

ARCHITECT COSMAN CITROEN (1881-1935) Family Background, Arrival to- and Career in Surabaya

SANTOSO, Joko Triwinarto

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering
Brawijaya University, Malang, Indonesia
Email: jokotris@ub.ac.id

ABSTRACT

A Dutch architect Cosman Citroen (1881-1935) was one of the most remarkable architects in the Netherlands Indies. He left his position in Amsterdam and then went to Surabaya to be an advisory architect of the Municipality of Surabaya. During his career in the city, he designed many buildings and constructions so that any discussion about Dutch colonial architecture in the city cannot be separated from his works. This article explains from which family he came, how situation of Surabaya when he arrived, and what his activities other than as the Municipal architect.

Keywords: Cosman Citroen, Dutch Colonial Architecture, Surabaya.

INTRODUCTION

Cosman Citroen (1881-1935) was a Dutch architect, the bulk of whose design could be found in Surabaya. Any discussion about Dutch colonial architecture in the city cannot be separated from his works. If H.P. Berlage considers Bandung as the city of C.P. Wolff Schoemaker due to a series of his works and Semarang as that of Thomas Karsten (Berlage, 1931), Surabaya belongs to Citroen. His works range from furniture to town planning and from architectural designs to civil constructions for a broad range of clients during his career both as an advisory architect of the Municipality (*Gemeente*) of Surabaya and as an independent architect afterwards. Unfortunately, previous studies on this architect only focus on his status as an advisory architect and his works in this city and other places. No one reveals his family background, moment when he arrived, and other activities during he stayed in Surabaya. By knowing his family, condition of the Netherlands Indies in general and Surabaya particularly when he arrived, and his activities, we can understand him more comprehensively.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Cosman Citroen was born in Amsterdam on 26 August 1881 (Fig. 1), the third child of Levie Citroen (Amsterdam, 12 November 1855 - † Amsterdam, 30 December 1905) and Sara Levie Coltof (Amsterdam, 26 February 1852 - † Amsterdam, 24 December 1921). Levie Citroen was a diamond worker, a profession dominated at that time in Amsterdam by Jewish workers. He was the son of Cosman Levie

Citroen, a diamond cutter, and Marianne Salomon Norden. In June 1880, they lived at Plantage Badlaan 19, 1018 Amsterdam. Sara Levie Coltof was the daughter of painter Levij Coltof and Beletje Levie Bronkhorst (Citroen, 2007).

Levie Citroen and Sara Levie Coltof had seven children: Betje (Amsterdam, 14 October 1879 - † Amsterdam, March 1901 died of tuberculosis), a stillborn son, architect Cosman Citroen (Amsterdam, 26 August 1881 - † Surabaya, 15 May 1935), medical doctor Salomon Citroen (Amsterdam, 22 January 1883 - † Auschwitz, 6 March 1944), Marianne (Amsterdam, 20 July 1884 - † Jewish house, Amsterdam and buried in Muiderberg), Leon (Amsterdam, 29 December 1885 - † Amsterdam, 7 May 1886) and Jeannette, a teacher in Haarlem (Amsterdam, 12 February 1887 - † ca. 1919 died of tuberculosis) (Citroen, 1994).



Source: Faber, 1934

Figure 1. Cosman Citroen (1881-1935)

In 1915, Cosman Citroen arrived in Surabaya and worked for N.V. Bouwmaatschappij “Kupang”, a company established by the Surabaya Municipality. Here, he married M.E. Dencher (Citroen, 2007). They had three children, Jörn Citroen (born in Surabaya, 7 September 1920, married to Mathilde Catharina de Vries in 1945 and passed away in Australia before 1994), Carin Citroen (born in Surabaya 22 June 1925, a secretary in post-war Batavia) and Robert Citroen (Surabaya, 22 June 1925, lived in Australia and probably passed away there) (Citroen, 1994). Cosman Citroen passed away in hospital due to complications from an appendix operation (Citroen, 1994) on 15 May 1935 (Zeeuw, 2001). A day later he was buried in Kembang Kuning cemetery, block A-167 (Dinas Kebersihan dan Pertamanan, 2007) (see Fig. 2).

