PROCEEDING
The 3rd INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS
CONFERENCE ON INDONESIA

INDONESIAN URBAN CULTURES
AND SOCIETIES

The Graduate School UGM, 8 - 9 November 2011

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Assoc. Prof. Freek Colombijn (Vrije University of Amsterdam)
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Introduction

Discussing the current urban culture phenomenon, it is commonly believed that it has a significant strategic meaning as it meets the reality that there are more than fifty percent of world society currently live in urban cities. Seen from the cultural-sociological perspectives, urban culture phenomenon is mostly the result of modernization phenomenon.\(^1\) One of the main positive characteristics of the urban city society compared to the rural society is their ability and potentials to take control on the production construct, reproduction and distribution of knowledge as the main pillar of dynamic process and change of culture.

There have been so many historical-cultural facts showing, along with the history of this nation’s journey starting from the colonial era, the urban’s society life and culture which has not only influenced the country life but even become the main founder of a set efforts in building and growing strategic ideas of what so called nationality and freedom awareness which mainly based on a wide perspective of the principal idea of civil society (masyarakat madani).\(^2\)

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2. *Masyarakat madani*, or commonly considered having similar meaning to ‘civil society’, is derived from the term ‘societas civitas’, translated from Latin from Aristoteles idea *koinonia politike*. In Indonesian context, the idea of civil society is mainly proposed by Nurkholis Madjid referring to the historical facts of Islamic society after Muhammad, the prophet moved to Madina, which can be identified from the civilized society having noble characters. The word *madani* is
What has been becoming the main concern is the urban’s current strategic position and role in the current contemporary culture which often invite sharp criticism as in fact this group of society tends to live in an uncircuit ordinate and circle which cannot be said to be ‘enlightening’. This condition is the result of their current culture paradigm which tends to be considered as under the hegemony of the grips of a typical classical curses of the modern age, namely, capitalism and neoliberalism, which tend to have an opaque narration as its main spirit against the enlightening principles of ideal civil society. This phenomenon mainly concerns with, how the values that characterize the classical marker-urban society, seemed to fade slowly amid an atmosphere of contemporary national life.

One crucial issue appears opaque to the fore as the record of contemporary urban culture, although subtle, is associated with the issue of 'racism' which increasingly increased. As one of the ancient diction that can be said to be the most sensitive in the long history of human culture, it turns out that the term-of course with all the typical stereotypes of absurdity that always moisten it-until now barely unmoved from necessity. This racism phenomenon in the current era, even, meets its comprehensive justification space, particularly, in urban society with all of its various representations. One of the reflective-comprehensive references which could be used to look closer to this phenomenon, is whenever we relate it to one of the main pillars that construct the city urban society, that is through the advertisement discourse. Hence, before coming to the discussion on the problem of racism within the advertising discourse, it seems necessary to have a little discussion on the urban historical treatise in Indonesian context.


3 It is the beginning of various multidimensional ironic elements, which tend to explain the current condition of metropolitan cities, which can be considered as cities without souls; cities without their citizens. A critical comprehensive study of this opaque profil tendension of the urban societies’ rites, can be easily seen from Jo Santoso’s, Menyiasati Kota Tanpa Warga (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2006).
The History of Urban Society in Indonesian Context

In Indonesian context, the existence of urban society, which is often closely related to the middle class society, has its most significant history starting from the end of the 19s to the beginning of 20th century, particularly related to the practice of the Dutch’s ‘ethical politics’. Within that period, the Dutch’s exploitative–dehumanitative stereotype profile, experienced its historical radical orientations, that is, when it noticed treatise concern over the colony. One of the various criticism and condemnation to the Dutch Colonial government came from an Indo Belanda called, ‘Ernest Francois Eugene Douwes Dekker’, in his novel entitled Max Havelaar (1860), followed by C.Th. van Deventer—a lawyer who once lived in Indonesia during the year 1880-97—who published an article in the Dutch journal-de Gids, in 1899 entitled ‘Een eerschuld’ (A Debt of Honor). All of those criticisms began in 1901, when Queen Wilhelmina announced/declared an overall investigation on the colonial colony inhabitants’ welfare, particularly those living in Java island, and at the same time the ‘ethical politics’ was declared, as one of the solutions. This politics which came into practice in 1902, when Alexander W.F Idenburg became Minister of Colonial Affairs (1908-1909) and then became the Governor General of Hindia Belanda (1909-1916), with its main pillars, that is education, had given a chance to some colonial inhabitants to get an enlighten access. Those inhabitants, later became the first urban generations in the Indonesian history. Their live style totality, taste, awareness, and beliefs within

