

Colonial refractions

Opening new perspectives
on power, materiality, and history



Essays in honour of Susan Legêne

*Edited by Caroline Drieënhuizen, Miel Groten
and Wim Manuhutu*

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COLOFON

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Colonialism and culture. Biographies, objects, places, and legacies

Introduction

Caroline Drieënhuizen & Miel Groten

Henri Cartier-Bresson's famous photograph, in which two Indonesians remove the portrait of Governor-General Van Heutsz and other Dutch governor-generals from the halls of the palace in Jakarta four days after the handover of sovereignty on 27 December 1949, was used by Susan Legêne in an article eighteen years ago to illustrate her point about how objects moved in and out of different contexts during the colonial era: family *pusaka* had been sold, statues had been removed from their original places, and regalia of royalty had become museum objects.¹

In 2022, the same photograph inspired Indonesian artist Timoteus Anggawan Kusno: in the installation he made for the Rijksmuseum (*Luka dan bisa kubawa berlari / Wounds and venom I carry as I am running*) in the context of its exhibition on the Indonesian Revolution, the empty frames of these portraits, the 'tormenting phantoms of the pasts', lie on the ground, the depicted are nowhere to be seen, 'the haunting images left to wander' and how that still resonates with today's realities.²

The empty frames refer to the colonial rulers' absence but also reflect on the continuing influence of their power, and thus the colonial system, on everyday lives and practices in not only former colonies but also former colonising countries. As objects, they are recognised for losing their original meaning as a result of the colonial system and its downfall and for then generating new meanings. The afterlives of colonialism and the meaning of objects within it, as captured in that one picture of Cartier-Bresson that continues to inspire, is more topical than ever, but the beginnings of this thinking in the Netherlands can be traced mainly back to Susan Legêne's work and her contention that Dutch culture was in many ways a colonial culture and that

this still affects today's society. Perhaps this idea was articulated most clearly in 2010's *Spiegelreflex*: the many references to it in the chapters below prove it has a large and continuing impact on the field.³

About this book

The theme of colonial culture in past and present is the point of departure for this edited volume, a *liber amicorum* that is a collaborative and bilingual reflection on, and celebration of, Susan Legêne's career. Collaborative is a key word here, as from the outset, the editors were confronted with the 'problem' that this career has been spanning such a variety of fields, collaborators, and continents, that dozens of (former) colleagues and research partners were eligible to contribute. To solve this, these authors have been grouped together into teams based on shared and/or complementary interests and expertises – a somewhat uncommon request to which, it must be said, the authors responded with grace, creativity, and curiosity. We believe this arrangement to be very much in the spirit of Susan Legêne's capacity for cooperating with and connecting people, and which has resulted in original, thought-provoking chapters. Fitting, too, is the variety of not only topics – from an 1898 car to taxidermised tigers, from contemporary artworks and photographs to Holocaust commemorations – and languages – English and Dutch, in which we deliberately let authors make their own choice – but also in the nature of contributions, which include empirical case studies (footnote-heavy chapters may betray the presence of historians in their particular teams of authors) as much as personal essays and critical reflections. The authors were asked to include at least one image to illustrate their analysis or, in a number of cases, build their argument around.

All the contributions in this volume reflect on Susan Legêne's scholarship and intellectual legacy

¹ Susan Legêne, 'Enlightenment, empathy, retreat. The cultural heritage of the Ethische Politiek', in: Pieter ter Keurs ed., *Colonial collections revisited* (Leiden 2007) 220-245.

² Takusno.com, 'Luka dan Bisa Kubawa Berlari', <https://www.takusno.com/luka-dan-bisa-kubawa-berlari/> (accessed 31 October 2024).

and focus on topics close to her heart: material objects as historical sources; individual lives, caught up in the historical realities of their day; the enduring influence of colonialism on contemporary culture, history, and social practices, analysed from the point of view of how heritage was managed, presented, and interpreted and also proved to be shaping the construction of realities. It is also noteworthy that several articles argue for the need for a broader rethinking of how we deal with history, heritage, and identity in our current postcolonial world, also always deeply felt by Susan Legêne. For her and many authors in this volume, critical, academic reflection and taking ethical responsibility for today's world are important core values. Of course, any selection of topics necessarily excludes others. Photography, for one, is discussed in multiple contributions, but perhaps not as explicitly and as a medium and subject in its own right, as Susan Legêne's work would allow for. Digital humanities, in which she – yet again, as will turn out below – was an early adopter with projects such as BiographyNet, deserves an honourable mention too.

Three broad themes in Susan Legêne's work stand out, as far as the editors of this volume are concerned, and have been used to head sections in this book: biographies, objects, and places. The fourth theme and section, legacies, forms the overarching and perhaps most important topic of this volume, namely Susan Legêne's vast, important intellectual effect on others and their academic work. This effect included adopting her ideas or views, but also reacting to them and choosing to take a different view and position – a polemical historical debate which, to her mind, still happens too little in the Netherlands. Susan Legêne's openness to cooperate, train, inspire, facilitate discussions, and debate is attested to by the many contributions in this volume, written by a variety of people – historians, anthropologists, legal and literary scholars, archaeologists, curators, and independent researchers – from a variety of countries.

The metaphorical title of this volume is a reference to the phenomenon of refraction, where

light changes direction as it transfers from one medium into another. Similarly, Susan Legêne and her work allowed existing patterns of thinking to be broken and new directions in thinking about colonialism, culture, and politics to emerge.

Biographies

The theme of biographies can be read in at least two ways. First, it is about our own lives as humans, scholars, and our relations to others. By her own account, and certainly attested to by many, a central characteristic of Susan Legêne's work has been a willingness to help people develop themselves, similar to how she has managed to develop and tread new paths in her own career.⁴ That career has taken her from publishing and museums to research and teaching at (among other places) Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and to administrative posts at the KNNGH (Royal Netherlands Historic Society), the Vereniging KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), and as dean of VU's Faculty of Humanities.

Second, biographies, whether of objects or people or places, are a subject for study and have been fascinating Susan Legêne throughout her academic career. In her dissertation *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel* (1998) she traced the lives of objects collected by two 'imperial' families, just as she unravelled the biographies of the family members. And in another meaning of 'biographies', she has never shied away from reflecting on her own positionality and family history, in 2007 writing about one of her grandparents, or in a 2020 interview stating she increasingly came to realise that she 'deal[s] with a past that I carry with me or have lived through, or that the people I encounter carry with them'.⁵ This is how we always relate to the past in the present, she claimed.

This book's 'biographies' section deals with both senses of the word. *Benoît Verstraete-Hansen* and *Michiel van Kempen* write about that same grandparent and the narratives, goals, and audiences

³ Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam 2010) 8.

⁴ Greetje Bijl, 'Hoe we ons in het heden verhouden tot het verleden. Genderview Susan Legêne', *Historica. Tijdschrift voor*

Gendergeschiedenis (2020) issue 1, 16–20, at 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Susan Legêne, *From India to Suriname. A journey into the future narrated by two photograph albums (1913–1930)* (Jhusi 2007).

of Dutch Protestant missionary publications that he published. *Halleh Ghorashi* in her essay singles out Susan Legêne's ability to cross boundaries by interdisciplinary collaborations, by connecting 'domestic' European history to global history, and by connecting past and present. *Esther Captain* and *Guno Jones* revisit the 'OudIndisch Paspoortarchief' and the relations between passports, identities and citizenship. Passports allow to cross borders as much as they delineate and exclude people and reinforce racial definitions of citizenship.

This section is concluded by two personal reflections. *Pál Nyiri* describes the relativity of nationalities, pondering the different passports his family held over the years and how European countries presently reject (and often try to deter) certain nationals while welcoming others. Finally, *Artwell Cain* and *Martina Amoksi* reflect on their encounters with Susan Legêne as researchers, lauding her unwaveringly critical outlook when it comes to colonialism and its lingering impact.

Objects

Objects – paintings, ritual objects, batiks, embroidery, photographs, playing cards, models, and sometimes entire museum collections – are one of the most central topics in Susan Legêne's oeuvre. Inspired by scholars such as Nicholas Thomas, Arjun Appadurai, and James Clifford, she was one of the first intellectuals in the Netherlands to take 'colonial' objects and their biographies as a starting point for studying people and societies. Susan Legêne considered material objects and their 'lives' as sources of information just like archival sources. Her abovementioned dissertation on the 'luggage' of two Dutch empire families in the nineteenth century was the most telling example of this and arguably the first study about Dutch culture as a colonial culture, in response to postcolonial scholarship.

In doing so, she inspired many scholars and museum professionals after her, as evidenced by some of the articles in this volume in which not

only the biographies of material objects, but also those of living beings like tigers and their meanings are discussed, as shown in the article by *Marieke Bloembergen*, *Caroline Drieënhuizen*, and *Fenneke Sysling*. In this article, the biography of a particular tiger shifts the perspective from a human-centric one to an animal-centric one and reveals histories of colonial destruction of flora and fauna and indigenous protection and knowledges.

The objects, and Susan Legêne's personal history as head of museum affairs at the then Tropenmuseum, are also reflected in *Pamela Pattynama*, *Susie Protschky*, and *Henk Schulte Nordholt's* analysis of the recent (2023-2024) Indonesia exhibition at De Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. While discussing, they take us through the exhibition and find that the questions Susan Legêne already asked a quarter of a century ago and the conclusions she drew about the pervasiveness of colonial conceptions of self and others and power inequality are still relevant today.

Unsurprisingly, given the timing of that particular exhibition and Susan Legêne's connection to the topic of exhibiting, other contributors found their subjects in the Great Indonesia Exhibition, too. *Widya Fitria Ningsih* and *Babs Boter* revisit the same exhibition in their article on sculptures by female artists *Kustiyah* and *Alfiah Rahdini* (one of whose sculptures also drew the eye of *Pattynama*, *Protschky*, and *Schulte Nordholt*) whose work was on display in the Nieuwe Kerk. *Ningsih* and *Boter* show in their article how artworks, with autobiographical inscriptions, not only convey life stories, but are also strongly framed by exhibitions like the Great Indonesia Exhibition in the Nieuwe Kerk. In doing this, they depart loosely from the 'toolkit' for museum analysis which Susan Legêne devised, born out of her practical experience in the museum sector.⁶

The next contribution that deals with objects in this section is that of *Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach*, who studies the 'borrowing' of the technique behind most iconic Indonesian objects, batik fabrics, by *Rabindranath Tagore* and his university.

In the final chapter, *Inger Leemans* sniffs out

⁶ A version of the toolkit was published online in 2015: *Lonneke Geerlings et al.*, 'Manifesto. Towards a historical critique of exhibitions', *Historici.nl* (16 March 2015). [https://](https://www.historici.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2015-03-15_historical-critique-of-exhibitions_draft-for-OPG.pdf)

www.historici.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2015-03-15_historical-critique-of-exhibitions_draft-for-OPG.pdf (accessed 22 November 2024).

hidden histories by focussing on the smells of VOC colonialism and its commodities in Asia. She argues that investigating objects' smell furthers our understanding of trade (the scent of spices and aromatic substances, which the company had to know in order to trade successfully), diplomacy (the exchange of fragrant gifts), cultural othering (the stereotypical association of unfamiliar peoples with unpleasant odours), and warfare (weaponising smell).

Places

Places – sites, locations, areas – are a third recurring theme and perspective in Susan Legêne's work. We should understand places not only as geographically fixed, but also as imaginary places part of networks and local and global connections. They are sites where different groups of people meet – contact zones, in the words of Mary Louise Pratt whom multiple authors cite – and where the meanings associated with these places are constantly negotiated and contested. It is about belonging, not-belonging, about being present or absent. Focusing on places also highlights distinct localities and spatial characteristics unique to different cultures and histories. Furthermore, such a research approach has the benefit of moving away from an emphasis on national histories, the binary model of empire that centres on the core-periphery relationship and on histories that favour temporal perspectives, an approach that many researchers who worked with Susan Legêne also tried to emulate.⁷

The geographical places in this volume are a sugar factory on Java, churches in Paramaribo and Amsterdam, heritage sites in Yogyakarta and Mosul; places connected by networks through which knowledge and objects like pipe organs and photographs moved.

Miel Groten, Harmil Sulistyani, and Freek Schmidt take as a starting point a photograph of the ceremonial start of the production season in a Dutch sugar factory on Java. In their chapter they

explore the sugar mill not just as part of an economic network that ran from the sugarcane fields to the port cities and beyond, but also as a contact zone where people and customs – from animal sacrifices to folk games – were intermingled during the festivities, albeit temporarily and under strict conditions.

Dienke Hondius shows how the still relatively unknown history of Dutch church organs and their travels through places all over the Dutch colonial empire provides insight into multifaceted and multi-part colonial and slavery histories in Asia, America and Europe. Hondius builds on new insights in the Netherlands about the relationship between churches and the history of slavery which are leading to a renewed and critical approach to church objects, like the family pews in the Dutch Maartenskerk in Hillegom. Hondius' contribution guides us from the historical development of places to their current role as heritage sites.

We should therefore understand cultural heritage like those organs or pews as a concept, as Susan Legêne also always has done: as the ever-changing way in which objects from the past are given meaning in the present. In that process representation, politics, memories and place play a major role. Heritage is therefore often discussed here in the context of power and inequality, playing an active role in contemporary social and political issues: the way it is managed, presented and interpreted by often reflects asymmetrical power relations stemming from colonial structures.

Martijn Eickhoff, Ghufuran Sabi and Tular Sudarmadi also affirm in their article this view of heritage, strongly defined by colonial power structures. They, however, also emphasise that heritage formation involves multiple forms of agency, advocating for attention to local developments and agency, while interpreting the colonality of heritage in a broader context: while the heritage they discussed was defined by colonialism, it was at the same time part and parcel of local, contemporary and influential power constellations that we also should take into account.

Finally, focusing on another legacy of racial

⁷ See for instance: Susan Legêne, Bambang Purwanto and Henk Scholte Nordholt ed., *Sites, bodies and stories. Imagining Indonesian history* (Singapore 2015).

discrimination, *Judy Jaffe-Schagen* and *Bettine Siertsema* analyse the inaugurations of *Stolpersteine*, small memorials to Jews murdered during the Second World War, placed in the pavement in front of their last places of residence. Rather than the stones themselves, Jaffe-Schagen and Siertsema explore the otherwise often overlooked poetry that local 'city poets' have written and recited when the stones are unveiled in a number of Dutch cities. This allows them to investigate local memory cultures, specifically the ways in which the poems draw attention to parts of the urban landscape.

Legacies

This volume concludes, quite appropriately, with the theme of legacies. In Susan Legêne's work, the topic of colonial legacies has come to the fore most explicitly in research projects such as *Pressing Matter* and *Colonial Normativity* and in her involvement with government reports on discrimination and inclusivity. However, colonial legacies have played an important part in most, if not all of her research and publications, informed by her critical perspective and early insistence on the coloniality of Dutch (and European) culture. Furthermore, this attitude has also been part of her teaching, where she introduced texts by scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Derek Walcott, and Walter Dignolo to students and PhD candidates.

In this volume, we approach the issue of legacies broadly. Among the tangible objects, ideas, and perceptions inherited from our ancestors that are passed on to future generations, we not only consider the intellectual legacy of Susan Legêne herself among these, but also the human remains of ancestors or the lasting cultural, political, and economic impacts of colonialism. The contributions in this section each discuss colonial legacies in different domains.

The first of these examines the historiography of Dutch colonialism and decolonisation as both a political and a lengthy cultural process, viewed from a postcolonial perspective. Legêne regularly made the point that we should not separate colonial and national history. Only after the Second World War did Dutch history become a national history; before that, she claims, it was an imperial history. *Gert*

Oostindie, who also concerned himself with these topics and who worked with her, reflects on his own and position on these issues in his chapter.

The second legacy is the domain of politics, for which *Farabi Fakihi*, *Ronald Kroeze*, *Otto Linde*, and *Uji Winardi* draw on their work in the *Colonial Normativity* project and trace the entanglement of corruption and colonial history from a long-term perspective that includes both colonial and 'postcolonial' Indonesia. Power relations and exploitation allowed those who profited from the colonial system to embezzle, profit, and extort. However, Indonesian and Dutch critics of corrupt practices often focused on different forms of corruption, each for their own reasons.