One of Cosman Citroen’s brothers whose work experience related to his own was Salomon Citroen. After finishing his study, financed by a scholarship, Salomon Citroen was hired as a medical doctor on a Navy ship. His ships often sailed to tropical regions, visiting New Guinea, Sumatra and other islands. Afterwards, he worked on the “Koningin Emma” passenger ship which also sailed to tropical areas (Citroen, 1994). After finishing his contract, on 20 January 1916 he married Nelly Suze Croes, a teacher (born in Jember, East Java on 29 May 1896 and passed away on 16 February 1956 in Hilversum). They lived in Amsterdam, where Salomon took a course on tropical diseases at the *Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen* (Royal Tropical Institute) or KIT. Afterwards, he applied for a position as a local physician in Surabaya. His application was approved and on February 1917, two years after his older brother’s arrival, he arrived in Surabaya (Citroen, 1994). Several weeks after Salomon and Nelly’s arrival, their first child Uli Sierks Citroen was born on 26 February 1917. A year later, the couple had a second child Louis, who would later become a dentist, on 4 February 1918 and finally Alexander on 27 January 1919 (Citroen, 1994).



Source: Private collection, 2007.

Figure 2. Citroen’s Gravestone at Block A-167, Kembang Kuning Cemetery

In the same year of his arrival, Salomon accepted a position as member of the health commission led by dr. A. van Dorsten (Anonymous, 1918). His job was to examine the health condition of the indigenous people who worked with tin, Sumatra rubber and other agricultural products. Every afternoon and evening his house was opened for Javanese, Madurese and other people who needed medical help. A heavy workload weakened Salomon, and in 1927, he and his family moved to Australia. In 1931, Salomon’s family returned to the Netherlands and stayed with Nelly’s father, Jacobus Willem Croes (Citroen, 1994).

The following Diagram 1 shows the genealogy of the Citroen family.

DUTCH ARCHITECTS IN THE NETHERLANDS INDIES 1900-1942

The colonization of a new country is usually followed by the arrival of experts from various fields coming from their native country to the colonies. One of their aims is generally to find a new ‘market’ for their profession. This phenomenon also occurred when the Netherlands ruled the geographic areas

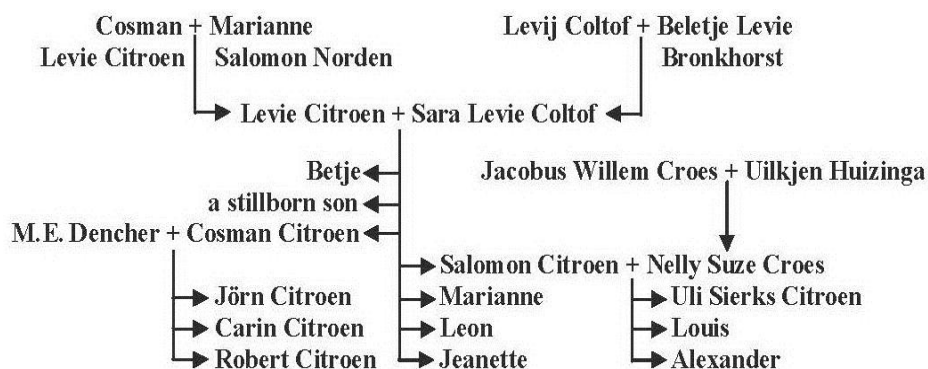


Diagram 1. Genealogy of Citroen Family

surrounding the equator in Asia, often known as the Netherlands Indies or Dutch Indies.

One of these professions is architect. Although the *Vereeniging van Bouwkundigen in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Association of Architects in the Netherlands Indies) was founded in 1898 (Roosmalen, 2008), it only became a large-scale organization after the turn of the century. After reaching their destination in the Netherlands Indies, the colonists established themselves as independent architects, founded architectural offices, joined municipalities as municipal architects or as architects working for the *Dienst Gemeentewerken* (Municipal Works Service), became architectural engineers (*bouwkundig ingenieur*) working for the *Burgerlijke Openbare Werken* (Department of Public Works) or BOW in short, took similar positions in other (government) institutions, or taught at the *Technische Hogeschool Bandung*. Furthermore, architectural bureaus became popular around World War I, mostly in combination with construction firms (Akihary, 1990).