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5 In Indonesia, a Dutch writer who used a pen name (nom de plume) ‘Multatuli’, is widely known as Dr. Danudirdja Setiabudhi, who was born in Pasuruan on 8 October 1879, a the third child and the second son of Auguste Henri Edouard Douwes Dekker dan Louisa Neumann. Please see M. Nasruddin Anshorig & Djumaidi Tjakrawerdaya, Rekam Jejak Dokter Pejuang & Pelopor Kebangkitan Nasional (Yogyakarta: LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2008), 71.

6 Ricklefs, 328.

7 Ricklefs, 328.

8 The figures of nationalist movement, such as Soekarno, Hatta, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoema, Syahrir, and many more, can be considered as the first generation of Indonesian urban society.
their period can be said to be the main determination of the struggle to get the long historical entity of Indonesia.

However, it can simplicitly say that, it is a history, as we currently deal with difficulties as we have to draw a map of imperial sites of the urban cathedral's achievement in the context of contemporary Indonesia. The contemporary city urban society’s traces can only be seen and bemoaned from ruins of houses having the Art Deco style which have became unclearly seen. The current contemporary metropolitan urban society have been trapped to a series of tragic epic betrayal.  

**Racism Aesthetics in Advertising and the Urban Betrayal**

One of the betrayal epic treatise of the urban whose comprehensive reflections are the most transparent can be clearly identified as we reflect on the culture of advertising. Being one of the fenomenal findings in the culture of urban society, advertising has become the most important variable, in terms of its reflection and also in terms of its ability to construct the living awareness of the modern and postmodern urban societies. Imagine, in the totality of life and culture of contemporary society, advertising has become a dramatic kaleidoscopic sensation landscape mainly covering the entire face and body awareness of urban sites, that it seems not even a single space is free from its influence and power. Advertising has truly become a kind of sentral institution in modern society. Therefore, it is not excessive as McLuhan has considered advertising as one of the 20th century greatest masterpieces, containing what Raymond William once

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9 One of the critical reflections and understandings of this phenomenon, can be seen from some fine art works exhibited in ‘CP Biennale 2005’ event in Jakarta, and also from the critical curatorial introduction entitled “Urban, Refleksi” written by Jim Supangkat. For further explanation please see Jim Supangkat, “Urban, Refleksi”, in CP Biennale 2005: Urban Culture (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia in collaboration with CP Foundation, 2005), 2-18.


called ‘the magic system’, or what Sutherland mentioned as ‘the mistique system’, having an amazing force to persuade or even to construct society’s awareness massively-ideologically. Through this context, advertising has become a form of superstructure agent having the powerful force to determine the cultural tendency, trend, as well as mode in the society. Advertising is an important category and social key to explain the treatise of the construction of production and reproduction of various supremacist ideology of commodification in this modern era.

Beyond all the ideological critique of the various negative impacts of advertising discourse, whose traditions much anchored to the base of analysis related to issues surrounding the growing hedonism and consumerism which need to be concerned. The other important impact of advertising also comes from its aesthetic representation which has been deeply contaminated by racism whose main spirit is dehumanism. Racism phenomenon hegemony in advertising as mentioned could be easily verified, by means of two main categories, namely obsessions towards western body or Indo and white skin (whiteness).