Third, *Jos van Beurden*, *Sadiya Boonstra*, *Klaas Stutje*, and *Wouter Veraart* investigate scientific legacies of colonialism in the case of ancestral remains of colonised communities. Drawing on decolonial scholarship, they discuss case studies from St. Eustatius and the Moluccan islands and argue for a paradigm shift towards 'rehumanising' such remains.

Annemarie de Wildt and *Pim Westerkamp* pick up on the topic of bodies and the physical by discussing colonial legacies in museum collections and exhibitions. They analyse how two Amsterdam museums address depictions of sex work and sex workers, both from the city's modern-day red-light district and from historic Java during Dutch colonial rule. Considering terminology, presentation, and artistic interventions, De Wildt and Westerkamp show how artists and museums can create new representations of sex work for museum visitors that are not steeped in gendered, heteronormative, and racialised power relations.

Pepijn Brandon and *Gloria Wekker* draw attention to colonial ways of knowing in connection to current political events. Critically assessing communications issued by Dutch universities in response to the violence in Gaza and Israel in 2023, they call for taking into account how appraisals of this conflict are informed by persistent colonial stereotypes and frames of reference.

The final, twentieth chapter of this volume is by *Thomas Spijkerboer* and focusses on working to overcome eurocentrism in both the content of research and the people and countries which with scholars collaborate. Based on personal experiences,

he presents decentring, or even decolonising, Europe as first and foremost a challenge for Europe itself – even if input from other continents might be crucial.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this edited volume revisits and expands upon the core themes of Susan Legêne's scholarship - biographies, objects, places, and legacies. Each author's interpretation and elaboration of these concepts not only deepens our understanding of colonial and postcolonial realities, but also serves as a testament to Susan Legêne's lasting influence on historic academic methodologies and discourse, particularly regarding the enduring impact of colonialism.

All contributors emphasise the importance of interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary approaches to history to create a more nuanced understanding of colonial and postcolonial dynamics. Such a framework challenges the traditional, sometimes compartmentalised, approaches to studying colonialism and its aftermath, urging scholars to think across boundaries and embrace diverse perspectives – whether these boundaries are national borders, demarcations of imperial empires or disciplinary delineations of what counts as sources of research or methodology. It is this type of research and methodological stance that Legêne champions, and the volume illustrates its capacity to generate richer, more complex and nuanced understandings of history by transcending traditional boundaries.

Theoretically, Susan Legêne's early engagement with postcolonialism led to her identification

of Dutch culture as inherently colonial and the exploration of how colonial power structures and thought continued to permeate contemporary societies, shaping cultural practices, narratives, political systems, and social relations. This aspect is one of the most significant and recurring themes of the articles in this volume, as demonstrated by the contributions on topics such as colonial corruption, racialised citizenship, and the dehumanisation of colonised bodies, all of which address these unresolved colonial legacies.

And perhaps we could also conclude that this volume embodies Legêne's commitment to socially engaged scholarship. Many of the essays underline the need for critical reflection not only on the past but also on the researcher's role in contemporary debates on identity, politics, and social justice. This volume is perhaps not simply an academic exercise but also an intellectual call to action, urging scholars to acknowledge their own positionality, engage with the public, and take responsibility for the historical narratives they construct. Legêne's influence here is profound, as she consistently advocated for scholarship that is reflexive and grounded in ethical responsibility.

In sum, this volume highlights the importance of interdisciplinary, reflexive, and ethically engaged scholarship in addressing the complexities of colonial legacies in today's world. It hopefully not only pays tribute to Susan Legêne's academic contribution but also provides future scholars with a roadmap for navigating the intertwined histories of colonialism, memories and power and challenges them to rethink how history is constructed, represented, and interpreted.

Part 1: Biographies

Deel 1: Biografieën

1. Referentiële, materiële en historische elementen in Legênes zendingsoeuvre

Benoît Verstraete-Hansen & Michiel van Kempen

De Deen Peter Martin Legêne (1885-1954), grootvader van Susan Legêne, wilde koste wat het kost zendeling worden. Nadat hij afgewezen werd bij het Deense Zendingsgenootschap waagde hij zijn kans bij de Evangelische Broedergemeente in Herrnhut (Duitsland) waar hij in 1909 wel opgenomen werd. Na zijn opleiding aldaar, vervolgde hij zijn zendingstudies in Nederland en in Brits-Indië. In 1914 kwam hij samen met zijn echtgenote Anna van Zanten, de dochter van zijn leraar Nederlands, in Suriname aan waar hij onder de Hindostanen zou missioneren. Legêne werd wel door de Evangelische Broedergemeente uitgezonden, maar zijn zendingsactiviteiten zelf werden gefinancierd door het in Kopenhagen gevestigde Lutherse Zendingsgenootschap, *Luthersk Mission*. In 1930 werd hij naar Zeist geroepen, het jaar daarop werd hij secretaris en in 1935 voorzitter-secretaris van het aan de Broedergemeente gelieerde Zeister Zendingsgenootschap.

Legêne vertrok niet alleen vanuit altruïsme en de behoefte om een betere wereld te scheppen naar het overzeese Suriname maar hij schreef erover. In zijn Surinameperiode schreef Legêne een bibliotheek vol met artikelen voor *Missionsvennen*, het tijdschrift van het Luthers Zendingsgenootschap. Het genootschap zorgde ervoor dat er geld in het laatje kwam en Legêne zorgde ervoor dat de lezer via *Missionsvennen* op de hoogte werd gebracht van zijn werkzaamheden overzee.

In zijn Nederlandse periode schreef hij een groot aantal geschriften, essays, schetsen en romans. Er verschenen meer dan zeventig boekuitgaven van zijn hand. Daardoor kwam de protestantse Nederlandse lezer te weten hoe het eraan toe ging in de 'donkere en diepgezonken heidenwereld'. In andere boeken beschreef Legêne het leven van individuen die ofwel

het licht brachten, ofwel de duisternis voor het licht hadden verlaten. In onze bijdrage zullen de materiële en historische context van de schetsenreeks *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* worden nagegaan.

In het Amsterdamse proefschrift *Leven in dienst van de Heiland* (2022) van Verstraete-Hansen werden verschillende verhalen uit het boekje *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* van P.M. Legêne geanalyseerd.⁸ Een nieuw model van evangelisch-narratologische functies werd ontwikkeld waardoor getoond kon worden hoe deze non-fictieteksten van de Deense zendeling als literair verhaal functioneren. Langs de weg van vaste retorische wendingen (functies) werd een evangelische overtuigingskracht naar de lezer toe uitgedragen.

In termen van de taalhandelingstheorie van John Austin⁹ kan men een onderscheid maken in dat wat geschreven wordt (de locutie), dat wat de schrijver door middel van zijn verhaal doet (de illocutie, te analyseren volgens het hierboven vermelde verhaalmodel) en dat wat de schrijver in werkelijkheid bereikt met zijn tekst (de perlocutie): bij de lezers de overtuiging doen postvatten hoe belangrijk het zendingswerk is en uiteindelijk als opvolgende daad het opentrekken van de portemonnee. Want laten we niet vergeten dat dat in laatste instantie een essentieel doel was van de lange reeks zendingboeken die Legêne publiceerde: geld bijeenbrengen. Het zendingswerk kostte immers veel geld. De salariëring van de zendelingen, de gebouwen die moesten worden onderhouden, de scholen en hun onderwijzers en de weeshuizen – in het geval van Legêne: Sukh Dhaam in Alkmaar aan de Commewijnerivier – kon alleen maar door een constante stroom van giften vanuit de geloofsgemeenschap betaald worden. *Leven in dienst van de Heiland* laat ook zien hoe die financiële noden

⁸ Benoît Verstraete-Hansen, *Leven in dienst van de Heiland*. Peter Martin Legêne als zendeling en schrijver (proefschrift Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam 2022).

⁹ Uiteengezet bij Janneke Velthuis, 'Ik dreig niet, ik doe je

een belofte...' Hoe taalgebruikstheorieën de interpretatie van taaluitingen als dreigementen in een juridische context kunnen onderbouwen (masterscriptie Nederlandse Taal & Cultuur, Universiteit Leiden, z.j.).

een permanent onderwerp van correspondentie waren tussen de zending in Suriname en het hoofdkwartier van het Zeister Zendingsgenootschap.

Taaluitingen en dus ook literaire teksten kunnen alleen functioneren en begrepen worden binnen hun context, zoals Austin betoogde. Laten we meteen beginnen met de aandacht te vestigen op de autobiografische elementen die door illustraties en de foto's in *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* worden opgeroepen. In de schetsenreeks zijn twee illustraties afgebeeld. De ene met een foto van Legêne met een Hindostaans jongetje op de arm en de andere met het echtpaar Legêne omringd door een vijftigtal Hindostaanse kinderen. Er staan ook twee kinderen van het echtpaar op de foto. In de schetsen wordt het reilen en zeilen in het kindertehuis beschreven. Het zijn biografietjes van een aantal Hindostaanse kinderen die in het tehuis verblijven.¹⁰ De schetsen omvatten bijgevolg de verhalen van de kinderen die op de foto staan. Daardoor worden ze kinderen van vlees en bloed.

Het omslag van het boekje geeft een eenvoudige tekening te zien: een witte vrouw omringd door drie bruine kinderen staat op het omslag. De tekenaar ervan is een zekere V. Het leuke van de tekening is dat die gebaseerd is op een foto die wij in het fotoarchief van Legênes kleindochter Clara Legêne hebben gevonden. En op deze foto staat Anna, Peters echtgenote, afgebeeld samen met acht Hindostaanse kinderen. Dat is een hint voor ingewijden. Op die manier wordt Anna's belangrijke rol in het zendingsproject benadrukt.

Wij willen hieronder de aandacht vestigen op enkele andere aspecten van de context waarbinnen deze uitgave – die overigens evengoed als kinderboek als boek voor volwassenen gezien kan worden – heeft gefunctioneerd. *Leven in dienst van de Heiland* gaat uit van de tweede druk van het boekje uit november 1933. Een ruim aantal signalementen in de evangelische pers werden gevonden uit dat jaar en de jaren daarna. Maar zoals wel met meer uitgaven van Legêne: kennelijk was de eerste druk niet traceerbaar. De catalogus van de Koninklijke



1. Omslag van Legêne's *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* uit 1935.

Bibliotheek en via die catalogus de databank Delpher leert ons echter dat er in 1922 bij Van Dorp in IJmuiden een boekje van Legêne is verschenen met de titel *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* met als boventitel *Schetsen uit het leven in het kindertehuis te Alkmaar in Suriname*. Maar die uitgave wijkt wel in enorm veel opzichten af van die uit 1933; niet enkel qua typografie maar ook naar inhoud, vorm en illustraties verschillen de uitgaven.¹¹

Als auteur en evangelist was P.M. Legêne een pragmaticus: zijn teksten werden gerecycled, herschreven en herdrukt in elke vorm die dienstig leek aan het grote zendingsproject. In de herdrukken van *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* zie je ook overal wijzigingen in de teksten. Het heeft niet zo heel veel zin om die eindeloze tekstvarianten op een rij te zetten, maar laten wij om een idee te geven één voorbeeld aanhalen. Het verhaal 'Sumeran, 't ongelukkige kind, en zijn wreede vader' gaat

¹⁰ Het dagboek van Anna Legêne-Van Zanten is een document dat veel informatie zou kunnen verschaffen over het al dan niet fictieve bestaan van de kinderen. Een kopie van het dagboek bevindt sinds februari 2024 in de collectie Verstraete-Hansen, maar is nog niet bestudeerd.

¹¹ P.M. Legêne, *Lief en leed met onze kleinen*. *Schetsen uit het leven in het kindertehuis te Alkmaar in Suriname* (IJmuiden [1922]) 12; *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* (tweede druk; Zeist 1933).

over een kind, vermagerd, in de steek gelaten door zijn vader en verwaarloosd door de arme moeder, dat na veel aandringen wordt opgenomen in het kindertehuis van Alkmaar. Als de verdwenen vader dit ter ore komt, komt hij met veel geweld tegen de moeder alsnog het kind opeisen. Uiteindelijk kunnen de zendelingen niet verhinderen dat het kind weer wordt meegenomen. De schets eindigt met deze zinnen:

't Laatst zag ik haar [de moeder] op den straatweg. Zij had zich in het gras bij een sluis neergelegd om daar met haar drie kinderen te gaan slapen. Misschien waren zij op zoek naar... vader!¹²

Dit was de versie uit 1922. In de herdrukken luidt die:

't Laatst zag ik haar op den straatweg. Zij had zich in het gras bij een sluis neergelegd om daar met haar drie kinderen te gaan slapen; een ander tehuis had zij, naar het scheen niet meer. Misschien waren zij op zoek naar... den wreeden vader!¹³

De laatste versie is duidelijk meer aangezet, explicieter, meer op effectbejag geschreven.

Waarom werd het eerste verhaal uit de druk van 1922, 'Dhanmatia, die een stijf been kreeg', later niet meer herdrukt? Dhanmatia was een pleegkind van omstreeks drie jaar oud, nog geboren in 'Voor-Indië' (Brits-Indië of India) dat sinds 18 oktober 1916 bij de Legênes thuis leefde, zoals Legêne vertelt in een bericht vanuit Paramaribo aan de Lutherse Zending in Denemarken in het *Brødreminighedens Missionsblad* van 1916.¹⁴ Het zendelingenechtpaar had zich toen nog niet in Alkmaar gevestigd, want dat gebeurde pas in juni 1917.¹⁵ Het kind was in zeer slechte conditie toen het bij de Legênes kwam, het praatte niet en het had een opgezwollen buik.

Er is een plausibele verklaring voor het feit dat hij het eerste verhaal uit de editie-1922 later niet meer



2. Foto van Anna van Zanten met Hindostaanse kinderen (z.j.).

heeft opgenomen in de herdrukken: de geschiedenis van Dhanmatia heeft Legêne in uitgebreide vorm verteld in een afzonderlijk boekje, dat in 1931 uitkwam met als omslagtitel: *Soeradshmoekhi, of het zonnebloempje in de schaduw geplant*. De naam Dhanmatia komt daarin niet voor, maar met name het eerste van de zes hoofdstukken is voor het overgrote deel letterlijk gelijk aan het oude verhaal van 1922. (Eva Schütz voorzag het verhaal van nieuwe illustraties.)¹⁶

Het verhaal van Dhanmatia is natuurlijk vanuit het perspectief van het meisje een gruwelijk verhaal, zoals dat van Sumeran nog veel vreselijker was. Anno 2024, ruim een eeuw na de verschijning van de eerste druk van de verhalen van Legêne, nu wij vooronderstellen in sensitiever tijden te leven, zouden zijn verhalen waarschijnlijk niet zonder disclaimer de wereld in kunnen worden gestuurd. Het zegt iets over de normen en waarden van de jonge lezers in de eerste decennia van de 20^{ste} eeuw. En over onze tijd.

¹² Legêne, *Lief en leed* (1922) 12.

¹³ P.M. Legêne. *Lief en leed met onze kleinen* (derde druk; Zeist 1935) 16.

¹⁴ P.M. Legêne, 'Paramaribo. Af Missionær P.M. Legêne. Til Billedet', *Brødreminighedens Missionsblad*. Evangelisk

Missionstidende (1916) nr. 5, 97-99.

¹⁵ Benoît Verstraete-Hansen. *Leven in dienst van de Heiland. Peter Martin Legêne als zendeling en schrijver* (Hilversum 2023) 68.

¹⁶ P.M. Legêne, *Soeradshmoekhi of het zonnebloempje in de schaduw geplant* (Zeist [1931]).