More than 140 architects honed their skills in the Netherlands Indies. One such architect stayed in the region permanently until he passed away. Another spent his years there until the start of the Japanese occupation. Another periodically returned to the Netherlands, and another designed from the Netherlands, making short visits before or after the commencement of his projects. Several well-known names in the Netherlands such as H.P. Berlage (1856-1934), E.H.G.H. Cuypers (1859-1927), W.M. Dudok (1884-1974), J.F. Klinkhamer (1854-1928), and B.J. Ouëndag (1861-1932) created works in the colony.

ARCHITECTS IN SURABAYA

In the years from 1900 to 1942, Dutch and/or foreign architects who remained in the colony and the architectural firms that were established (main office or branch one) in Surabaya were not limited to lists of architects and architectural firms as described by Akihary (1990), Handinoto (1996), and Passchier (2006). Based on a comparison of those sources and the *Gids voor Soerabaja* or Guide for Surabaya No. 119 (Anonymous, September 1927), it can be found:

- The following are mentioned by three authors or by one/two of them: G.J.P.M. Bolsius, H.A. Breuning, W.B. Carmiggelt, C. Citroen, A. van Doorn, D.A. Emanuel, J. Gerber, C. de Graaff, W. Lemei, Th.N. Muller, J.J. de Ruiter, H. Maclaine Pont, C.P. Wolff Schoemaker, H. Smeets, M.B. Tideman, M.H. Voets, F.H. Warnaars, W. Westmaas, A. Zimmermann, architecten- en ingenieursbureau Job & Sprey, Algemeen Ingenieurs-

en Architecten bureau (AIA), architecten-ingenieursbureau Hulswit en Fermont te Weltevreden en Ed. Cuypers te Amsterdam, architectenbureau Rijkssen en Estourgie.

- The following are only mentioned in the Guide for Surabaya: J.L. Bliemer, J.J. van Dongen, L. Geldens, H. de Gids, S.J. Hijlkema, J. Kat, J.Th. Kienecker, H.B. Kolling, A.M. de Kruijff, J.C.F. v.d. Merendonk, L.A. Molijn, F.E. Sommerecker, W.F. Soute, G.T. Ubink, P.A. Westerbeek, C. Wielenga, J.W.J. Zernike, W.J.G. Zweedijk, Ingenieurs en Architecten Bureau Korverit.

If a closer investigation is conducted, i.e. a study of the Dutch architects and architectural firms in Surabaya prior to the arrival of Citroen in 1915, the following names are found: C. de Graaff, H. Smeets, W. Westmaas, R. Rijkssen, Architecten-ingenieursbureau Hulswit en Fermont te Weltevreden en Ed. Cuypers te Amsterdam, Architecten J.J. van Dongen & Co., Architects en Ingenieursbureau Groedo, Bouwkundig Atelier Vulkan (Akihary, 1990; Anonymous, August 1912; Handinoto, 1996; Passchier, 2006). The previous explanation is illustrated in Table 1.

CITROEN'S CAREER

Citroen came to the Netherlands Indies in 1915 with great aspirations to become an independent architect in Surabaya (Lemei, 1935), the capital of the East Java Province. There is no information as to why he chose this city as his destination. One might wonder why he did not choose Semarang, the location of his first project (*Nederlandsch-Indische Spoorweg Maatschappij* office) or Batavia as the capital city of the Netherlands Indies.

Citroen was able to develop good relationships in his new home, becoming involved with various committees and councils (Zeeuw, 2001). For example, he was a member of the board of the *Soerabajasche Jaarmarktvereniging* (Surabaya Annual Fair Association) or SJV from 1923 onwards (Fig. 4). He became a member of the advisory commission of an archaeological service at the invitation of the government (Lemei, 1935). Moreover, he held the position of president of the *Vereeniging "het Oudheidkundig Museum"* (Archaeological Museum Association) in Surabaya for several years (Lemei, 1935). After achieving some success, Citroen was asked to design a building complex for the ninth Annual Fair in 1923 and to continue the new Surabaya Town Hall in Ketabang. He then received an award at the Paris International Exhibition in 1925.