Firstly, in relation to obsession towards Western body performance or Indo in this contemporary advertising representation context, can be seen from the hegemony of using the model—in terms of the gender: men or women, or the age category: children, adolescents, elders—which tend to use those coming from the descendants of Caucasian race or those who are Indo used as the illustration attraction of the offered product. The Western models or 'Indo' are used as

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17 In advertising context, particularly in printed and electronic mass media based on audio visual (such as television), the representations of its aesthetics signifiers can be divided into five categories, namely: illustration, headline, subheadline, slogan, and signatur line. All those elements are represented in a combination of pictorial (pictures) and verbal (words). Please see Torben Vestergaard & Kim Schroder, The Language of Advertising (Oxford: Basil Blakwell Ltd., 1985), 49-50; Check also Ron Beasley & Marcel Danesi, “The Semiotic Approach to Advertising”, in Persuasive Signs: The Semiotics of Advertising (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 22.
the main attraction, or what commonly called as ‘eye catching’/‘eye catcher’.

The concept of Western body performance idealization—which has implicitly considered as the universal body performance idealization—is based on particularly in relation to face proportionality character, resulted from the ‘index cephalicus’. Index cephalicus is a concept or theory of proportionality of human structure and face form resulted from a measurement process based on the comparison of the length and width of their head. “The cephalic index (index cephalicus) is numerical expression of ratio between the head width (biparietal) and head length (frontooccipital diameter) of a person”. This form of measurement results in three very racial human face structure characters, called: dolichocephalic (human face of people coming from Caucasian race and North America), mesocephalic (Afrika), and brachycephalic (Mongolian, Asia). The result of this face proportionality character measurement is then completed by an observation on other secondary characteristics, such as, the differences in skin color pigment, proportion of body performance, crease of the eye, tissues of hair and feather, which are then become the scientific legitimation to justify this theory of racism. The ideal Western body performance images, which are quite popular, are: white skin, blue eyes, pointed nose, and blond hair. The ideal standard basic measurement of humanity, which has been provoked and manipulated by means of the euphoria-hegemonic Western bias in advertising,

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18 The phenomenon of using of Western or Indo model in the contemporary Indonesian advertising is easily recognized, either in printed mass media advertising, outdoor media advertising (for example in the form of billboards) or in the form of electronic media based on audio-visual, such as television.


22 Naini, without page number.

23 Bakker, 72.
has in particular led to problems, since the existence of human beings has been absurdly reduced into the most superficial body performance dimension.

Secondly, the other category, which also has sensitive relationship to the racism terminology and hegemony in the contemporary advertising representation is the obsession of having the white skin (whiteness). The main underlying reason for this obsession is the tendency of considering that Western whiteness body existence as the only standard for beautiful skin and universal contemporary myth of beauty. This phenomenon can be clearly seen in various advertising of cosmetic products either those produced by Indonesian or those imported from abroad countries. In most of the contemporary advertisings for skin cosmetic products, the words, ‘white’, has become a magic word having a miraculous power to change the previous words describing beauty commonly used in Eastern countries, not to mention Indonesia, such as: kuning langsat, kuning gadhing, nemu giriting, or sawo mateng, which have been becoming the ideological belief in Javanese society and culture. Based on this whiteness hegemony, then, the humans’ dispute to survive in this contemporary modern era, is not based on Darwin’s evolution theory, that is, the survival of the fittest, but goes further with an additional term of the survival of the most white.

This representation format of advertising aesthetics, in turn, results in aesthetic awareness which can be considered as ‘racism aesthetics’, which can be said to be a relatively new subject in arts discipline, which appears in line with the development of postcolonial theories. Indeed, it is commonly believed that

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24 It can be seen from various cosmetic and beauty products, such as, Sari Ayu Martha Tillar in 2007 promoting a series of cosmetic product called ‘putih langsat’; Mustika Ratu in 2008 promoting its product called ‘Bengkoang Whitening Series’; and also other cosmetic products, namely, ‘Viva White’, ‘Citra White’, ‘Fanbo Whitenign Arromatic’; ‘Piyx UV Whitening’; ‘Hazelin Natural White’; ‘Nivea Pure White’; ‘Pond’s White’, ‘L’oréal White Perfect’; ‘Revlon Absolut White’; ‘Vaselin Healthy White’; ‘Shinzu’I’; ‘Lux White Glamour’, ‘Give White’, and many others. This phenomenon can also be clearly seen its further derivation, for instance, by looking at how many beauty salon busineses established in big cities whose income could reach billion rate.