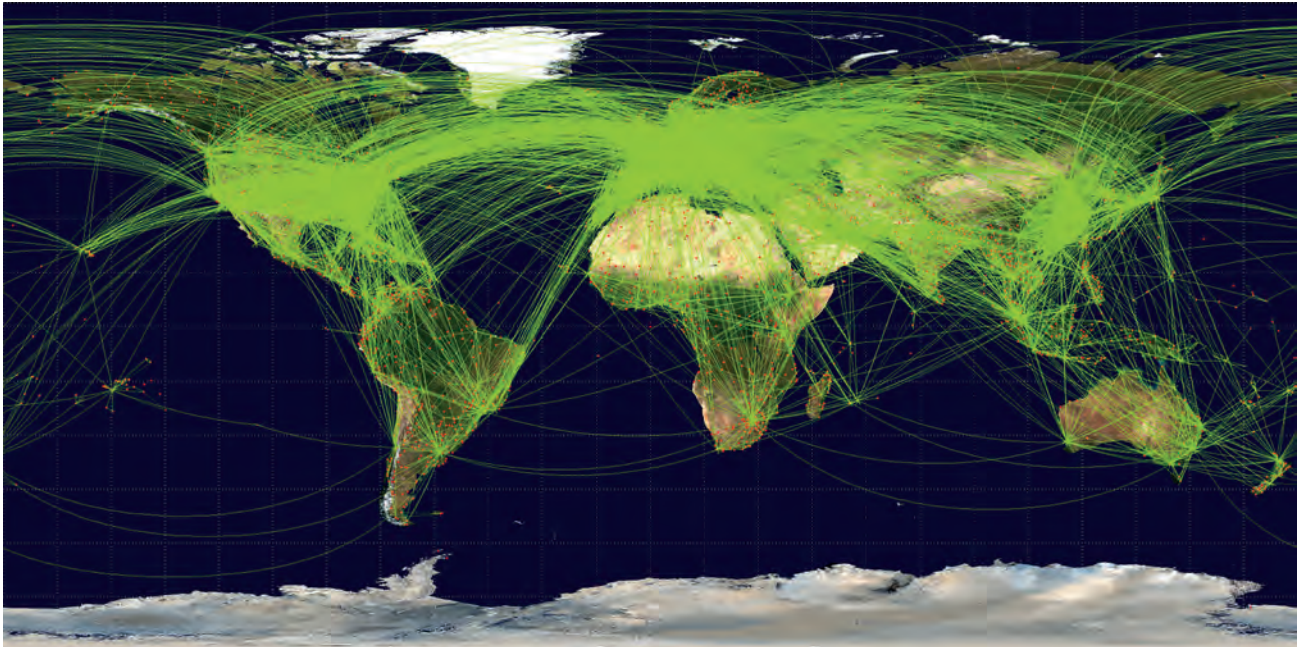
In het woord vooraf tot de tweede en derde druk van het boekje zegt Legêne dat ook de Duitse versie al is herdrukt en dat de Engelse in zeer korte tijd was uitverkocht. 'Zij vonden haar weg tot meer dan 12.000 lezers in Nederland en elders', zegt hij in de tweede druk; in de derde druk zijn dat er al 14.000. In *Leven en dienst van de Heiland* staat vermeldt dat er van het boekje 18.000 exemplaren zijn verkocht.¹⁷ Het zijn oplagen waarvan kinderboekenschrijvers van onze tijd slechts kunnen dromen. Antiquarisch is er momenteel geen enkel exemplaar meer van te krijgen. Vergelijkbare uitgaven hebben, aldus de informatie achter in de derde druk, ongeveer 25 cent gekost. Het exemplaar van december 1935 kostte ergens rond 1995 het tachtigvoudige: 20 gulden. Andere boekjes uit de reeks zendingsverhalen van Legêne doen vandaag

de dag soms meer dan 100 Amerikaanse dollar! Het zegt iets over de aard van deze boekjes die – net als de Surinaamse dubbeltjesboekjes met vertalingen van Bijbelboeken in het Sranantongo van rond 1890 – verbruiksvoorwerpen zijn geweest, en om die reden tegenwoordig erg zeldzaam zijn geworden. De waardevermeerdering van boekjes die ooit met duizenden tegelijk zijn verschenen, kan ons doen stilstaan welk een opofferingsgezindheid er ooit bestond voor de zending, want van de prijs van 25 cent van indertijd moest nog een deel worden afgestaan ter ondersteuning van het zendingswerk. Dat is bijna allemaal geschiedenis, voltooid verleden tijd.

¹⁷ Verstraete-Hansen, *Leven in dienst van de Heiland*, 269, noot 34.

2. A reflective and connected world needs history and courage

Halleh Ghorashi



3. Scheduled air traffic map (2009).

The image above, a visual representation of global airline traffic in 2009, was presented during Sarah van Walsum's June 2012 inaugural lecture. She referred to the work of the artist, psychoanalyst, and feminist theorist Bracha Ettinger to challenge our understanding of the border. According to Ettinger, the border is not a line that separates us but a shared field that joins the self and the other, or the stranger. Yet the dominance of bordering has led to one human crisis after another, with the growing dehumanisation of the stranger as one of its consequences. By referring to Ettinger's work, Sarah provided us with a different imagination and visualisation of the world. She showed us that we are interdependent through a densely woven web of connections, movements, and interactions. If we try to visualise the world in these terms, we arrive at a very different image of the self and others: one that acknowledges, rather than erases, humanity.¹⁸

This image also captures the ways that Susan Legêne has shaped her academic work and leadership. Her strong sensitivity to Eurocentric dominance in global connections provides another reading of the same image. Through her tireless efforts, she has shown that hierarchical dimensions of global, national, and local connections through history can only embrace humanity if they address the power-related differences at play. I met Susan for the first time in the context of the Migration and Diversity Centre, which was initiated in 2017 to enable interdisciplinary collaboration between faculties of Law (Thomas Spijkerboer), Humanities (Susan Legêne replaced James Kennedy), and Social Sciences (myself). The Migration and Diversity Centre (MDC) aimed to provide an intellectually stimulating, well-organised, and well-connected research environment. The attraction of such an environment, as well as the sheer fun of being

¹⁸ S. van Walsum, *Intimate strangers* (inaugural lecture, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2012) 11-14.

part of it, inspired researchers studying migration and diversity issues to focus more on the field – especially because there was no alternative research institute that provided a comparable environment.

Although my involvement with the MDC decreased over the years, my connection with Susan did not. I came to admire her work and her dedicated leadership as the dean of her faculty, where she worked to make space for critical perspectives in political history. There are many examples I could mention, but I will focus on the two endowed chair positions installed under her leadership: Wayne Modest's chair in Material Culture and Critical Heritage Studies and Guno Jones's new Anton de Kom Chair in the History of Colonialism and Slavery and their Contemporary Social, Cultural and Legal Impact. Both chairs focus on critical conversations with the histories of colonialism and slavery, combining disciplinary knowledges (history, social sciences, heritage studies, law). For these chairs, critical engagement with the past is an essential foundation for repair and healing in the present. By bridging the past and the present, they show that it is crucial to go through the pain of the past or uneasy conversations in the present to reach connection and understanding. And these important conversations and researches also represent the ways that Susan has performed the multiplicity of her tasks as a critically engaged scholar, a committed leader, a passionate fighter for justice and fairness, and a highly valuable colleague.

In all the domains of her performance, Susan has tried to break the walls of fixated binaries informed by colonial legacy. Her work has focused on the reimagination of the past for a more dignified future.

As part of a global movement, the Dutch public debate on heritage has been quite present and sharp in recent years, leading to polarisation of the society. In light of these developments, Dutch museums have had to take positions on how they communicate about the colonial past with their installations. One such example was the Amsterdam Museum's choice not to use the term *Gouden Eeuw* ('Golden Age') for

their exhibition about the Golden Age, which led to public controversies. Susan's position on this was clear and sharp: 'Our understanding of the Golden Age, the *grachtengordel* [canal belt] and the paintings in the Rijksmuseum are inextricably connected. If we can let go of the term Golden Age, we will open a window to look at that period again. You need those kinds of eye-openers from time to time'.¹⁹

The need to create an open window to look at the past and to have the courage to face the challenges that come with doing so has been made visible over the past few years in the Netherlands. The Black Lives Matters movement has had a major influence on how people make their own history of oppression a point of discussion in the present. The movement has also influenced the ways in which people have become more aware of their rights and have mobilised actions around state accountability. As the Congolese human rights lawyer Debora Kayembe states about how the movement is impacting European society, particularly in Belgium: 'Everyone is waking up from a sleep, it's a reckoning with the past'.²⁰

For the first time in the Netherlands, we are seeing a shift from a historical denial of racism toward a recognition of institutional forms of structural racism in both the Dutch public space and within institutions, including academia. There is also a growing awareness of structural racism among non-white Dutch citizens, who previously thought their exclusion from or marginalisation within Dutch society had to do with a personal inability to 'adapt'. The increasing calls against institutional racism have been unsettling the status quo and creating inclusionary spaces and practices. However, the results of the last parliamentary election in the Netherlands, with the most votes going to the populist and anti-migrant PVV (Party for Freedom), show the strength of white supremacy.

There have been many reactions to this outcome in the Dutch media. The most prominent has been to call party leader Wilders 'Milders', meaning that he has become milder in his standpoints. This ignores the fact that PVV's platform is full of blatantly racist

¹⁹ Greetje Bijl, 'Hoe we ons in het heden verhouden tot het verleden. Genderview Susan Legêne', *Historica. Tijdschrift voor Gendergeschiedenis* (2020) issue 1, 16-20, at 19.

²⁰ B. McGonigle Leyh, 'Imperatives of the present. Black Lives Matter and the politics of memory and memorialization', *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 38 (2020) 239-245, at 240.

statements and anti-constitutional proposals (three of which Wilders withdrew to increase his chances of shaping a coalition). In addition, some voices in the media are claiming that not all voters for the PVV are racist. These voices are often backed up with interviews with PVV voters who claim they are not racist but just want to have their country back the way it was, often referring to the discussion of 'Black Pete'. Surprisingly, many migrants and refugees allegedly voted for the PVV. This demonstrates both the growing normalisation of racism in the Netherlands and an increase in public awareness of racism after decades of denial. Thus, the Netherlands is moving in opposing directions. One direction involves reifying existing (internal and external) borders, while the other focuses on building connections to fight against racism.

In this situation, considering both the normalised nature of racism and its blatant presence is essential. The growing calls against institutional racism are an important step in the right direction. At the same time, the increase in racist sentiments shows the urgency of combating racism. Dutch society can take advantage of this momentum to transform its 'white innocence' into critical self-reflection and deliberate actions toward the inclusion of diverse groups by addressing and acting against institutional racism.²¹ But to do this effectively, we need to bring historical knowledge into the public arena. And Susan has been a champion in this. In Susan's 2022 interview in *Historica*, she discussed how addressing the European (or even Dutch) share in historical and current injustice has made space for reflection and understanding of the ways that injustice works, which marks the start of healing. Susan added that decolonising means teaching the youth about the deep roots of present-day injustices while teaching history. Colonialism, she reminded us, has influenced us deeply and will not stop just because we abolish it.²²

We need history to help us with understanding the profound institutional racism ingrained in the deep structures of our society, our institutions, and our daily interactions. Thanks to Susan, I am sure that the VU Humanities faculty, with Modest's and Jones's endowed chairs that I mentioned earlier, will play a very important role in this process. Moreover, Pepijn Brandon's appointment as professor of Global Economic and Social History, with a focus on slavery, in the same faculty is a welcome addition to fulfill this task.

But more is needed. In her essay about the continuation of slavery in the presence of education, Judi Mesman emphasises that 'the lack of connection between past and present in school textbooks also means that generally colonialism and slavery are not associated with racism and the position of black people in present society' and further argues that 'colour-conscious action is a necessary condition to addressing and combating racism and unsettling racist social hierarchies. That requires knowledge and courage' (translation is mine).²³ And courage is indeed what has exemplified Susan's leadership. She has always stood up for diversity, inclusion, and justice with actions, not just lip service. Susan really took this on as her core task as dean, and when the challenges came her way, she fought to find the right solution to be just and inclusive.

In conclusion, in these troubling times of polarisation, violence, injustice, and inequality, we need people in all positions who combine their passion for knowledge with the ambition to engage with societal actors to co-generate conditions against processes of injustice and racism for more just and inclusive societies. Susan's past and present is exemplary in this regard.

²¹ Gloria Wekker, *White innocence. Paradoxes of colonialism and race* (Durham 2016).

²² Bijl, 'Hoe we ons in het heden verhouden tot het verleden'.

²³ Judi Mesman, 'Wie is wat waard? Raciale hiërarchieën uit

het slavernijverleden in de samenleving en het onderwijs van nu', in: *Doorwerkingen van slavernijverleden. Meervoudige perspectieven op de relatie tussen verleden en heden* (The Hague 2023) 47-54, at 52-53.

3. Een onzeker teken van burgerschap. Pleidooi voor het erkennen van de verwevenheid tussen Nederland en de kolonies

Esther Captain & Guno Jones

Zeventien jaar geleden schreven wij een artikel getiteld 'A passport is a piece of paper'.²⁴ Hierin namen wij de Nederlandse identiteit onder de loep en probeerden wij te doorgronden welke obstakels er voor postkoloniale migranten uit Indonesië en Suriname zijn geweest om het Nederlanderschap te verwerven. De titel geeft aan dat we een paspoort het liefst zouden willen beschouwen als wat het in feite in materiële zin is: niet meer dan papier. Dat was destijds onze kritiek op de beperkte etno-nationalistische kaders van het dominante burgerschapsdenken waar we ons ook toen al, vanwege onze kritische blik op het Nederlandse beleid ten aanzien van postkoloniale burgers die mede geïnformeerd werd door ons transnationale familieleven, niet in konden vinden. Dat dominante normatieve idee over Nederlanderschap gaat over hoe we ons leven zouden moeten leiden (lees: binnen één nationale gemeenschap en met één staatsburgerschap). De 'echte Nederlander' is daarnaast een raciaal geconnoteerd begrip, waarin onder meer uiterlijk, afkomst en religie een rol spelen; het gaat om een raciaal normbeeld van het 'echte Nederlanderschap'. Dit dominante discours kan zeer nadelige, zelfs catastrofale, gevolgen hebben voor burgers die zich hier niet in kunnen of willen voegen, en in deze ultrarechtse tijden is alertheid daarom geboden. In dit artikel willen wij opnieuw stilstaan bij de juridische, materiële, symbolische en reële aspecten van het paspoort, als onzeker teken van burgerschap, gezien vanuit het brede Koninkrijk der Nederlanden. We putten daarbij inspiratie uit Susans Legênes baanbrekende werk *Spiegelreflex* (2010) dat een van de wegvoorbereiders was van de these dat Nederland onlosmakelijk verbonden is met de koloniale ervaring.



4. Het huidige Nederlandse paspoort. Onderaan het icoon dat aangeeft dat dit paspoort een chip met biometrische gegevens bevat.

Burgerschap en transnationaal familieleven

De beperkte versie van nationaal burgerschap, het dominante idee dat burgers slechts een exclusieve nationale gemeenschap toebehoren en onder andere bepaalde uiterlijke kenmerken of religieuze overtuigingen hebben, staat haaks op de geleefde werkelijkheid van vele honderdduizenden Nederlanders (waaronder die van onszelf) die genealogische connecties met de kolonies hebben. Het hebben van slechts één paspoort ontkent de meervoudige identificaties van mensen met meerdere landen en inwoners en belemmert een transnationaal familieleven in symbolische en praktische zin. Onze familiegeschiedenissen en ervaringen zijn niet uniek, maar staan voor een veel breder verhaal over relaties tussen mensen uit de (voormalige) kolonies en Nederland. In *Spiegelreflex* analyseert Susan Legêne de complexe 'sporen van de koloniale ervaring' in Nederland op het vlak van cultuur en ze staat daarbij ook stil

²⁴ Esther Captain en Guno Jones, 'A passport is a piece of paper, or the enrichment of the Netherlands' in: Rosi Braidotti, Charles Esche en Maria Hlavajova ed., *Citizens and subjects. The*

Netherlands, for example. A critical reader (Utrecht en Zürich 2007) 87-97 [Nederlandse bijdrage aan de 52^e Biënnale van Venetië].

bij burgerschap. Ze wijst op de gedifferentieerde impact van politieke onafhankelijkheid op de burgerschapsstatus van verschillende categorieën mensen uit het (voormalige) Koninkrijk der Nederlanden.²⁵ Ook uit ons werk komt keer op keer naar voren dat constructies van ras (in samenhang met onder meer klasse, gender en seksualiteit) verschil maakten in de burgerschapsstatus die mensen bij en na de staatkundige onafhankelijkheid van Indonesië en Suriname toegeschreven kregen. Het maakte, ook als je na de politieke dekolonisatie het Nederlandschap behield, uit of je zwart, bruin of wit was. Die erfenissen werken door in het Nederland van vandaag.²⁶

Een van de 'boodschappen' die we uit *Spiegelreflex* halen is dat dominante opvattingen over de enkelvoudigheid van de Nederlandse natie, in culturele, sociale en etnische zin, onhoudbaar zijn omdat Nederland fundamenteel en onomkeerbaar verweven is met de (voormalige) kolonies. Zodra Nederland vanaf de zestiende eeuw ging deelnemen aan 'de Europese expansiegeschiedenis' veranderde het land voorgoed.²⁷ In dat proces onderging de staatkundige entiteit die we nu Nederland noemen grote wijzigingen, en parallel daaraan verschoof de verbeelding van wat Nederland is en wie Nederlanders zijn. Waar Europese Nederlanders als onderdeel van de expansiegeschiedenis de wereld introkken en overzeese gebieden veroverden, ontvolkten, bevolkten en overheersten, kunnen we de verplaatsing van burgers uit de kolonies naar de metropool en het ontstaan van transnationale gemeenschappen voor en na de politieke dekolonisatie beschouwen als het antwoord daarop: 'we are here, because you were there'! Dat deze mobiliteit en vestiging ook gevolgen van het

kolonialisme zijn, wordt in de metropool vaak niet gewaardeerd en ongewenst gevonden. De geschiedenis van het Nederlandse beleid laat zien dat de Nederlandse politiek de (vrijwillige) mobiliteit van burgers uit de kolonies doorgaans heeft willen beperken, terwijl reizigers afkomstig uit de metropool geen restricties werden opgelegd.

