

PREFACE

On the cusp of history and economics, economic history is not a widely practiced academic discipline in Indonesia. Although many will readily acknowledge that history is crucial to understanding Indonesia's current state of economic development, not enough scholars have used the available historical sources to probe the still prevailing glib answers to the question what historical factors account for the country's economic plight. Few combine an interest in development economics and history to properly test the adequacy of such interpretations, which tend to caricature the exploitative nature of Western firms during the colonial era.

It is, admittedly, not easy to come to terms with long-term economic change in a country as large as Indonesia. Sufficient historical macro-economic statistics are not readily available to enhance our understanding of the general aspects of Indonesia's past. More importantly, regional diversity was and still is so considerable that any effort to generalise past economic trends in the country is laden with difficulties.

In that light, Nawiyanto's study is one of a growing range that draw attention to regional diversity within the country as a whole, and also in the core island of Java. Nawiyanto's book is particularly welcome, because it covers the Besuki region, an area that was manifestly different from other parts of Java. Nawiyanto's findings therefore throw doubt on the adequacy of previous generalisations. They draw attention to the relevance of the more systematic but gradual forces that drive economic change, including