This advertising aesthetic typology, stuck in a puddle of racism, can be categorized into bad taste advertising, since its aesthetic representation puts forward the ‘aestheticism’ concept; that is a form of aesthetics which has no connection with the domains of goodness or truth.

This model of aesthetics, in particular, can be considered as the anti-aesthetics owing to the fact that from its history, the understanding of the word aesthetics either in Eastern or Western countries, cannot be separated from the terminologies of ‘beauty’ and ‘truth’. The term aesthetics, etymologically is derived from the word ‘beauty’ (English), beau (France), bello (Italian) and bellum (Spanish), which means goodness. In the ancient Greek times, when Aesthetics together with two other philosophical domains, namely Logics and Ethics became an integral concept, the education spirit commonly adopted during the periods was based on the concept of kalos kagathos (kalos = beauty; kagathos = virtuous); aimed at developing smooth taste and at the same time providing young people to become virtuous ones. A similar concept, has implicitly inspired kakawin literature, epics written by ancient Javanese writers or those commonly called as kawi during 10-15th century. These epics are commonly called as kalangwan, whose underlying concept is a combination of beauty,

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26 Apollo Amoko, “Race and Postcoloniality”, in Paul Wake & Simon Malpas (eds.), The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory. First Published (London: Routledge, 2006), 127. This racism question has also become one of the main issues in Postcolonial theory developed by its main figures, for example, Edward Said, with his Orientalism (USA: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2003); Frantz Fanon, with Black Skin, White Masks. Translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008); Hommi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (Routledge, 1994); and Gayatri C. Spivak lewat A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward A , History of the Vanishing Present (USA: Harvard University Press, 1999).


goodness, and truth.\textsuperscript{30} In Chinese philosophy, for instance, there is only one term representing the idea of beauty and morality taste, that is, \textit{tao}, meaning ways. Those taken the right ways, they will have capability to differentiate goodness from badness, between beauty and ugly.\textsuperscript{31} Consequently, it is not surprising as Sahakian claimed that “The aesthetic soul, who loves truth and pursues the good”.\textsuperscript{32} In line with that concept, Santayana stated that “The beauty is truth, that it is the expression of the ideal, the symbol of divine perfection, and the sensible manifestation of the good”.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{The Sustainable Genealogy Roots}

Genealogically, racism roots, have firmly planted in the long intercultural historical treatise. Two anthropologists, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Georges Curvier, were those who initially divided human race origin into three parent fathers, namely: \textit{Mongoloid (Oriental), Negroid (Ethiopian)} and \textit{Caucasian (white)}.\textsuperscript{34} Each of these groups has different physical performance as the result of their origin where they previously lived, that is, Kaukasus mountanious area to the south of Russia, the area of Nigeria, in Africa, and the area of Mongolian in Asia. This reality of physical-biological difference of each race was then used by Blumenbach and Curvier as the foundation to justify permanently the differences on the domain of psychological ability.\textsuperscript{35}

The existence of racism ideology, attitudes, and behaviors, have been absurdly recognized by many philosophers even since the ancient Greek period. Aristoteles, through his book \textit{Politics}, for example, stated that commonly people coming from Asia or commonly called Asian have less capability to think and to compete, that they have been contionously under colonialized and considered as

\textsuperscript{30} Hartoko (ed.), 8.
\textsuperscript{31} Hartoko (ed.), 78.
labors or even slaves. It is natural that human beings are created having different shape and colour of skin. Therefore it seems very common that some of them were born to be free people, while some others were born to be slaves. He noted that it is a fair division.\textsuperscript{36} Besides Aristoteles, an ancient historian Herodotus, through his writing entitled “History” in The Greek Historians, mentioned the stereotypes of the black Ethiopian people, as people who eat snakes, lizards, and other reptiles,. He also mentioned that these people cannot speak as other human beings do, and the only thing they can do is producing a particular sound as the one belongs to bats.\textsuperscript{37} In line with these two historians, a famous Roman historical writer, Tacitus, adored the German nation (North Europe) for their physical characteristics (light skin, blond hair, blue eyes), which are considered as the pure race, having no mixture with other races.\textsuperscript{38}