Met andere woorden, de verwevenheid tussen metropool en kolonies waar Susan Legêne naar verwijst en die bijvoorbeeld blijkt uit de omvang van de vele transnationale familierelaties, is na de politieke dekolonisatie helaas niet verdisconteerd in burgerschap.²⁸ Dat Nederlandschap biedt en bood geen ruimte voor meervoudigheid in nationale zin. In de woorden van Susan Legêne: 'Het paspoort maakte het verschil, en dat verschil werd [na de staatkundige onafhankelijkheid, EC en GJ] steeds groter'.²⁹ De politieke dekolonisatie betekende wat dit betreft een knip in burgerschapsstatus binnen families, waarvan een deel het Nederlandschap behield en een ander deel Indonesisch of Surinaams staatsburger werd. Dat spanningsveld tussen de eenduidigheid van de toegeschreven status en de geleefde werkelijkheid motiveerde ons het paspoort 'a piece of paper' te noemen.

Het paspoort is weliswaar papier, maar het biedt, als bewijs van burgerschap, ook toegang tot rechten, en is daarmee een poortwachter.³⁰ Als reisdocument geeft het toegang of doorgang tot landen. Familieleden met de Surinaamse en Indonesische nationaliteit kunnen Nederland niet eenvoudig bezoeken, maar moeten een visum aanvragen dat aan allerlei uiterst restrictieve voorwaarden is verbonden. De officiële excuses voor kolonialisme en slavernij in de laatste jaren zijn wat dit betreft vooral van symbolische waarde.

²⁵ Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam 2010) 208. 'Daarmee verkeerden deze immigranten in een wezenlijk andere positie dan de teruggekeerde Nederlandse ex-koloniale families, voor wie de periode van de dekolonisatie en migratie wellicht even diep in hun persoonlijke leven had ingegrepen, maar van wie het burgerschap strikt genomen niet veranderd was'.

²⁶ Esther Captain, *Achter het kawat was Nederland. Indische oorlogservaringen en -herinneringen 1942-1995* (Kampen 2002); Guno Jones, *Tussen onderdanen, rijksgenoten, en Nederlanders. Nederlandse politici over burgers uit Oost & West en Nederland, 1945-2005* (Amsterdam 2007).

²⁷ Legêne, *Spiegelreflex*, 13

²⁸ Ruben Gowricharn en John Schuster, 'Diaspora and transnationalism. The case of the Surinamese in the Netherlands' in: Rosemarijn Hoefte en Peter Meel ed., *Twentieth-century Suriname. Continuities and discontinuities in a New World society* (Leiden 2001) 155-173.

²⁹ Legêne, *Spiegelreflex*, 215

³⁰ John Schuster, *Poortwachters over migranten. Poortwachters over immigranten. Het debat over immigratie in het naoorlogse Groot-Brittannië en Nederland* (Amsterdam 1999).

Ze hebben zich niet vertaald in een dekoloniaal migratieregime. Tegelijkertijd zijn we ons er pijnlijk van bewust dat 'het paspoort', het verschil in nationaliteit, voor EU-burgers die een bestaan willen opbouwen in Nederland geen enkel verschil meer maakt. Ze kunnen zonder visum naar EU-landen zoals Nederland komen en 'hebben het recht om te wonen, werken, studeren en trouwen in andere EU-landen.'³¹ David Theo Goldberg heeft dit 'Racial Europeanisation' genoemd.³²

Ingetrokken paspoort

Het bezit van een paspoort is voor veel postkoloniale migranten uit Indonesië geen vanzelfsprekend gegeven. Indo-Europeanen en Indonesiërs die na de soevereiniteitsoverdracht naar Nederland wilden gaan of Indonesië gedwongen moesten verlaten, hadden een Nederlands paspoort nodig. Als ze dat niet hadden, moesten ze een paspoort aanvragen. Een aanvrager moest aantonen dat hij of zij de Nederlandse nationaliteit bezat door afstammingsgegevens te verstrekken, die teruggingen tot ten minste 1892. In dat jaar trad namelijk de Wet op het Nederlanderschap in werking. Historicus Guus Cleintuar (1924-2019), geworteld in een op Nederland georiënteerde Indo-Europese familie, heeft indringend beschreven wat de lange gevolgen waren van een koloniale wetgeving waarin zijn overgrootvader had nagelaten zijn zoon (Cleintuurs opa dus) als kind te wettigen.³³ Dit bepaalde niet alleen de rechtspositie van zijn grootvader, maar ook die van zijn vader én van Cleintuar zelf. Hij was in 1946 per boot in Nederland mét een Nederlands paspoort aangekomen, maar dit werd in 1952 ingetrokken toen een ijverige gemeentebtenaar in Den Haag de eerdere 'nalatigheid' van Cleintuurs overgrootvader had ontdekt. Daarmee werd Cleintuar stateloos, moest hij zijn studie tijdelijk stopzetten en zich als 'buitenlander' periodiek melden bij de

vreemdelingenpolitie. Het kostte Cleintuar jaren van procederen totdat zijn geld voor een advocaat op was. Een oplossing kwam uiteindelijk toen hij werd opgenomen in een niet-aangevraagde naturalisatieprocedure en zo ontving hij in 1955 'voor de eerste maal' het Nederlanderschap. De formeel-juridische regels van de Nederlandse staat waren dus zo geformuleerd dat deze absurde instabiliteit van burgerschap mogelijk werd.

Naoorlogse paspoortaanvragen, gedaan in de periode 1950-1959 vanuit Indonesië, zijn online te raadplegen in het zogenoemde 'Indisch Oud-Paspoortarchief'. Het is een gedigitaliseerde collectie onder beheer van het CBG/Centrum voor Familiegeschiedenis en bestaat uit ongeveer 150.000 voorgedrukte kartonnen kaarten met informatie over de aanvrager en een aangehechte pas- of groepsfoto. Het 'Indisch Oud-Paspoortarchief' is van belang voor Indo-Europeanen in de diaspora, waarvan jongere generaties een toenemende interesse hebben voor hun familiegeschiedenis – mede omdat dit voor de oudere generaties soms moeilijk was om te bespreken, maar het ook lastig was om toegang tot bronnen en andere documentatie te krijgen. Dat persoonlijke gegevens, inclusief pasfoto's, in een virtuele omgeving zichtbaar zijn, nodigt uit tot verdere reflectie. Susan Legêne heeft in *Spiegelreflex* met een groot inlevingsvermogen geschreven over de machtsverhoudingen tussen kolonisator en gekoloniseerde, met name als het gaat om het afbeelden van de zogenoemde 'ander', onder meer op foto's.³⁴ Haar inzichten onderstrepen niet alleen de zorgvuldigheid die cruciaal is bij het opnemen van persoonsgegevens in de openbaarheid, maar ook inspireren ze tot het stellen van kritische vragen.

In lijn met Susans werk voelen wij ons uitgenodigd om dóór te vragen. Wat betekent het dat steeds meer persoonsgegevens in het publieke domein beschikbaar komen, soms meer dan in het privé-domein van een familie aanwezig of bekend is? Wie heeft de macht om de grenzen van en de

³¹ 'Bescherming, rechten en rechtvaardigheid voor EU-burgers', website Europese Unie, <https://europa.eu/!6QWKQ8> (geraadpleegd 28 februari 2024).

³² David Theo Goldberg, 'Racial Europeanization', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29:2 (2006) 331-364.

³³ Guus Cleintuar, 'Hoe vreemd mijn Holland was', in: Wim Willems en Leo Lucassen ed., *Het onbekende vaderland. De repatriëring van Indische Nederlanders (1946-1964)* (Den Haag 1994) 24-33.

³⁴ Legêne, *Spiegelreflex*. 83-117.

prijzen voor openbaarheid en zichtbaarheid vast te stellen?³⁵ Wie wordt beschermd door beperkingen op de openbaarheid: de betrokken personen en hun nazaten, de archief- of collectiebeherende instantie, de koloniale organisaties van destijds? Een aanvraag voor een Indisch paspoort komt alleen online als is vastgesteld dat de aanvrager is overleden en/of meer dan 100 jaar geleden is geboren. Wij zien nog altijd het dilemma dat de aanvragers van een paspoort verplicht waren om te poseren en zich te laten fotograferen, maar dat zij geen toestemming hebben gegeven voor het online publiceren van hun pasfoto, ook al is het honderd jaar later. We kennen de vervulling van het online vinden van bloedverwanten. Via pasfoto's kunnen wij hun gezichten leren kennen, en die van hun kinderen. Maar wij ervaren tegelijkertijd een schrijnend gevoel dat familieleden tentoongesteld worden – een praktijk die Susan Legêne in haar werk kritisch beziet. Aantekeningen over specifieke lichaamskenmerken, zoals littekens en postuur zijn ook in het 'Indisch Oud-Paspoortarchief' opgenomen. In het huidige Nederlandse paspoort is een geplastificeerde pagina opgenomen met daarin een chip met biometrische gegevens, waarin onder meer scans van vingerafdrukken zijn opgenomen. De paspoortaanvrager heeft zo te maken met disciplinerende interventies die letterlijk aan zijn of haar lichaam worden ontleend. Naast vingerafdrukken zijn er ook mogelijkheden als irisscans en gezichtsherkenning.

De confrontatie met 'belichaamde' vormen van het verleden kan belastend zijn. Een complexe (familie-)geschiedenis, waarin kolonialisme, slavernij, oorlog, geweld en migratie een rol spelen, maken dat het doen van onderzoek naar deze thema's een extra lading met zich kan meebrengen. Daarmee omgaan vraagt niet alleen om onderzoekservaring, maar doet ook een beroep op het vraagstuk van emotionele spankracht bij het doen van wetenschappelijk onderzoek – een thema waar wij ons meer op willen toeleggen in de komende jaren.

³⁵ De toegang tot deze collectie en het aanvragen van scans is aan prijzen gebonden: zie de website van het Centrum voor familiegeschiedenis, <https://cbg.nl/bestellen-cbg/bestellen/>.

Alarmbellen

De beschikkingsmacht over lichamen en de onzekere status van het staatsburgerschap waar respectievelijk het 'Indisch Oud Paspoortarchief' en de lotgevallen van Cleintuar exemplarisch voor zijn, zijn niet uniek of 'historisch'. Als hedendaagse politici 'de Nederlander weer op nummer 1' willen plaatsen, dan gaan bij ons de alarmbellen af. Wij weten hoe smal en hiërarchisch dat Nederlanderschap tijdens de koloniale tijd en tot in het heden gedefinieerd is en hoe dat doordeesemd was (en is) met systemisch racisme. Het werk van ons en van anderen staat hier uitgebreid bij stil.³⁶ De betrokkenheid van de Nederlandse politiek en culturele instellingen bij de symbolische erkenning van kolonialisme en slavernij in de Nederlandse publieke ruimte (denk aan monumenten, tentoonstellingen en excuses) is helaas nog niet gevolgd door het nemen van verantwoordelijkheid voor de hedendaagse koloniale erfenissen van het verleden, zelfs niet als ze concreet aanwijsbaar en oplosbaar zijn. We kunnen ook zeggen dat de centrale these uit Susan Legênes werk, de verwevenheid tussen Nederland en de kolonies, nog niet is gevolgd door politieke rekenschap van het nationale burgerschapsregime, dat vanwege zijn gewelddadige, exclusieve en uitsluitende karakter, moreel en sociaal failliet is.

³⁶ Zie bijvoorbeeld Schuster, *Poortwachters*; Captain, *Achter het kawat*; Jones, *Tussen onderdanen*.

4. Crossing borders. A research trajectory with family roots

Pál Nyíri

In 1988, at age sixteen, I got my first ‘world passport’. In its penultimate year, the Hungarian People’s Republic passed a new passport law making travel to any foreign country a citizens’ right. This ended the dual passport system that consisted of one set of red passports for the ‘socialist’ countries of the Soviet bloc, and another, blue, for all others. Perhaps more importantly than the actual boost to travel, the ‘world passport’ generated a sense of connectedness with ‘the West’ that translated into pride and optimism.

More so than other Soviet satellite states, Hungary had begun liberalising its border regime several decades earlier. By the 1980s, tourist trips to Western Europe had become commonplace and were limited more by the lack of access to hard currency than by administrative hurdles. According to my well-worn copy of the book *World passport*, by 1988, 6.5 million Hungarians travelled abroad. Conversely, the country served as the meeting place for tourists from West and East, an experience that shaped generations of East Germans. I, too, was an experienced traveller. The year before, for the 7 November holidays (which commemorated Russia’s ‘October Revolution’ for the last time), I had taken the overnight train to Warsaw but was so depressed by the greyness of the city that I bought an air ticket and flew straight back to Budapest.

Despite the relative permissiveness of the Hungarian authorities, crossing borders was, and remained, an unnerving experience of powerlessness. Borders are sites where the state projects its might and the individual is forced into subjection. In the 1991 short story *The protocol*, the writer Kertész Imre describes how the appearance of armed border guards and customs officers in a train compartment could trigger decades-old, embodied reflexes of fear, guilt, and obsequiousness even in a now democratic Hungary. It took further decades for these reflexes to wash out of a new generation of travellers – but they continue to be instilled in those coming from elsewhere. In 2008, Hungary’s



5. Cover of *Világ útle vél*, or ‘World Passport’ (1988).

Border Guard was disbanded, but in 2022, battalions of ‘border hunters’ were created anew, tasked with enforcing the ‘security’ of Hungary’s new fence built along its southern border.

My family has had many passports: Russian, then Soviet, then Russian again and American on my father’s side; German, Hungarian, French, British, and American on my mother’s, thanks to my maternal grandmother’s and her siblings’ timely exodus from Nazi Germany. At one point, my grandfather held a diplomatic passport, representing the Hungarian People’s Republic in Iskander Mirza’s Pakistan and Soekarno’s Indonesia. Shortly after retiring from state service, however,

he acquired a West German passport as part of what was called *Wiedergutmachung*, or reparations for the destruction by the Nazis of his career as a singer in Germany. After thirty years, as a pensioner, he could sing in Germany again. And he did, albeit under a stage name. Surprising as it sounds, it was possible for a retired official of the Hungarian party-state and a devoted Communist to divide his time between Budapest and West Berlin.

It is perhaps not altogether unrelated to this family history that I ended up researching human mobility. Hungary's 1988 passport reform roughly coincided with China's, and in 1989, Chinese traders came to Hungary to escape uncertain times after the Tiananmen Massacre. They were there to make a living, taking advantage of a brief period of Soviet-Chinese détente when holders of Chinese passports needed no visas for Hungary. I began talking to them in 1991 and have kept in touch since. Over these three decades, I have followed new waves of human mobility out of and into Hungary. At first, the country maintained its position of relative prosperity among the 'transitional economies' of Eastern Europe, and labour migration to Western Europe remained on a smaller scale than that from its neighbours. As its economy fell behind and its politics became increasingly authoritarian after 2010, the scale of labour emigration picked up, and so too did the departure of artists and intellectuals no longer able or willing to make ends meet in Hungary.