Table 1. Architects/Architectural Firms or Their Work(s) in Surabaya 1900-1942

Architect or Arch. Firm	<1899	1900	1901-1905	1906-1910	1911-1915	1916-1920	1921-1925	1926-1930	1931-1935	1936-1940	1941	1942
W. Westmaas												
Arch.-Ing. bureau Hulswit, Fermont en Ed. Cuypers												
H. Smeets												
C. de Graaff												
Arch. en Ing. bureau Groedo					?	?						
Architecten J.J. van Dongen en Co.					?			?				
Bouwkundig Atelier Vulkaan					?	?						
Arch. bureau Rijksen en Estourgie												
C. Citroen												
H. Maclaine Pont												
A. Zimmermann						?						
M.H. Voets						?						
Arch.- en Ing. bureau Job en Sprey												
J. Gerber												
G.J.P.M. Bolsius												
AIA												
J.L. Bliemer								?	?			
H. de Gidts								?	?			
A.M. de Kruijff								?	?			
L. Geldens								?	?			
Sj. Hijlkema								?	?			
J. Kat								?	?			
J.Th. Kienecker								?	?			
H.B. Kolling								?	?			
L.A. Moliijn								?	?			
F.E. Sommerecker								?	?			
W.F. Soute								?	?			
G.T. Ubink								?	?			
P.A. Westerbeek								?	?			
C. Wielenga								?	?			
J.W.J. Zernike								?	?			
W.J.G. Zweedijk								?	?			
Ing. en Arch. bureau Korverit								?	?			
C.P. Wolff Schoemaker												
W. Lemei												
Th.N. Muller												
W.B. Carmiggelt												
F.H. Waarnaars												
H.A. Breuning												
A. van Doorn												
M.B. Tideman												
J.J. de Ruiter												
D.A. Emanuel												

Note:

?

? : taken from the Guide for Surabaya



C. Citroen

Source: Jaarmarktvereniging, 1926.

Figure 4. Daily Board Members of *Soerabajasche Jaarmarktvereniging* in 1925

The Paris International Exhibition, opening on 28 April 1925 and closing in October 1925 with the theme “Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes” (International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) was the (international) exhibition where Citroen’s works were showcased for the first time. His design was dedicated to the display of modern decorative arts. The exhibition brought together thousands of designs from all over Europe and beyond with over 16 million visitors attending. The exhibition was shaped by France’s ambitions in the years immediately following the First World War. Its aim was to establish the preeminence of French taste and luxury goods. French displays dominated the exhibition and Paris was presented as the most fashionable of cities (Victoria and Albert Museum, 10 April 2013).

Ir. J. de Bie Leuveling Tjeenk, Commissioner-General of the Dutch department at the exhibition, made it known that the Dutch Pavilion presented the works of 237 artists and designers, who were classified into nine groups: architecture, interior and furniture, sculpture and small plastic construction, wall decoration, stained glass and mosaic, textile, ceramics and glassware, processed metal and jewellery (*byouteriën*), book and print art and applied graphics (Anonymous, 30 June 1925). At this event, Citroen earned a “Mention”, the lowest category of awards for his design of the Gubeng Bridge (Anonymous, 15 December 1925: 262). Other participants from the Netherlands Indies who received awards were J.F.L. Blankenberg (also “Mention” category) and the firm of Karsten-Lutjens-Toussaint (bronze medal).

In the mean time, a plan was made to hold a Netherlands Indies architectural exhibition in August 1925, to take place in the *Kunstkring* building in

Weltevreden (Anonymous, 15 May 1925). It was postponed until the 1925 Paris Exhibition was concluded. Finally, the exhibition was held from 10 to 30 December 1925 (Anonymous, 15 December 1925: 263), shortly after the Paris Exhibition. The most likely reason for this deferral was to provide an opportunity for the participants from the Netherlands Indies at the Paris Exhibition to return with their exhibition materials, mostly photographs and images, for display in Batavia. These representatives were J.H. Antonisse, J.F.L. Blankenberg, C. Citroen, B.J.K. Cramer, J. van Hoytema, the firm of Hulswit-Fermont-Ed. Cuypers, the firm of Karsten-Lutjens-Toussaint, H. Maclaine Pont and P.A.J. Moojen (Cramer, 31 October 1925). The organizers of the exhibition were the *Nederlandsch-Indische Architecten Kring* (NIAK) and the *Batavia Kunstkring*. The exhibition became the first of its kind in Batavia. With the exception of B.J.K. Cramer and J. van Hoytema, all of the names mentioned above and others including AIA, H.P. Berlage, the firm of Job and Sprey, R. Baumgartner, G. Jobst, J.J. Jiskoot, J. Gerber, E. Kühr, the firm of Wiemans-Abell-Pichel, the firm of Reyerse-De Vries and *Staatsspoorwegen* (SS) exhibited their works in the form of drawings, photographs and/or three-dimensional scale models (maquette).