Meanwhile, Carlous Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist, in 1758 called the human species formally as \textit{Homo Sapiens} and at the same time he also suggested a basic racism idea. He divided human races into four sub categories, namely: Red American, Yellow Asian, Black African, and White European. Based on his theory, he also classified the four subcategories further as: 1) \textit{Homo Sapiens Americanus} as those who are ‘bad tempered, stubborn, light-hearted or cheerful, free’; 2) \textit{Homo sapiens Asiatus} as those who are stubborn, arrogant, and stupid; whereas , 3) \textit{Homo Sapiens Europaeus} as those who are active, highly intelligent, and inventive.\textsuperscript{39}

Meanwhile, a French, Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, in his book entitled \textit{Essai sur L’inégalité des Races Humaines} (An Essay about the


\textsuperscript{37} Herodotus, “History”, in \textit{Greek Historians}. Translated by George Rawlinson (New York: Random House, 1942).


Differences of Human Races) published in 1853 proposed his views, which tend to be very ultra-Eurocentrists and fatalists, that all humans’ civilization come from the white race that he called as Arya. He mentioned that it is the only race having all the beauty, intelligence, and strength.

Charles Darwin, through his phenomenal writing The Descent of Man (1874) also expressed his legitimation of the question of races, by saying, “At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world”. The term civilized race obviously refers to the white skin race, Arya. All of Darwin’s evolution theory ends in his masterpiece thesis, which at present tends to be canonical, that is, ‘the survival of the fittest’.

In terms of literary domain, however, Rudyard Kipling, an English controversial poet living in the end of 19th century itu, has once published a very racist poem entitled The White Man’s Burden (1865). In his poem, Kipling claimed that all dark historical phenomena of Western atrocities against East within the domains of imperialism and colonialism, can be considered as Western white man’s burden or a very hard task and at the same time it is also a glorious task for the sake of making Eastern civilized, that he mentions in his poem—in the eight line of the first stanza—as nations and societies: half-devil and half-child.

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40 Jacques Barzun, “Chapter IV: Gobineau”, in Race: A Study in Modern Superstition (USA & Canada Taylor & Francis, 1937), 78.
Meanwhile, the European ocean explorer, Christopher Columbus had also made a racist note as he came back from Caribbien islands (America), mentioning that he met the indigenous people whose characters are very different from his society coming from the White man race. He considered the indigenous people as a wild, savage, rude, and cruel group of society. In addition, he also mentioned that each of them has nose similar to the one belongs to dogs and they love to eat one another (cannibals), and they like to behead their enemy and drink their blood.

There is also a myth in the form of a legend to strengthen and complete and legitimate Aryan’s power and strength. In Europe legend, there is a famous character called Mannu—the son of Tuisto, who is well known as Aryan ancestor. It is from the term Mannu that derives the word Mannusa meaning the descendants of Mannu. As Mannusa has experienced various victory, those who are not the descendants of Mannu are not human. The term Manusia, Man, Mensch, Hu-Man, then become the hegemonic term for human. Therefore, it is widely believed among the White race, Aryan that people having other colour of skin are not descendants of Mannu meaning that they aren’t humans but monsters, demons, fairy, animals, or any other creatures rather than humans, that they deserve to be killed.

Having a long process of research—particularly through a research project known as Human Genome conducted by National Instituties of Health and Department of Energy, United States of America in October 1990—it has found that there is no human gen known as race. Bill Clinton, the president of USA at

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45 Christopher Columbus, Select Letters of Christopher Columbus: with Other Original Documents, Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World. Editor by Richard Henry Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1847), 25-31. This book was digitalized on June 23rd, 2007.