Curiously, this same period witnessed an entirely new immigration from China. The 2000s had been a decade with little immigration but much tourism, as the growing Chinese middle class discovered Europe as a place of leisure consumption. But in the 2010s, China's own economic slowdown, increasing competition for good jobs, and tightening state surveillance made the same middle class bristle. Their parents had discovered Hungary looking for places to make more money; they themselves did so looking for places to spend theirs better. A new wave of migrants was attracted by what they saw as a freer, more relaxed lifestyle in a healthier environment with less competition to face for their children. For many, the lockdowns brought on by China's zero-Covid policy at the end of the decade were the last straw as they realised that the state cannot just immobilise them but deprive them of access

to the basic necessities of life at any time. The term 'run', written in a homophonous Chinese character, became a buzzword on social media.

Seeking freedom in an increasingly authoritarian Hungary is only one of the paradoxes I am currently working on disentangling. Another is the rapid increase of all sorts of immigration in a country that has adopted the exclusion of foreigners as an official ideology. In the 2020s, Hungary seems set to champion the Gulf model of labour immigration in Europe, recruiting guest workers from Asia to provide labour for largely foreign-invested manufacturing, depriving them of rights and sequestering them from the rest of society. Many of these Filipino or Vietnamese workers will be working under Chinese managers, as the country is undergoing a Chinese investment boom in electric vehicle and battery manufacturing feeding into global supply chains. Beyond these new flows of industrial workers and managers, growing numbers of students, small business owners, and gig workers such as bicycle couriers appear to be coming from Asia.

In 1988, the 'world passport' appeared to usher in an era in which greater mobility and greater prosperity go hand in hand with greater understanding. We have since learned that they do not. But entitlements to mobility and the relative value of passports are changing. For the time being, Europe's increasing hostility to immigration is set to coexist with expanding cohorts both of migrants ready to provide sequestered labour and those with the money to pursue the dream of a 'European lifestyle'. These flows will contribute to a redrawing of the relationship between Europe's eastern periphery and its western 'core'.

5. Verschil maken

Artwell Cain & Martina Amoksi

Artwell Cain

In 2008 ben ik aangesteld als directeur van het NiNsee in Amsterdam. Mijn eerste publieke activiteit was het verwelkomen van gasten bij de Nieuwjaarsreceptie van januari (2009). Dat was mijn eerste contact met Susan Legene. Tijdens ons kort introductiegesprek vernam ik dat zij bij het Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT) werkte. Dat was een bevriende organisatie c.q. museum aan de overkant van de straat van het NiNsee. Deze ontmoeting was de start van een bijzondere samenwerkingsrelatie. Tijdens latere momenten van overleg vernam ik dat zij een bondgenoot was die het NiNsee in een vijandig veld nodig had.

Een jaar later las ik Legène's toen verschenen boek *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (2010). Ik was zeer onder de indruk van haar verhaal vooral over datgene dat zij over de doorwerking van het kolonialisme te melden had. Destijds, dertien jaar gelden was het niet normaal of vanzelfsprekend dat een Nederlandse wetenschapper op een heldere en openlijke wijze over het koloniale verleden en de wijze van de doorwerking tussen de kolonisten en de gekoloniseerden schreef. Zij schreef, in het verlengde van de relatie tot de relatie tussen Nederland en Indonesië, onder andere: 'Ook in de Nederlands-Surinaamse context lijkt 'kolonialisme' tot op heden een actief normatief begrip, dat van tijd tot tijd in overdrachtelijke zin ook van toepassing wordt verklaard (samenwerkings) relaties. Van Surinaamse kant wordt dan gewezen op economische ongelijkheid, op al dan niet vermeende politieke betutteling en racisme, zowel tussen die twee landen als binnen de Nederlandse samenleving'.³⁷

De opmerking kwam bij mij over als geroepen. Ik wilde weten waarom meer wetenschappers niet het lef en de intellectuele moed hadden om datgene wat zij tijdens onderzoek vonden op te schrijven. Ik had vooral honger naar kennis over de koloniale verhoudingen in Suriname, op de eilanden en in Nederland. Wie had het lef om dit op te schrijven of te vermelden? Ik heb ook gedacht dat Legène wellicht anders is in haar opvattingen en eerlijkheidshouding omdat zij in Suriname een aantal jaren met haar ouders gewoond had. Ik zag haar als een historicus/culturele antropoloog. Zij zag en had de koloniale zaken door. Toen zij hoogleraar politieke geschiedenis werd aan de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam bleef zij een *stakeholder* bij het NiNsee.

Later in 2013 werd het wetenschappelijk gedeelte van het NiNsee door de Nederlandse overheid met subsidiërende maatregelen weggevaagd. Ik ben ook weggegaan, maar wist heel goed welke mensen in de diverse instellingen lof en respect verdienden vanwege hun houding en inzet voor de organisatie. Susan was en is een van deze mensen.

Een paar jaren later heb ik de mogelijkheid gekregen om een kort onderzoek van ruim een jaar onder de supervisie van Susan bij de VU uit te voeren. Barryl Biekman en ik hadden een opdracht van het Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties in de wacht gesleept. De opdracht handelde over de *Uitsluitingsmechanismen van mensen van Afrikaanse afkomst in Nederland. Wat is erover bekend?*³⁸ Het literatuuronderzoek is door Deniece Wijdenbosch en mijn persoon in 2017 verricht. Het verslag van dat onderzoek is vervolgens door het ministerie op zijn website gepubliceerd.

Tijdens mijn werkzaamheden bij de VU heb ik Susan beter leren kennen. Zij deelde haar kennis,

³⁷ Susan Legène, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam 2010) 21.

³⁸ Artwell Cain en Deniece Wijdenbosch, *Uitsluitingsmechanismen van mensen van Afrikaanse afkomst in Nederland. Wat is erover bekend? Een quick scan van de literatuur* (Amsterdam 2017).

Beschikbaar op ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345258630_Uitsluitingsmechanismen_van_mensen_van_Afrikaanse_afkomst_in_Nederland_Wat_is_erover_bekend_Een_quick_scan_van_de_literatuur (geraadpleegd 1 November 2025).



6. Gebouw van het Tropenmuseum en Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT), Susan Legêne's werkplek en trefplaats in de jaren 1980-2000 (datum onbekend).

literatuurkennis en ervaring. Uiteraard ben ik tijdens dezelfde periode gevraagd om als voorzitter deel te nemen aan een paar workshops en zelf een inleiding bij een conferentie te houden. Op deze wijze heeft Susan een grote bijdrage geleverd bij het verrijken van mijn intellectueel leven.

Ik denk dat veel van haar collega's en studenten haar zullen missen. Ik wens haar de nodige rust en reflectie terwijl zij haar wetenschappelijke werkzaamheden op een andere wijze voortzet. Zij heeft voor een verschil in de academische wereld van Nederland gezorgd.

Martina Amoksi

Mijn eerste kennismaking met Susan Legêne dateert van september 2009. Ik had net mijn masteropleiding Geschiedenis aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam (UvA) afgerond. Een jaar daarvoor had ik een studiebeurs ontvangen van het NiNsee, waardoor ik in de gelegenheid werd gesteld mijn

masteropleiding in Nederland te doen. Suriname had op dat moment geen academische opleiding voor Geschiedenis.

Na mijn afstuderen was ik naarstig op zoek naar een wetenschapper om me te begeleiden bij mijn PhD-thesis. In gesprek met de marronantropoloog Thomas Polime vertelde hij me dat Susan Legêne de beste persoon was om me te begeleiden. Hij maakte met haar een afspraak om mij te ontmoeten. We ontmoetten elkaar in het Tropenmuseum waar zij op dat moment hoofd van de onderzoekafdeling was.

Bij de eerste ontmoeting met haar viel het me op dat ze heel leuk in de omgang is. Hoewel ik voor de ontmoeting heel zenuwachtig was, zorgde haar houding en uitstraling ervoor dat ik me op mijn gemak voelde. Ze ging ermee akkoord me te begeleiden en we maakten afspraken. In 2012 zijn we officieel begonnen met het onderzoek, hoewel ik daarvoor al bezig was. Ik heb nooit spijt gehad van het feit dat zij mijn begeleider is geweest. Ze maakte ruimte vrij voor me op de Vrije Universiteit en zorgde ervoor dat ik me daar thuis voelde. Wanneer ik op de

VU was zat en werkte ik bij de andere promovendi, maar ze was altijd op de achtergrond. Ik kon altijd een afspraak maken en bij haar langslopen.

Susan Legene heeft me begeleid in de periode 2011-2023. In die tijd heb ik haar leren kennen als een vrouw die het hart op de juiste plaats heeft. Ze was niet alleen een begeleider, maar ook een vriendin op wie ik kon bouwen. Ik kon van alles met haar bespreken. Ze was ook degene die er altijd voor zorgde dat ik aan middelen kwam om mijn studiereizen naar Nederland te bekostigen. Ze wist altijd een 'potje' te vinden zoals ze het zelf noemde. Als mijn begeleider stimuleerde ze me om mijn eigen ideeën te volgen en vanuit mijn eigen perspectief zaken te benaderen. In haar benadering van het verleden heeft ze bijna een anti-kolonialistische insteek. In het begin was ik verbaasd, maar dit stelde me gerust en zorgde ervoor dat ik tijdens mijn onderzoek mezelf kon zijn. Dankzij haar heb ik het volgehouden om te promoveren. Ze geloofde in mij en ik wilde haar niet teleurstellen. Zo heeft zij ervoor gezorgd dat ik mijn doel heb bereikt.

Part 2: Objects

Deel 2: Objecten

6. Growl, roar, chuff, moan. The lives and afterlives of the Sumatran tiger in the light of colonial and environmental history

Marieke Bloembergen, Caroline Drieënhuizen & Fenneke Sysling

They growl, roar, chuff and moan. Each sound is a different communication. A growl is a warning to another tiger, animal or human. A roar means battle or long-range communication, and can be heard from almost 2 miles away. A chuff (known as a prusten) is a sound of happiness, much like purring. A moan communicates anxiety.³⁹

Introduction

In November 2023, a tender-looking young tiger from Sumatra sparked our imagination when we visited the Great Indonesia Exhibition at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. This stuffed, yet moving, animal had traveled to Amsterdam on loan from Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden. Despite the exhibition makers' intentions to break away from colonial narratives, this tiger was put on display without its inventory number and together with other animals it was anonymised and exoticised as 'breath-taking, overwhelming, magical, wonderful'. Nature, the accompanying wall text explained further, 'in traditional belief systems in Indonesia', has a 'soul', and 'The powerful tiger [...] is seen as an apparition of a modern ancestor'.⁴⁰ While this may be the case in specific local narratives, places, and times, the exhibition did not elaborate on it, nor did it consider alternative, changing tiger-human relationships.



7. Tiger photographed in Amsterdam's 2023 Indonesia exhibition.

The tiger, representing the largest and heaviest member of the feline family, is a colourful and charismatic creature in popular imagination worldwide: king of the Asian jungle. It has also long been threatened by extinction, a process started when colonisers, plantations, and oil companies encroached on the tiger's territory. Watching this tiger, we realised that there must be deeper insights hidden in its yellow-green eyes that might have heuristic values for present-day efforts to decolonise knowledge.

The animal brings together various forms of knowledge and practice, including local narratives, myths, western science, heroic hunting stories, soil

³⁹ LSU Mike the Tiger exhibit, Louisiana State University, <https://www.lsu.edu/mns/files/exhibit/TigerSounds.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2024).

⁴⁰ Wall texts in this section of the exhibition. Visits by MB, CD and FS, all on 20 October 2023. The colonial dimension can also be seen in the structure of the exhibition: beginning with nature, moving to an exotic world of ancestral beliefs and ruined temples, and then suddenly jumping to modern times. See for some reviews critical in other ways: Eline

Kortehaas, 'De Grote Indonesië-tentoonstelling: veelzijdig, historisch en toch beperkt', NRC (20 October 2023); Gatool Katawi, 'Op de Grote Indonesië-tentoonstelling worden de echte hete hangijzers vermeden', Trouw (20 October 2023); Afran Groenewoud, 'Tóch kopieën van geroofde Indonesische stukken in omstreden tentoonstelling', Nu.nl (21 October 2023), <https://www.nu.nl/cultuur-overig/6286066/toch-kopieen-van-geroofde-indonesische-stukken-in-omstreden-tentoonstelling.html> (accessed 2 December 2024).

extraction and preservation attempts. Moreover, it carries ambiguous histories of affections – the fear, awe, masculine toxic honour and toughness, competitiveness, cruelty, worries, and care – that have shaped these forms of knowledge in local, colonial, and postcolonial contexts. What does the tiger’s perspective reveal, we wondered? How can we, following in Susan Legêne’s footsteps, understand the colonial dimensions of its histories? Paying closer attention to this tiger in life and death, and to the pain – the bodily pain and painful trajectories – of Sumatran tigers more generally, we hope, will break away from current colonial and exoticising narratives and practices of exhibiting ‘natural history’.⁴¹

While our essay is situated in this volume’s ‘objects’ section, our intention is not to ‘objectify’ the tiger. Instead, what follows is a preliminary effort, fragmented and exploratory, to investigate the social lives and afterlives of Sumatran tigers across and beyond colonial time and space, in and outside Sumatra. Engaging with an animal turn that also pervades colonial and Asian history, it is part of a larger experiment that seeks to assess the heuristic value of following animal-centred perspectives in reconstructing environmental history within and beyond colonial contexts.⁴² Focusing on animal-human interactions in history, and reading sources and narratives in an animal-

centred way as much as possible, we are guided by those tigers who had the misfortune to get involved in human affairs, those fortunate enough to remain undiscovered, and those who managed to escape in time.⁴³

Living alongside humans.⁴⁴ Tigers on Sumatra

Named by humans after their natural habitat, the island of Sumatra, the Sumatran tiger is smaller and darker than the Siberian tiger, and notable for its ‘well-developed collar’.⁴⁵ It is now the only tiger sub-species in Indonesia, surviving in what is left of the forests in Sumatra (now partly protected). While in the early twentieth century Asia counted around 100.000 tigers, today, of the 5.574 tigers that still roam wild in Asia and Eastern Siberia, fewer than 600 tigers live in Sumatra. Classified as ‘critically endangered’, they are listed on the IUCN Red List of threatened species ‘due to poaching, habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict’.⁴⁶

For Sumatran tigers, it all starts with the availability of land, ideally forests, and with other living creatures for subsistence. Before the spread of local human settlement, land appropriation, and deforestation in Indonesia, many more tigers lived on Sumatra, Java, and Bali, favouring forests and

⁴¹ On the role of the awareness of pain in human animals’ empathy and care for other animals see: Gauri Viswanathan, ‘Have animals souls?’ Theosophy and the suffering body’, *PMLA: Publications of the Modern language Association of America* 126 (2011) 440-447; J.S. Parrenas, *Decolonizing extinction. The work of care in orangutan rehabilitation* (Durham, NC 2018); Marieke Bloembergen, ‘Cats and the vegetarian dish in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia. Unsettling sources for environmental history’, in: Sandra Swart et al. ed., *Gender and animal history. Yearbook of Women’s History* 42 (Amsterdam 2024) 207-224.

⁴² Compare for recent studies animal-human relationships –and/or debates on animal-centred analysis – in history, including imperial history: Timothy P. Barnard, *Imperial creatures. Humans and other animals in colonial Singapore* (Singapore 2019); Antoinette Burton and Renisa Mawani ed., *Animalia. An anti-imperial bestiary for our Times* (Durham, NC 2020); Jennifer Bonnell and Sean Kheraj, *Traces of the animal*

past. Methodological challenges in animal history (Calgary 2022); Sandra Swart, *The lion’s historian. Africa’s animal past* (Johannesburg 2023).

⁴³ Compare Leigh Claire La Berge, *Marx for cats. A radical bestiary* (Durham and London 2023) 4-5; Bloembergen, ‘Cats and the vegetarian dish’; Parrenas, *Decolonizing extinction*, 6, 191.

⁴⁴ Referring to a colonial classic book in which Sumatran tigers figure, written by a colonial administrator who worked in Sumatra in the 1910s-1930s: L.C. Westenken, *Waar menschen en tijger burens zijn* (The Hague 1927). Shifting the order (first animals, then humans) is a first step in shifting the perspective.

⁴⁵ On features: Geraldine Véron ed. *Félins. Petits dictionnaire illustrés* (Paris 2023) 135.