Citroen’s position as chairman of the Association of the Archaeological Museum led to his appointment to one of the juries for a photograph and sketch competition of vernacular houses in East Java. The competition was organized by the *Soerabaische Kunstkring* (Surabaya Art Society) and the *Java Instituut* (Java Institute) at a conference at the latter institution in Surabaya on 23-26 September 1926 (Kunstkring, September 1926). Two other jurists were Henri Maclaine Pont (1884-1971), an architect representing the Java Institute, and Bruno Nobile de Vistarini, an architect in Surabaya who was also a member of the *Soerabaische Kunstkring* daily board led by H.M. Planten (Kunstkring, September 1926).

Because of Citroen’s position as president of the Archaeological Museum Association, he was asked to give a speech at the opening of the Exhibition for Language, Land and Folklore of East Java and Madura held by the Java Institute in Surabaya on 25 September - 10 October 1926 (Merkus, 1926).

During his career in the Netherlands Indies, Citroen produced several sketches, designs (buildings and other constructions) and two-dimensional development plans. In Surabaya these were:

- Development plan for the Kupang area;
- Development plan for the Ketabang area;
- Surabaya Town Hall;

- House on Sumatra street;
- Kebondalem bridge;
- *Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij* (BPM) office;
- “K.K. Knies” music and piano shop;
- Shop of “Van Kempen, Begeer and Vos” Royal Dutch precious metal company;
- Darmo hospital;
- Gubeng bridge;
- The ninth Surabaya Annual Fair;
- Pasar Besar railway viaduct;
- Extension of the *Algemeen Syndicaat van Suikerfabrikanten in Nederlandsch-Indië* (ASNI) building;
- British community church;
- Emplacement of the *Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij* (BPM);
- Wonokromo bridge;
- Mansion on Kayun street;
- Mayor’s official residence;
- Monument of Dijkerman; and
- *Borneo Sumatra Handel Maatschappij* (Borsumij) office;

Besides the works above, Citroen also produced three designs of unexecuted projects in Surabaya, including (Anonymous, 31 December 1925):

- Drawing of a wooden gasoline station;
- Drawing of a wooden boat house; and
- Drawing of a wooden restaurant in a town park.

Other works that can be found outside Surabaya:

- *Nederlandsch-Indische Spoorweg Maatschappij* (NIS) office, Semarang. In this project, Citroen acted as an architect assistant to help B.J. Ouëndag and J.F. Klinkhamer.
- Country house, Lawang, Malang;
- Interior of Malang Town Hall, Malang;
- Hospital, Jember; and
- “Faroka” cigarette factory, Malang.

The above projects were made by Citroen when he was the Municipal advisory architect or as part of his private practice.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, from the genealogy of Citroen family, it can be known that he came from a family that had artistic blood. His maternal grandfather, Levij Coltof, worked as a painter, a profession which is close to drawing skills. That is why Citroen had talent on pen drawing.

Second, his choice to live in Surabaya was strengthened by his brother’s arrival. Salomon Citroen. Then, both worked for the Municipality of

Surabaya, one as the advisory architect and the other as the physician and member of the health commission.

Third, from Table 1, it can be seen that before Citroen’s arrival, Surabaya had a limited number of architects and architectural firms. A few of the buildings in the city were designed in another city, i.e. Weltevreden, by the firm of Hulswit, Fermont and Ed. Cuypers. It seems likely that Citroen came at the right time, when the city needed more architects to support increased development. Surabaya became a potential architectural ‘market’ and attracted many Dutch architects and architectural (and construction) firms, as well as firms from other countries, all eager to establish their profession there.

Last, Citroen involved in many activities held by several institutions other than the Municipal of Surabaya, such as the Surabaya Annual Fair Association since 1923, the advisory commission of an archaeological service, the Archaeological Museum Association, the Surabaya Art Society, and the Java Institute. He also participated in two well-known (architectural) exhibitions with other prominent Netherlands Indies architects.

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