48 Jenny Reardon, “Chapter 3: In the Legacy of Darwin”, in Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 45. Please check also Kevin Davies, Cracking the Genome: Inside the Race to Unlock
that time, on June 26th, 2000, as he gave an introduction of the *Human Genome Project* result, stated that “Human beings, regardless of race, are 99.9 percent the same”. Consequently, a series of claims proposed by experts to justify race division is false. Race claimed as a scientific discovery in the 19th and 20th century, is merely a part of social construction. Indeed, racism is actually a prejudice that human species have certain characteristics inherited from their ancestors that enable them to be divided into smaller groups by which each of them tends to have different characteristics. This prejudice, is then, becomes more absurd as it meets with the concept of power, that “Prejudice+power = racism”. This format of understanding is in line with the statement declared by UNESCO on July 18th, 1950, stating that: “The scholars resist against any theory which use the racial thesis as an operational tool the interpretation of culture”. In addition, Sartre has also mentioned the similar thing that: “That there is no biological, cultural, or metaphysical reality to ‘race’; it is a social construct”. Therefore, any campaigns to determine human races, even when they are conducted through scientific methods, are particularly false ways. Race, has rather blurred out rather than explained the multidimensional humans’ history.

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50 Olson, 89-90.


54 Bakker, 72. In 1965 UNESCO invited 22 famous scholars from anthropological institution from all over the World to rediscussing the race theory culturally, and the result was that all of the participants supported the UNESCO statement.


56 Olson, 90.
However, the scientific discoveries that try to break all theories of race are not sociologically-culturally enough to construct a new positive perspective towards the present racist issues. Image towards black colour, for instance,—including similar clours, such as brown or yellow—has strongly constructed in the wide and complex sociocultural spectrum, with its negative and bad stigma mainstream. This colour, is not merely the symbol of negro and slavery, but this term has already been used in daily language with its negative image. There are some expressions using this words with its negative meaning, such as: ‘black death’, ‘black magic’, ‘black market’, bete noir (French), and schwarz fahrer (Deutch). Those terms have also been absorbed in Indonesian terms together with their negative meaning or sense, for instance: pasar gelap, pedagang gelap, pendatang gelap, penumpang gelap (not pasar hitam, pedagang hitam, pendatang hitam, penumpang hitam!).

In the Indonesian context, racism has become a crucial and hard issue regarding to the curse of postcolonial syndrom, as the result of the long history of the White men colonialism, particularly those coming from Dutch. It is widely known that all of the narrations, either in the form of fiction or scientific, concerning the colonialism experienced by this country in the past are always connected to the tragic stories of racism and dehumanization. This fact has been experienced not only by those originally coming and born in this nation but also by people commonly called as Indo, that is, those born from intermarriages between the local and Dutch people.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The long stories of racism and dehumanization in this colonialism era, spread in almost all of references about colonialism studies in Hindia Belanda, either those written by Indonesian or Dutchman. Some of them can be seen, for example, Subagio Sastrowardoyo, Sastrowardoyo, Sasstra Hindia Belanda dan Kita (Jakarta: PT Balai Pustaka, 1983), telling the racism phenomenon in literature; Check also Tineke Hellwig, Citra Kaum Perempuan di Hindia Belanda. Translated by Yayasan Obor Indonesia. First Publication (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2007); See also Ulbe Bosma & Remco Raben, “Chapter 1, Sparation and Fussion: Racism and Mestisation”, in Being Dutch In The Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920. First Published (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008); Check also Anwar Thosibo, Historiografi Perbudakan: Sejarah Perbudakan di Sulawesi Selatan Abad XIX. First Printing (Magelang: IndonesiaTera, 2002); Check also Frances Gouda, Dutch Culture Overseas: Praktik Kolonial di Hindia Belanda, 1900-1942. Translated by Jugiari Soegiarta & Suma Riella Rusdiarti. Second Publication (Jakarta: Penerbit Serambi, 2007); Check also Reggie Baay, Nyai & Pergundikan di Hindia Belanda. Translated by Siti Hertini Adiwoso. First Publication (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2010).
Ironically, although all Indonesian have experienced a hard colonialism trauma, which has put them into deep misery over generations—they cannot even stay away from the Western enchantment with all its great narrations. This is what commonly called as the ambivalence curse, that becomes one of the unexplained key words in postcolonial theory. In one side, we do hate the White men but at the same time, we do miss and adore them.