⁴⁶ ‘Sumatran tiger’, Fauna & Flora, <https://www.fauna-flora.org/species/sumatran-tiger/> (accessed 24 January 2024); ‘De tijger, koning van de jungle’, WWF Belgium, <https://wwf.be/nl/bedreigde-dieren/bescherm-de-tijger> (accessed 26 January 2024).

the proximity of water. When hungry they hunt for animals, usually avoiding humans – unless disturbed by human appropriation of their space. As tigers were drawn closer to areas inhabited by human animals too, they began to capture the human imagination. Local ideas about tigers were not ‘tradition’ or ‘superstition’ as they were represented in colonial but also in later sources, but rather a dynamic body of knowledge shaped by, and shaping human-tiger encounters.⁴⁷

From a human perspective, tigers represented a very real threat. Local sources and oral histories reflect the awe and fear they inspired. The *harimau* was often a being whose name could not be mentioned.⁴⁸ This sense of danger generated rules of behaviour for people entering the forest and status quo-legitimising narratives.⁴⁹ Local sources also show how tigers became part of an increasingly cultivated and sacralised yet real landscape, evident until today in the notion of *hutan adat* (forest protected by traditional law).⁵⁰ Such stories reflect efforts to maintain a balance in power relations through forms of mutual respect and care.

In Sumatra, tigers have played an important role in local myths, as friend and foe, and as ancestral or village tiger. Some were believed to possess

magic forces, or to serve as tools of the gods for punishment, demanding village cleansing rituals to avert this.⁵¹ Religious beliefs also played a role in the reluctance of people to kill tigers.⁵² When tigers killed cattle or a human, Minangkabau people in West Sumatra would refrain from catching or killing the perpetrator and turn instead to local magical experts, the *pawang* or *dukun*, or the *pawang manangkok harimau*, the men specialised in dealing with tigers.⁵³ These experts were skilled in using traps, songs, and formulas to direct the tiger’s behavior. If a tiger could not be captured, it was considered without ‘sin’, implying it had not killed anyone.⁵⁴ Seen from a tiger’s perspective, these *pawang*’s activities shaped local practices that could sometimes work to their advantage.

Tigers, as historian Peter Boomgaard pointed out, also seemed to guard places and graves that were sacralised by humans, because these places were often located in isolated areas, on mountains and near water. Occasionally, he continues, ‘tigers killed pilgrims to these sanctuaries, thereby ‘reinforcing the notion of the sanctity of the place’. He ponders upon the possible relation of tigers and sanctuaries to local practices of nature protection: ‘It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that this feedback

⁴⁷ See for example Peter Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear. Tigers and people in the Malay world, 1600-1950* (New Haven 2001) who ironically frames his enlightening environmental histories with the colonial period 1600-1950. See for more attention for local engagements with tigers Jet Bakels, *Het verbond met de tijger. Visies op mensetende dieren in Kerinci, Sumatra* (Leiden 2000); Robert Wessing, ‘The last tiger in East Java. Symbolic continuity in ecological change’, *Asian Folklore* 54 (1995) 191-218; compare Teren Sevea, *Miracles and material life. Rice, ore, traps and guns in Islamic Malaya* (Cambridge 2020), 220, 155-6; Erlinda Kartika, Multiple anthropogenic pressures: challenges for tiger conservation (Unpublished PhD-thesis, Wageningen University 2023); and for contemporary research: M.J. Struebig et al., ‘Addressing human-tiger conflict using socio-ecological information on tolerance and risk’, *Nature Communications* 9 (2018) no. 3455.

⁴⁸ See Russell Jones, ‘Harimau’, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 126:2 (1970) 260-262, on the local meanings of ‘harimau’ as present in Malay sources, including those from Sumatra. Compare Tjalie Robinson’s preface to Lex Denninghof’s, *Langs tijgerpaden* (The Hague 1966), first unnumbered 2,5 pages, also quoted below.

⁴⁹ See for important reflections on material and oral sources relevant for further exploring histories and perspectives of the tiger in Sumatra, J.J.M. Wuisman, *Sociale verandering in Bengkulu. Een cultuur-sociologische analyse* (Dordrecht 1985) 77, 179, Bakels, *Het verbond met de tijger*, chapters 2, 4 and 5.

⁵⁰ Such as the Temedak forest in Kerinci: Bakels, *Het verbond met de tijger*, 103-106.

⁵¹ Wessing, ‘The last tiger in East Java’; Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear*, chapter 8, for Sumatra, p. 168, 170; for Sumatra in the 1970s, Wuisman, *Sociale verandering*; Sevea, *Miracles and material life*, 155-6 on the wider practice in the Malay world and Southeast Asia.

⁵² Jet Bakels, *Het verbond met de tijger*; R. Corbey and A. Lanjouw ed. *The politics of species reshaping our relationships with other animals* (Cambridge 2013); Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear*; J.A. McNeeley and P.S. Sochaczewski, *Soul of the tiger. Searching for nature’s answers in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu 1995).

⁵³ Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear*, chapter 8, mostly for the nineteenth century; Bakels, *Het verbond met de tijger*; Margaret Kartomi, ‘Tigers into kittens’, *Hemisphere* 20:5 (1976) 9-15, q.v. 12.

⁵⁴ Kartomi, ‘Tigers into kittens’, 14.

mechanism kept people from felling the (mountain) forests and clearing the 'wastelands' where these sanctuaries could be found'.⁵⁵

In short, local perceptions of tigers, while the result of human actors intruding in the tiger's habitat as well, may have contributed to the preservation of the forests, prevented massive clearing of lands and ensured tiger conservation. Although these local tiger-human relationships are coming under increasing pressure nowadays, ethnobiologists acknowledge that these relationships and local land and water management often achieved greater results in nature conservation.⁵⁶ All in all, in today's world where the human destruction of its environment presents itself more urgently, tigers, as Tom van den Berge has argued for tigers on the neighbouring island of Java, are good to think with.⁵⁷

A tiger in my tank. Exploitation, hunting and colonialism

Ever since the seventeenth century, Dutch colonisers have seen the tiger as a major threat. Initially this was relevant mostly on Java, where Dutch power was concentrated, but later, during the nineteenth century and the expansion of direct colonial rule, the concern spread to Sumatra.⁵⁸ There, tigers became more visible due to colonial expansion, land-appropriation, and, subsequently, deforestation for agricultural expansion that intensified in the third

quarter of the nineteenth century. As Europeans invaded the tiger's habitat, tigers roaming next-door and on plantations, became more directly threatening to human animals.

A response of both colonial government and private entrepreneurs was to eliminate this 'evil': calls for the 'extermination' of the 'monsters' were heard until the 1950s and killing tigers was considered routine practice. Colonial newspapers advertised with offers and requests for tiger traps, and colonial authorities actively supported the killing of tigers by offering bounties.⁵⁹ Much earlier, there were also private initiatives like the Society for the Eradication of Tigers, which propagated the aesthetic and practical properties of the tiger skin.⁶⁰ From the perspective of the tiger, these actions reveal the destructive effect of fear, strategic entrepreneurship, and commodification.

The hunting of tigers was also considered a game, for military and entrepreneur adventurers: 'There is only one hunt of kings and that is the tiger hunt', Indo writer-cum-macho Tjalie Robinson writes in the preface of a book by Lex Denninghoff Stelling. Robinson described Denninghoff, a petroleum entrepreneur and avid tiger hunter, as one of the 'patriarchs' who had been so 'courageous' as to 'cultivate' land in 'the Kingdom of the Striped One'.⁶¹ In such heroic stories the dependency on local knowledge was obfuscated, as was the pain of the tiger. The tigers photographed in Denninghoff's book are presented exclusively as trophies: 'three tigers in one afternoon', or 'with

⁵⁵ Peter Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear*, in particular pp. 178-182. See also chapter 2, on the story of Niti Sastra, about the tiger and the forest protecting each other.

⁵⁶ Ovi Zurah Mei, I Gusti Putu Suryadarma, 'The utilization of traditional conservation of Sumatran tiger as a potential development of biology teaching materials', *Journal of Science and Science Education* 4 (2023) 126-137, 127. Compare on the destructive impact of (colonial and postcolonial) conservation programmes: Adam Runacres, 'Relocated tigers and relocated villagers. Ferality and human-animal entanglement in Indian conservation', *Modern Asian Studies* 57 (2023) 222-251.

⁵⁷ Tom van den Berge, *De tijger in het Soendase volksgeloof* (unpublished introduction for a paper in the 'Aspecten van de Javaanse maatschappij en cultuur' course of the 'Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost Azië en Oceanië' programme at Leiden University, October 1988).

⁵⁸ Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear*, Bakels, *Het verbond*.

⁵⁹ Boomgaard, *Frontiers of fear*, 227; Peter Boomgaard, 'Hunting and trapping in the Indonesian archipelago', in: Peter Boomgaard, David E.F. Henley and Freek Colombijn ed., *Paper landscapes. Explorations in the environmental history of Indonesia* (Liedenn 1998) 160-1950.

⁶⁰ 'Maatschappij tot uitroeiing der tijgers op Java' [letter to the editor], *Bataviaasche Courant* (26 February 1820). See on this society and other measures to 'exterminate' also 'Over de uitroeiing van tiigers', *Tijdschrift van Nederlandsch-Indië. Nieuwe serie* 4 (1866) 492-495.

⁶¹ Just an example: Tjalie Robinson's Preface to Lex Denninghof, *Langs tijgerpaden* (The Hague 1966).



8. 'Put a tiger in your tank!' advertisement.

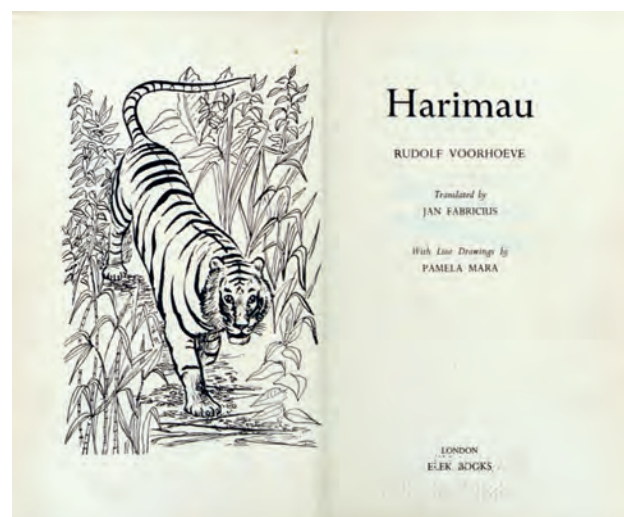
Goliath from the goenoeng'. Both as oil man and as hunter, Denninghoff played a crucial role in the endangerment of the Sumatran tiger.

The fate of tigers and the colonial exploitation of natural resources like timber, rubber, or oil, along with the colonial passion for hunting (seen as a masculine activity) are intimately linked. It is therefore not surprising that many Sumatran tigers were captured in the late colonial era, often near plantations or colonial towns.⁶² For instance, seven tigers were captured on the rubber and palm plantations Pematang Siantar and Tebing Tinggi

⁶² Colonial treasure trove Delpher abounds in examples that, while often pointing to the fear of, and predatory role of tigers, and providing clues to local perspectives, mostly reveal indifference to and possibly ignorance of the environmentally destructive effects.

⁶³ Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, the Netherlands, inventory numbers RMNH.MAM.60541, RMNH.MAM.60542, RMNH.MAM.60543, RMNH.MAM.60544, RMNH.MAM.60545, RMNH.MAM.60546, RMNH.MAM.60547.

⁶⁴ <https://www.ensie.nl/woordenboek-van-populair-taalgebruik/stop-een-tijger-in-je-tank>; for example: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/631700285218154134/>



9. Title page of Voorhoeve's *Harimau*, drawing by Pamela Mara.

located in the woods of Sumatra's East Coast. Their skulls and skins were sent to the Natural History Museum in Leiden by the Van der Veer family as late as the 1950s.⁶³

The relation between oil, which began to be commercially exploited in Sumatra in the 1880s, and the Sumatran tiger had a long afterlife. The Esso campaign of the 1960s and 70s encouraged people to 'put a tiger in your tank'.⁶⁴ In 1965, a two-year-old Sumatran tiger worth £ 6000,- and named Paul entered Blijdorp Zoo in Rotterdam as a gift from Esso, playing on a variation of the slogan: 'put a tiger in your cage'.⁶⁵ It is a cliché today, but still important in this context to acknowledge that histories of American Standard Oil (predecessor of Esso) and the (Royal Dutch) Shell, and their complicit consumers happy to put a tiger in their tank, are histories of environmental destruction that enabled, in many ways, the demise of the Sumatran tiger.⁶⁶

[com/pin/631700285218154134/](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/631700285218154134/) (both consulted 23 February 2024).

⁶⁵ 'Stop een tijger in uw hok. Kampioen in Diergaarde Blijdorp', *Het Vrije Volk* (3 December 1965).

⁶⁶ A comparable story might be told when starting with the advertisements on tiger balsam, relating to the trade of tigers for medical use: Mitra, Sarat Chandra, 'The tiger in Malay folklore, proverbial philosophy, and folk-medicine', *The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay* 9 (1910-11, Amp 1912) 369-377.

In response to colonial hunting, nature protection initiatives started to focus on the cruelty and uselessness of the hunt. This shift in perspective can be seen in the Dutch children's book *Harimau*. Its author, former military and tiger hunter Rudolf Voorhoeve, reflects on how his failed attempts to catch one individual, led him to develop a deep respect for this tiger. He is relieved that the protagonist of his book escapes 'the humiliating treatment' to end up as a skin on someone's wall.⁶⁷

Tiger journeys. Travelling to the Netherlands as skins, as mounted exhibition objects or as zoo animals

In 1891, Theodore Delprat, a Dutch engineer working on the railway line in Solok, Sumatra that was to carry off coal from the Umbilin mine, prepared the skin of a tiger himself and shipped it to his brother in Amsterdam in an oil can. It ended up as a 'small hearth rug of tiger'⁶⁸. Tiger rugs like those were common in colonial households: writing about his 'Indische' upbringing, Thom Hoffman uses the Sumatran tiger skin hanging on the wall in his room when he was a boy as a focal point for his memories.⁶⁹ In the Netherlands Indies, tiger skins appeared regularly in advertisements, or were given as presents at official occasions. A skin that included the skull, wrote the *Sumatra-courant* in 1868, was more valuable than one without, because it best kept the features of the original animal.⁷⁰

For research purposes, natural history museums preferred to have tigers as skeletons or skins. As exhibition spaces, they used these materials to mount the animals in specific positions.⁷¹ Preparator W.F. van Ee, who worked for the Zoological Museum in Amsterdam, created a diorama with two mounted Sumatran tigers in their natural habitat for the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition in Paris. Speaking to a Dutch newspaper, he commented: 'It's quite a job. (...) It includes sculpting, skinning, carpentry and whatnot! But the work is nice, if you enjoy it'.⁷² Positioned in the tall grass as a couple, the two big cats, while embodying pain, were to represent Dutch colonial nature, its dangers under control.

Other tigers were captured alive and sent to European zoos, because living tigers too were a source of revenue: Jan van Geuns, for instance, who began as an administrator on a Sumatran rubber plantation in the mid-1920s, developed into a well-known 'animal catcher' or 'professional tiger trapper'. Operating from Medan, he sold animals such as tigers and orangutans to zoos. Even in 1949, during the Indonesian revolution, he caught a tiger, called Caesar, as a 'husband' for a tigress at the Rotterdam Zoo, caught a year earlier.⁷³ Sumatran tigers have remained a presence in Dutch zoos: Blijdorp Zoo in Rotterdam still participates in a Sumatran tiger breeding programme, which it started in 1945.

⁶⁷ R. Voorhoeve, *Harimau* (Antwerp and Amsterdam [1939]): 5-6. For a critical analysis of tiger conservation programmes in colonial and postcolonial India: Runacres, 'Relocated tigers and relocated villagers'.

⁶⁸ Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Delprat family archive (2.21.183.16), inv.nr. 292, letter by Th.F.A. Delprat to C.C. Delprat (14 February 1891).

⁶⁹ Thom Hoffman, *Indië, betovering en desillusie. Een persoonlijke zoektocht naar een verborgen geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 2022). In the movie *Sweet Dreams* by Ena Sendijarevic (2023), which critically reflects on Dutch colonial history, one scene is filmed from the mouth of a tiger rug.

⁷⁰ 'Tijgervellen', *Sumatra-courant. Nieuws- en advertentieblad* (17 October 1868).

