies physicians who saw, dissected, and diagnosed the ills of colonial politics with a clinical gaze. It is no wonder then that today's Museum of National Awakening in Jakarta was formerly the Batavia Medical College, also referred to as STOVIA (*School tot Opleiding voor Indische Artsen*), and that so many nationalist figures stemmed from the generations of students trained at the Batavia Medical College whose nascent student associations and reading clubs grew into professional associations and nationalist political organizations. Significantly, the experience of modernity through colonial medical education was the very thing that inculcated a sense of disenchantment with the colonial order, eventually fomenting anticolonial sentiments and nationalist ideas. By tracing this very process step by step through the experiences of specific historical actors, Pols demonstrates how western colonial medicine was not merely a tool of empire, as many have argued, but an institution, a practice, and a condition—a habitus—that dramatically affected the personal, political, and professional identities of its practitioners as they tried to negotiate the hybridity of their upbringing and education in a colonial society divided along racial lines. In sum, the very seeds of decolonization were sown in the the promises and the strictures of colonial modernity, as Indies physicians became aspirants of social, political, and scientific progress articulated along nationalist lines.

If *Nurturing Indonesia* is a history of how Indies physicians successfully launched a nationalist movement in colonial Indonesia, it is also a history

of how modern medicine failed to live up to its ideals in the hands of both the colonial and the postcolonial state. Pols ends the book with a discussion of the decline of public health programs, regional disparities in funding and resources, and the general trend of decentralized health services in post-independence Indonesia. Indeed, it is the reality of the state of health care in Indonesian society that confronts us as we try to understand how Indies physicians, inspired by their commitment to medicine and progress, took center stage as they agitated for national independence in the not too distant past. In this way, *Nurturing Indonesia* is a work of scholarship that also resonates deeply with Indonesian audiences today. At the book launch of its Indonesian translation, *Merawat Bangsa*, at the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesian scholars, students, doctors, and the interested public gathered to celebrate the publication of the book with the author present and to discuss both historical and contemporary implications of colonial medicine and its formative role in the formation of Indonesian nationalism. If there is one lesson to take away from such an honest discussion about the promises and failures of modernity, it is that this entwined history also requires one to recognize the inheritance of a shared past, one that is not so easily reconciled by extending into the present the oppositions that made colonialism possible.

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