One of the example showing the madness of Western image or Indo, and obsession of having white skin can be clearly seen in advertising. Through this context, we have becoming the victims of Western beauty theory, which mainly based on a superficial perspective, that is on the physical appearance towards the meaning of beautiful body, which becomes a rational modernity tradition “Conventional beauty is often as a commodity keep only for those who are perceived to be incredibly attractive and good-looking”.

In fact, in our culture, not to mention in Javanese culture, for a long time, it has ideologically been believed that the meaning of beauty must be put in a whole frame between physic and non-physical beauty, between body and soul, and also manners of treatment to get the harmony, which in ancient Javanese term called as *Rupasampat Wahyabyantara*. The concept of beauty concerning mainly on the outside domain, is not the real beauty, as its meaning is mostly connected to the comodification projects. “Beauty is only skin deep is not beauty of all, because a pretty face, hair, and body, or nice clothes are all surface attractiveness, with no depth. Societies stereotipical thinking has created an unrealistic idea of beauty to sell product”.

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When the Urban Society become New Ambtenaar

This phenomenon of the dominantly represented racism aesthetic hegemony in the awareness of Indonesian’s contemporary advertising tends to lead to a very deep concern as it is seen from those who become the actors and agents of the hegemony. Those roles are not played by the Western people but rather by ourselves, the urban society. This prototype of the present cultural colonization tragedy, reminds us to the ancient Dutch colonization modus called the indirect method, through the ‘priyayi’ group coming from the local Indonesian and commonly called ambtenaar, people who were loyal to Dutch. In the long history of Dutch colonialism historiography, it was through these ambtenaar, the destruction and radicality of Dutch colonialism was effectively carried out.

At present, these ambtenaar have changed their performance into the contemporary urban society and covered themselves with the jargons of modernization and capitalization, living in certain sites and metropolitan habitats. Similar to ambtenaar in the colonialization era, the new ambtenaar—the contemporary urban society—have the same performance in cultural perspective as terrifying. Their position and roles are no longer as the leaders of agents of social and cultural change and enlightening projects, on the contrary, they tend to be the main compradors of anti-civilization. Consequently, it seems necessary to go back to Levi-Strauss thesis in their books entitled Tristes Tropiques (1955), The Savage Mind (1962), and Totemism (1963), which implicitly mention that the


63 It happens as the urban society is placed in its ideal meaning, that is, as the educated society whose position and roles are said to be ‘berumah di angin’ (mentioned by WS Rendra). See Dick Hartoko (ed.), Golongan Cendekiawan Mereka yang Berumah di Angin: Sebuah Bunga Rampai (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1980).

64 It reminds as with the intellectuals’ betrayal, urban-intellectuals in France, the one mentioned by Julien Benda. See Julien Benda, The Treason of the Intellectuals. Translated by Richard Aldington. Fourth Paperback Printing (Transaction Publishers, 2009). This book was firstly published in French entitled La Trahison de Clercs, in 1927.
dynamic process of culture is always repeated and tends to be similar. Therefore, the patterns of cultural behaviours of the primitive society and modern one tend to be similar except in its representation. Primitive society is commonly called ‘cold society’, while the modern society is commonly called ‘hot society’. Strauss even has concluded that the logics of primitive-myth thinking is particularly the same as the positive thinking in modern science. He noted that it is the same intellectual logics and operation which take control over the two, and the possible distinctions we could make between the two are in terms of their orientation and objects.