⁷¹ For the stuffing of animals see: T. Asma, *Stuffed animals and pickled heads. The culture and evolution of natural history*

museums (Oxford 2003); A.C. Colley, *Wild animal skins in Victorian Britain. Zoos, collections, portraits and maps* (Farnham 2014); for recent critical approaches, see John Herron, 'Stuffed. Nature and science on display', in: Margaret S. Shaffer and Phoebe S.K. Young ed. *Rendering nature. Animals, bodies, places, politics* (Pennsylvania 2015) 49-69; Jake Shoborn, 'Stuffed animals and loaded histories' art project (2017). A.S. Ross, 'The animal body as medium. Taxidermy and European expansion', *Past and Present* 249 (2022) 85-119, emphasises the colonial dimension, but not the animals' perspective.

⁷² 'Opzetten van tijgers', *Het Volk* (20 November 1930).

⁷³ 'Tijgerin moest anderhalf jaar wachten', *Het Parool* (17 January 1949).

Conclusion

The young tiger on display in the Nieuwe Kerk encapsulates some of the threads we discovered. What we know is that it died in captivity, in a zoo in the Netherlands, probably Blijdorp, given the reputed breeding programme there. It must have been purchased by Naturalis around 1998, at the time of the National Natural History Presentation, preserved by a taxidermy firm in Venlo, and was put on display at the 'life science' hall of Naturalis in 2011.⁷⁴ Beyond the scope of this essay, we are exploring its life and afterlives further.

What insights do we gain from examining history through the eyes of a tiger, beyond colonial time and space? The other Sumatran tigers we encountered reveal complex human-tiger interactions that demonstrate balance and care for nature on the one hand, and on the other pain and destruction, mainly as a result of colonial expansion, toxically-masculine hunters, and the relentless pursuit of economic gain. This intertwining of colonial exploitation and

environmental degradation becomes apparent in the commodification of tigers as skins and zoo animals as well as in the promotion of oil consumption through slogans like 'put a tiger in your tank'.

The perspective of the Sumatran tiger confronts us with local views on tigers and ambiguous, multi-sited histories of colonialism and environmental exploitation and protection; with technical, biological, cultural, environmental, and cosmic forms of knowledge, developed by humans to balance, control, hunt, or kill the tiger, for survival, game and profit. Last but not least, it confronts us with a predator's own hunts, wanderings, and pains, as generated by colonial, entrepreneurial expansion and human cruelty. A question that emerges from this tentative experiment, and that merits further study, is the extent to which tigers had an active role in protecting their environment and making strategic choices for survival, while living a life of suffering and resilience. The Sumatran tiger, thus, urges us to re-evaluate our understanding of care, stewardship, and responsibility towards nature.

⁷⁴ Naturalis Biodiversity Center, specimen RMNH.MAM.60326, <https://bioportal.naturalis.nl/en/specimen/RMNH.MAM.60326> (accessed 14 June 2024); correspondence MB with

Naturalis curator (December 2023); with Naturalis archivist (February 2024); with Artis historian Wessel Broekhuis (February 2024).

7 . A visit to the Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling, Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam

Pamela Pattynama, Susie Protschky & Henk Schulte Nordholt

Three scholars discussing the *Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling* (Great Indonesia Exhibition) at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, the latest in a spate of 'new' museum exhibitions on Indonesia in the Netherlands,⁷⁵ seems to us an appropriate tribute to Susan Legêne's career, given her profound impact in reshaping how academia and museums collaborate to critically re-evaluate heritage and image and object collections from Indonesia and the Netherlands' other former colonies. Since we have worked together before, we decided to extend the spirit of the *vriendenboekje* by weaving reflections on Susan's work into a conversation about the Great Indonesia Exhibition.

Henk: Despite the title of the exhibition – 'de Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling' – I think that visitors will look in vain for an in-depth encounter with modern Indonesia.

In the first room we encounter a statue of a Buddha-like woman with glasses and a hijab plus a Chinese smartwatch that refers to the famous statue of Prajñāpāramitā (Figure 10, see also Figure 13) from the thirteenth century. The sculptor, Alfiah Rahdini, notes the figure is meant to be a reflection on contemporary Indonesian women's complex forms of spirituality, but the ironic reference and other connotations are lost in a flurry of statistics representing modern Indonesia. We then enter a room which glorifies the archipelago's natural beauty. A promotion of the future capital Nusantara promises a rather idealistic 100% sustainable balance between humans, city, and nature. Next, the visitor dives into religions and the classical past – ancient kingdoms, Hindu Bali, followed by four representations of Islam: objects from old



10. Alfiah Rahdini, Sri Naura Paramita (2021) on the Amsterdam exhibition.

Islamic kingdoms, a picture of an offering to the Javanese Goddess of the South Sea, photos of young boys at a Qur'an class and women praying in a mosque, and another Rahdini statue of a superhero woman in a hijab who radiates autonomy and resists subservience to Islam. What Islam means and 'does' in modern Indonesia is unclear, but the exhibition hints that maybe Islam is not ok. Another room focuses on ancestors. Christianity gets no mention. Millions of Catholics and Protestants are disregarded, presumably because they do

⁷⁵ See, for example, 'Onze koloniale erfenis' at the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam (2023–); 'Revolusi!' at the

Rijksmuseum (2021); 'Beyond the Dutch' at the Centraal Museum (2009–10).



11. Religious and economic figures presented at the exhibition.

not represent 'authentic' Indonesia. So far, the exhibition produces a neo-colonial mode of representing the Indonesian archipelago.

In the next room we are suddenly in the middle of World War Two and then the Revolution. No mention is made of the initial optimism that characterised a newly independent Indonesia in the 1950s, or how Indonesia was central to the non-aligned movement through hosting the Bandung Conference in 1955. Instead, a small side-room jumps to President Suharto, on one wall, facing uniforms on the other representing 'the' military. Besides a video interview with the famous novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and the contemporary artist FX Harsono painting Chinese characters on a glass plate, only for them to be symbolically washed away, we have no idea what the New Order was, the extent to which it changed Indonesia, how it gave birth to a new middle class and urbanisation. One small text mentions the mass killings of alleged communists in 1965, but nothing is more said about the impact of this tragedy. Then the exhibition moves backwards in time to the colonial era and the VOC period! There is silence on the 1970s–90s,

as well as *Reformasi* (1998–2002) and the transition to electoral democracy. Finally, the visitor enters 'modern Indonesia' in a room filled with film clips of influencers and activists talking on gender, inter-religious dialogue, democracy, child marriage, the new criminal code, intolerance, a military whose function remains vague, and an artist from Papua (no controversial allusion to separatism) talking about their work. Meanwhile we still have no clue what modern Indonesian society looks like. As a result the critical remarks made by the influencers echo in a huge vacuum.

For me the exhibition displays the inability to show key features of modern Indonesia, because Indonesia is still confused with 'Indië'.

Susie: I had a similar response. My experience was of embarking on a strange, dreamlike journey to a realm that is Indonesian on the outside but colonial at its centre. I entered a church in Amsterdam, took a traveller at Schiphol airport ('mind your step') past tourism posters advertising Indonesia, encountered objects that were forgotten by the Rijksmuseum's *Revolusi!* exhibition (so *this* is where the stuff on women ended up), came at last to the centre, occupied by a familiar set of rooms on colonial history in the Netherlands Indies (is that Hans Goedkoop on the television?), before finally being spat out into the museum shop. The exhibition made me think about how Susan's work has been instrumental in showing the history of the Netherlands and its museums as *colonial* history.⁷⁶ But should an exhibition ostensibly about Indonesia be doing the same?

Pamela: Like Henk, I thought about the homelands but perhaps in a different way. My family owns several Indonesian paintings, woodcarvings, utensils, and (sacred?) objects, the meaning of which is unknown to me. They have become family heirlooms that have been passed down from one generation to the next. In the East Indies my family belonged to the socially lower Indo group, sometimes referred to as 'Kleine Boeng'. They were not part of the wealthy colonial elite and therefore

⁷⁶ Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam 2010) 8.

the family heirlooms from Indonesia do not form a large, valuable collection. Without further thinking, I have always regarded our Indonesian objects as precious mementos of my parents, my Indo heritage, and our country of origin.

Susie: That's interesting, Pamela. I can see how for you, as a historian and member of the Indische community in the Netherlands, it's impossible to represent 'home' without connecting family heirlooms and heritage with colonial Indonesia. Whereas for me, as an 'outsider' to both the Netherlands and Indonesia, and a historian of colonialism and visual culture, I was prompted to think about what Susan Legêne identified of a pronounced *dingenliefde* in Dutch culture, and what she calls a *thuis-koloniale cultuur* that domesticated collecting from the colonies, while confusing colonial history with 'authentic' cultures.⁷⁷

What struck me walking through the exhibition was how, at eye level, objects were fetishised as material relics of the past, while photographs were often backdrops to the main, material focus. And perhaps also as windows in the present, if visitors are inclined to look up. The cavernous ceiling space of the Nieuwe Kerk is used to accommodate enormous photographs printed on banners showing scenes from contemporary life in Indonesia, which are meant to be in dialogue with a past represented by historical objects at eye level. A photograph of a model wearing western-style *haute couture* at a contemporary Indonesian fashion-show, for example, hangs above a vitrine showing swathes of batik and other regional textiles from earlier centuries.

In the rooms where we encounter colonialism in the former 'East Indies', suddenly the ceiling is filled with iconic *tempo doeloe* photographs straight out of Rob Nieuwenhuys' famous books that seem to need no explanation.⁷⁸ For example, the portrait of the little Dutch girl, Antoinette Westerman, with her hand on the shoulder of her seated *babu*. How can we hope to historically ground these images, pulling them down from the fog of nostalgia, if we

cannot give them critical histories, starting with their materiality as historical objects and social lives as sources that keep recirculating?

In her book *Spiegelreflex*, Susan uses optical technologies and illusions as a metaphor for how images of the past are formed. It seems to me that the Great Indonesia Exhibition gives us parallax: a framing error arising from badly reconciled perspectives between the eye and the camera's viewfinder, particularly when objects are photographed close up. In focusing on the objects at eye level, in the museum, we still can't seem to capture the whole scene without cutting off the head of what we are looking at. In the Nieuwe Kerk, these missing 'heads' of contemporary Indonesian life are replaced by flat images printed on banners.

Pamela: Lately, my attitude towards the Indonesian objects my family owns has turned into an ambivalent and uncomfortable feeling. This change stems from the postcolonial knowledge that the colonisation of Indonesia was achieved through structural violence, racism, sexism, and slavery. While I used to sometimes catch myself indulging in a mild form of nostalgia, nowadays, my feelings have been affected by the current negatively-charged collective memory of the Dutch East Indies, which is full of remorse and rejection. The once-nostalgic national ideas about an exotic overseas territory have been replaced by collective shame, regret, or looking away. All of that concerns me, and as far as family property is concerned, so does the issue of looted art.

Where do the Indonesian objects in my family come from? Who were the previous owners? How did they come into our possession? I would like to believe that my ancestors bought those objects legally or perhaps happily accepted them as wedding gifts. But to be honest, I have no idea about the origins of the colonial pieces in my house.

In her excellent *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel* (1998), Susan follows the colonial goods that Dutch elite families brought to their home country as their property.⁷⁹ She analyses how 'imperialist

⁷⁷ Legêne, *Spiegelreflex*, 28, 26, and 29, 154, respectively.

⁷⁸ Series of three books by Rob Nieuwenhuys, *Tempo doeloe – een verzonken wereld: Fotografische documenten uit het oude Indië 1870–1920*, published by Querido, Amsterdam, between 1981

and 1988.

⁷⁹ Susan Legêne, *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel. Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse cultuur van het imperialisme* (Amsterdam 1998).

culture', i.e. overseas imperialism, continues to affect post-imperialist Dutch society to this day. Most of the time, the elite families had no idea of the meaning the first owners attached to the objects. They classified them and gave them a meaning that put the interests of the nation first. Susan discusses the social life of these exported Indonesian objects in Dutch possession and sees them as threads of the fabric of collective memory.

During my visits to the exhibition, I noticed that all objects (except some art) come from Dutch museums, archives, and libraries and are therefore Dutch property. How did those showpieces get here? Are they objects donated by Dutch, colonial collectors who lived or worked there? And how did these unique works of art come into their possession? Is it looted art, inherited by descendants of Dutch soldiers who started looting after a deadly battle against the local population? Or are they legally acquired objects, purchased at auctions or passed on through another friendly museum? In all these cases, questions about the provenance of the documents are relevant. But the exhibition does not provide any information about this.

Indeed, a lot of descriptive information was given, indicating the places of origin of the various objects, but that did not answer the questions that arose for us. The exhibition unproblematically ignored their social biography and does not say a word about how they came into Dutch possession.

Susie: Indeed. 'Authority based on violence' is also how the Nieuwe Kerk figures a wall of such atrocity images, some of them taken as trophy photographs during military expeditions from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But in making a montage without reflecting on the deep imbrication of colonial photographers and audiences with cultures of violence, and how histories of colonialism were constitutive of European nation-states like the Netherlands, how far has museum culture in the Netherlands really moved forward from Nieuwenhuys' photo books, which catalogued

well-known sites and stories of conquest using pictures with minimal context? As Susan has said, 'met de dekolonisatie was het kolonialisme nog niet voorbij'.⁸⁰

Pamela: This exhibition once again shows that Susan's research on imperialist culture, published 25 years ago, is still relevant to the questions we ask ourselves in 2024 about our colonial past. Urgent questions stimulated by a cultural archive based on racial inequality.⁸¹ This deeply anchored archive works through contemporary emotions about the self and others, as well as the Dutch art and museum world.

Henk: This exhibition demonstrates that colonialism is like a contagious disease. It penetrated deeply in the soil, the landscape, the society, political structures, and bodies and minds of the conquered people, and it still leaves deep traces and long-lasting legacies in the attitudes and mindsets of the imperial 'homeland'.

⁸⁰ Legêne, *Spiegelreflex*, 31.

⁸¹ Gloria Wekker, *Witte onschuld. Paradoxen van kolonialisme en ras* (Amsterdam 2018) 8.

8. Sculpting stories of the Self. Autobiographical inscriptions by female Indonesian artists Kustiyah and Rahdini⁸²

Babs Boter & Widya Fitria Ningsih

In 2015, Susan Legêne, in collaboration with a group of students of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, developed a 'Toolkit for the Analysis of Objects and the Interpretation of Museum Representations of European History and Culture.' The toolkit consists of pertinent questions to ask when visiting museum displays: questions about 'the strategies and technologies of display,' including the positioning and framing of the objects by way of captions; questions about how press releases and websites address their target audience – either confirming or disturbing the 'visitors' tacit expectations and view of reality'; and 'political' questions such as: 'How does an exhibition construe notions of gender, race, religion, hard/soft identities'?'⁸³ In this essay, we would like to tweak and then answer this last question, swapping 'notions' for 'narratives' originating from our academic interest in life narratives. We will be engaging with two pieces of work by two Indonesian artists: Kustiyah (1935 – 2012), whose canvases were posthumously shown at the 'As if there is no sun' exhibition of the Carnegie Center of Art in Pittsburgh (24 September 2022–2 April 2023), and Alfiah Rahdini, whose sculptures 'Sri Naura Paramita' and 'Sailor Moonah #2' were displayed at the *Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling* (Great Indonesia Exhibition) in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (21 October 2023–1 April 2024).

Kustiyah and Rahdini trained and worked in very different historical, political, and cultural

contexts, yet both produced artworks that express (life) narratives *and* that are framed as such by the aforementioned exhibitions. This seems especially so for Kustiyah's 'Torso' (1960) and Rahdini's 'Sailor Moonah #2' (2022). We consider these pieces to be self-portraits—even though feminist scholars have pointed out the risk of zooming in on the autobiographical elements in women's art.⁸⁴ This would enable us to effectively study them as 'autobiographical inscriptions,' a term theorised by two leading scholars in the field of Life Writing, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson.⁸⁵ As early as the 1990s, when Life Writing as a field was newly developing, they explained that 'In addition to the textual modes of autobiography, memoir, diaries, and journals, there are many visual modes – sculpture, quilts, painting, photography, collage, murals, installations as well as films, artists' books, song lyrics, performance art and Web sites in cyberspace – that have not yet been recognised as autobiographical acts'.⁸⁶

Perhaps for that reason, in their 2010 handbook on how to read autobiography, Smith and Watson include an entire chapter on 'The visual-verbal-virtual contexts of life narrative'.⁸⁷ In this chapter, discussing a series of photographic self-portraits, Smith and Watson examine the notion of 'doubling,' as these self-portraits present 'the 'I' in the photograph as at once a flesh-and-blood subject and a dematerialised phantom' of the invisible artist. As such, the portraits are 'interrogating

⁸² We thank Eveline Buchheim for sharing her feedback on an earlier version of this essay.