Concerning the racism aesthetics in contemporary Indonesian advertising which based on Western syndrom, this kind of racism is particularly a small reflection of the top reality, as we see it through the perspective of iceberg theory. It means that the problem of Western race syndrom, has in particular haunted almost every domains and infrastructure of our civilization, that it is absolutely influenced our civilization. As a result, the existence of our basic humanitarianism becomes lost. It is by means of advertising that every day we are sitematically, unconsciously and continously colonialized by various ideological Western images and symbols and learn to hate our own natural body performance. We learn to hate the colour of our hair, our skin, our eyes, our form of nose, chin, lips, cheeks, and many others. Even this self hate politics has becomes more completely done, as this covers not only the physical domain but also the psychological and mentality domain, starting from the ways of thinking, feeling, imagining, and even our ways of dreaming. These phenomena are clearly reflected in this simple study context, that is on how Western racism aesthetic hegemony

67 It is this fact that verifies Anthony Synnott’s thesis as he mentions about body performance in social context, which cannot be seen only from its biological domain but also its political domain. Please check Anthony Synnott, “Introduction”, in *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self, and Society*. First Published (Routledge, 1993), 1; Check also Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. 2nd Edition (London: Sage Publication, 1996); Check also Kate Gleeson & Hannah Frith, “(De)constructing Body Image”, in *Journal of Health Psychology* (2006; 11; 79).
has destructed our power, ability, and awareness to formulate historical treatise and aesthetic historiography which are more Indocentrical, not only in this small context of advertising discourse but also in the whole art domain.  

Starting from this absurd reality, it is commonly believed that it may lead us to be a nation, having great or even absolute dependence to the Western countries, either in terms of managing our body performance, nature, or even our culture. Then, we are going to be the actors as well as the witnesses of one of Bung Karno revolutionary statements declared in his speech on August 17th, 1963, concerning his deep concern of the possibility that we may be the slave or labour country among other countries in the future; “Een natie van koelies, en een kolie onder de naties”. Seen from this fact, our awareness as human as well as citizen has completely damaged. Therefore, understanding this racism aesthetic phenomenon in advertising representation can be effectively and comprehensively used as one of the entrances to comprehend the projection portrait of the big narration of the contemporary Indonesian performance, which seems nearly powerless.

Closing

Based on this simple narration, it seems that it is the time for us to find alternative solutions to build our self cultural awareness, and one of the starting point and quite urgent step to do is by breaking the the contemporary urban society’s betrayal chain of awareness. The other step that seems very important, strategic and urgent to be carried out is the revitalization of the paradigm that has widely believed by the contemporary urban society in understanding advancement and modernity ideology, whose mainstream often confronts arbitrarily between the spirit of ‘rurality’ and ‘urbanity’. How the concept of rurality in the urban society context is considered as a condition that must be and will be left behind. Based on this perception, rurality is seen as having the same meaning and destiny

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68 For more comprehensive discussion of this, in its historical cultural spectrum and Indonesian’s historiography, please check Bambang Purwanto, Gagalnya Historiografi Indonesiasentris?! (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2006).

as *traditionality*, which tends to be confronted with *modernity*. This problem in particular, becomes one of the urban society’s main ideological problems that needs to be questioned and criticized. Why the contemporary Indonesian’s urban society are not willing to and having the capability to think of ways of, for instance, making the ‘rurality’ terminology, which is identically similar to ‘traditionality’ as the current and future basic of cultural behavioural patterns?

Our willingness and capability to bring back all the wisdom and goodness, and also the spirit of ‘rurality/traditionality’ in the contemporary Indonesia’s urban in particular, can be developed into a new promising thesis model, that is the one having no longer based on the Darwin’s old theory, that is, *the survival of the fittest*; nor *the survival of the most white*, but it would rather based on *the survival of the wisest*. The ones who will be the winners of the cultural evolution and the future life are no longer the ones who are as wild as the white wolf—as commonly believed and proved during the long history starting from the past to the modern era and even contemporary postmodern one—but they will be the best and wisest people in terms of their morality-mentality: no matter whether they have brown, yellow, red, black, or white colour of the skin. This concept needs to be applicable not only in the small context of advertising aesthetics but also in the whole civilization aesthetics.
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