⁸³ A version is accessible online: Lonneke Geerlings et al., 'Manifesto. Towards a historical critique of exhibitions', *Historici.nl* (16 March 2015). https://www.historici.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2015-03-15_historical-critique-of-exhibitions_draft-for-OPG.pdf (accessed 22 November 2024).

⁸⁴ Maria Tamboukou, 'Painting the body. Feminist musings on visual autographies', *a/b. Auto/Biography Studies* 33:2

(2018) 327–345; see also Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, 'Introduction. Mapping women's self-representation at visual/textual interfaces', in: Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson ed., *Interfaces. Women/autobiography/image/performance*, ed. (Ann Arbor 2002) 1–46.

⁸⁵ Smith and Watson, 'Introduction', 46.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21–22.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 167–191.

self-identity, doubling 'T's, unfixing gender, and unmasking conventions of self-portraiture by their impersonation of popular or artistic images'.⁸⁸

This notion of 'doubling' is useful for studying the two autobiographical artworks at hand and understanding how they – embedded in their respective exhibitions – co-construct life stories. Instead of 'doubling' we can perhaps even speak of 'tripling,' as both portraits are triply layered: Kustiyah has painted the portrait of a torso sculpted by her husband, the Indonesian maestro sculptor Edhi Sunarso (1932-2016), for which she sat as a model; Rahdini has used her own body as the basis for a fiber glass figure that, in its turn, tweaks a female anime character created by the Japanese manga artist Naoko Takeuchi.⁸⁹ In their tripling acts, both artists seem to engage in 'unmasking conventions of self-portraiture,' to use Smith and Watson's phrase, as they play with existing notions of self-representation and adjust European traditions of self-portraiture (Kustiyah) and more recent conventions originating in pop culture (Rahdini). This tripling is an important first warning for the visitor/viewer who is looking for the singular life story of each artist – referred to in Legêne's toolkit as 'visitors' tacit expectations and view of reality'. The following sections will only add more versions of their life stories as we present *and* create an additional framing of both artists and their artworks.

Kustiyah: Self-portrait, Torso, Dance

Kustiyah was born in Probolinggo, East Java, on 2 September 1935. She trained at the ASRI Arts Academy in Yogyakarta and was one of only three female students of the Academy in the early 1950s.⁹⁰ She was mentored by Hendra Gunawan, a distinguished member of LEKRA (the Institute for the People's Culture) and continued her artistic

journey with the *Pelukis Rakyat* (the People's Painters) and *Pelukis Indonesia* (the Indonesian Painters). Following her studies, Kustiyah married sculptor Sunarso and then became a leading member of the Yogyakarta Artists' Wives Association. She passed away in Yogyakarta on 1 June 2012, at the age of 77. Her artistic legacy is preserved at the Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, a private gallery dedicated in her honour.

Kustiyah's artworks include both (self-)portraits and canvases depicting everyday life scenes, partly about the natural scenery around her. They reflect characteristics that are typically associated with Indonesia, portraying people's lives and the spirit of revolution and freedom. Despite her participation in art exhibitions since her student days, Kustiyah's artworks have been greatly overlooked.⁹¹ However, in 2022 and 2023, for more than six months, over 40 of Kustiyah's canvases were exhibited at the 58th Carnegie International alongside work by other Indonesian artists. Following Legêne's toolkit, we can ask questions about the framing of Kustiyah's artwork and the life stories that it may represent. In his review for *Artforum*, art critic Zack Hatfield writes:

Hung salon style alongside canvases by contemporaries, her [Kustiyah's] roiling, darkly silent images—of watermelons, fish, frangipani flowers, and herself, often dappled with a charged, bloodred hue—dramatize, brushstroke by brushstroke, tensions between the repressed memory of political slaughter and the desiderata of truth and serenity instilled in artists of her milieu.⁹²

Hatfield's exoticising framing ('roiling, darkly silent images'; 'bloodred hue'; 'serenity'), as well as his references to the artist's hard work ('brushstroke by brushstroke') and historical and social/professional context ('repressed memory of political slaughter';

⁸⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁸⁹ Kayla Aurellia Budiyo et al., 'Assalamualaikum, Sailormoonah. A case study on Alfiah Rahdini,' *Media Seni* (SR 2105), Institut Teknologi Bandung (2020). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BankYNNtjMY>.

⁹⁰ The ASRI is now referred to as ISI, the Indonesian Institute of the Arts.

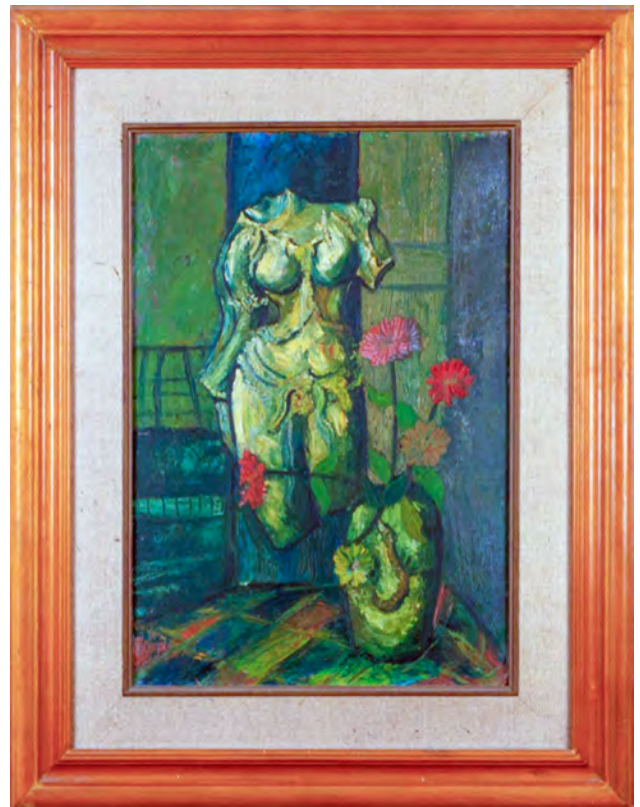
⁹¹ One reason for this may be that, in Indonesia, female artists have structurally been taken less seriously than male artists – although Kustiyah, as the wife of a renowned artist, was in a relatively advantaged position.

⁹² Zack Hatfield, 'Zack Hatfield on the 58th Carnegie International', *Artforum* 61:4 (December 2022).

'her milieu') of course set the stage for *Artforum*-readers planning to visit the exhibit.⁹³

A much more comprehensive framing is provided by Hyphen—, the Yogyakarta-based collective that guest-curated the exhibition at the Carnegie Center in Pittsburgh: their framing highlights the lack of life stories of the artist Kustiyah. In 2022, in their online log, they seem rather adamant in trying to find Kustiyah's life stories. They have apparently started a 'research trajectory aim[ed] to unravel stories about, behind, and surrounding the lifelong artistic practice of the painter Kustiyah ...'.⁹⁴ Introducing Kustiyah's artwork at the Carnegie exhibition, they offer a multifaceted biographical story in which Kustiyah comes across as an enduring, passionate artist who mostly positioned herself locally and thus set herself off even more against European painters. In addition, her canvases constitute a lens through which Indonesia's political and gendered history can be explored. The artist seems to have operated rather independently and has developed her own style. But her various roles, both private and public, did not hinder her from playing a part in Indonesia's art history.⁹⁵

When we zoom in on 'Torso' (Figure 12), the intriguing and layered portrait introduced above that Kustiyah painted at the age of 25, we can examine whether this painting also conveys a multiplicity of life stories. For one thing, the painting seems to critically address the double standard in which the artist, like other women artists of her time, was caught. On the one hand, the painting suggests the sensuous dance pose of a female figure under a full spotlight or bathed in sunlight and represents all the expected attributes of a woman's beauty and femininity: the model's naked arms and thighs and the vulva-like flowers. This seems to confirm the power of the male gaze – not only that of Kustiyah's husband, the sculptor who had first created the torso, but also, implicitly, all his male colleagues.



12. Kustiyah, 'Torso' (1960), oil on canvas.

However, as attentive viewers engaging with the vivacious image on the canvas, we simultaneously observe and sense Kustiyah's vigorous drive to train her skills at painting and her wish to establish and promote her status and identity as an artist. This is also suggested by the torso's great resemblance (especially in terms of its ornamental elements) to the famous statue of *Prajñāpāramitā* (see Figure 13), the goddess of transcendental wisdom, of East Java of the thirteenth century, which is considered a masterpiece of classical Hindu-Buddhist art.⁹⁶ Kustiyah, the canvas seems to suggest, is able to re-create that perfect statue – and give it a dancing twist.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ 'Kustiyah, et al., 'As if there is no sun,' Hyphen— (21 April 2022), <https://hyphen.web.id/kustiyah-et-al-as-if-there-is-no-sun/> (accessed 1 November 2024).

⁹⁵ 'Hyphen—', Carnegie Museum of Art, <https://carnegieart.org/people/hyphen/> (accessed 1 November 2024).

⁹⁶ Kustiyah also seems to comment on the colonial history of

the statue: after it was discovered by a Dutch colonial official in the early nineteenth century, the statue was transferred to the Netherlands to be placed in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden. In 1978 the statue was returned to Indonesia.



13. The thirteenth-century statue of Prajñāpāramitā, in the National Museum of Indonesia, Jakarta.

In addition, we could interpret the small vase with daisy flowers, which the artist has strategically added, as serving as more than mere decoration or a way to create depth. The small object, placed in front of the much larger sculpture but outside of the spotlight, possibly signifies Kustiyah's attempt to grasp the public's perception of her in relation to her husband's immense success, indicating her desire to be recognised not just as an attractive or noteworthy companion to the famous sculptor, but rather as an autonomous individual and artist, valued for her own qualities. Thus, as an autobiographical canvas, 'Torso' bears witness to Kustiyah's varied experiences as a woman, a trained artist, and the wife of a renowned national artist.

⁹⁷ 'Panel discussion. Story of two sculptures', Goethe Institute Indonesia, https://www.goethe.de/ins/id/en/ver.cfm?event_id=22468566 (accessed 1 November 2025).

⁹⁸ Moonah sounds like a typical Indonesian name used among certain ethnic groups such as Betawi (Munah, Maemunah).

⁹⁹ Maarten Fornerod, 'De Indonesiëtentoonstelling: genieten mag', *The Optimist* (13 December 2023), <https://theoptimist.nl/de-indonesie-tentoonstelling-genieten-mag/> (accessed 1 November 2025).

Alfiah Rahdini: a cosplaying hijabi designed to trigger dialogue

Alfiah Rahdini was born in 1990 in Bandung, West Java, and completed her bachelor's degree at the Faculty of Art and Design of the Bandung Institute of Technology in 2014. In 2020, she started the Master of Arts in Cultural Studies programme at Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta. Although she mostly creates sculptures, she has also produced installations, performances, and site-specific forms.⁹⁷ The Grote Indonesië-tentoonstelling held at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam displayed Rahdini's sculpture 'Sri Naura Paramita' (2021), portraying a woman wearing a hijab and a mini-skirt, meditating on a yoga mat, and 'Sailor Moonah #2' (2022), a larger than life-size and full-colour statue of a hijabi cosplaying (costume playing) the iconic Japanese anime character of Sailor Moon (Figure 14).⁹⁸

Rahdini has explained that 'Sailor Moonah #2' is the starting point of telling her personal history. Growing up in a middle-class family in the megacity of Bandung, she had felt lonely, causing her to converse and identify with Sailor Moon, the courageous manga-girl who wore a sailor outfit and wielded a magical sword. Sailor Moon had also inspired her, as a young girl, to start drawing – which caused her to discover her love for art.⁹⁹ But the sculpture is not only connected to the story of her own life. In order to match the clothing options for religious Muslim women, the artist – who herself does not wear a hijab – modified the character's uniform by lengthening the miniskirt, adding long sleeves, and merging the hijab with her hair. In addition, 'Sailor Moonah #2' lifts her right hand to copy the sign of happiness or coolness used by youngsters when posing for a picture.

Rahdini aims at creating art for public space in order to reach local Indonesian people, and trigger dialogue between citizens.¹⁰⁰ A monochrome precursor of the statue had briefly, and without

¹⁰⁰ Noël van Bommel, 'Kunstenaar Alfiah Rhadini: 'De ultraconservatieven in Indonesië zijn beelden aan het weghalen, niet aan het plaatsen'', *De Volkskrant* (17 October 2023).



14. The sculpture *Sailor Moonah#2* by Alfiah Rahdini (2022) on the Amsterdam exhibition.

permission, been displayed in four parks in the artist's own city of Bandung, where Rahdini recorded public responses to the statue, using a public questionnaire on the statue's base. As she explained, 'We just placed the sculpture there and filmed the responses of the passers-by. They were all very positive and enthusiastic.' A few hours later the police would arrive to ask Rahdini for her permit and chase her away. In the fall of 2023 a newer, multi-coloured version of the statue was placed in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, to be part of an exhibit which was 'set up as a polyvocal biography that incorporates a wide variety of perspectives, personal stories, suppressed histories and traumatic experiences'.¹⁰¹ However, despite the statue's caption stating that 'This work depicts a powerful, self-assured woman enjoying life and unafraid of sharing her personal identity,' it may have been challenging for the visitor to find that 'wide variety ... of personal stories' when encountering 'Sailor Moonah #2': the statue has been incorporated in the exhibition's section called 'Legendary empires: Islam,' among historical objects of masks and wayang puppets. Hanging from the ceiling, over the head of the sculpture, the curators positioned an enormous photo-image of a collective of women in hijab at a religious assembly. Thus, the exhibit did not position

the sculpture as a multifarious self-narrative, but as a commentary on Islam and Muslim identity.¹⁰²

Still, assertively standing on a playful pink star instead of the usual, classic high pedestal, the female figure almost seems to be flashed into her illustrious being, but reachable at the same time. In that sense she responds to the implicit call by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, who state, '[the autobiographical subject is] in dialogue with multiple and disparate addressees or audiences. In effect, autobiographical telling is performative; it enacts the 'self' that it claims has given rise to an 'I'.¹⁰³ Like Kustiyah's dancing 'Torso,' Rahdini's 'Sailor Moonah #2' stirs 'the viewers' affects and imagination, although on different levels and in different times'.¹⁰⁴ Like 'Torso,' it addresses each individual visitor in a process that, according to Susan Legêne's toolkit, questions the ways in which exhibitions construe notions [and narratives] of 'gender, race, religion, hard/soft identities.'

¹⁰¹ Stella Küçükşen, Press Office Nieuwe Kerk, personal email message (4 March 2024).

¹⁰² This problematic framing fits with Remco Raben's commentary on the exhibition's incomplete and incorrect reflection. See

Gatool Katawazi, 'Op de Grote Indië-tentoonstelling worden de echte hete hangijzers vermeden', *Trouw* (21 October 2023).

¹⁰³ Smith and Watson, 'Introduction', 25.

9. Interlocking the past with the present. Borrowing practices

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach



14. Batik cloth from Pekalongan, Java (ca. 1875 - ca. 1925).

In this festschrift that celebrates and engages with the work of Susan Legêne, I will focus on Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the poet-philosopher who is known to a Dutch audience since at least 1913. More specifically, I will focus on how the borrowed batik style that emanated from Tagore's university Visva Bharati can be read as Tagore's attempt to give to humanity what he and his entourage had learnt in Java.

The essay has three parts. The first section will reflect on why Tagore's trip to Southeast Asia (more specifically, to what was then known as the Dutch East Indies and is today Indonesia) in 1927 merits further study. The second part will briefly sketch Tagore's views on borrowing practices that can better facilitate the creation of, and inclusion into, an open

and egalitarian community. Finally, the third section will outline details of the borrowed batik practice. Given Susan's own expertise on batik and research interests in coloniality, cultural heritage, and intellectual history, she might be the researcher who is well positioned to tie up the loose ends.

I

The historical scholarship on the Greater India Project – the project that has promoted the idea that Hindu-Buddhist civilization spread across Asia as a benign, non-violent, and therefore superior, force – has many strands. Some publications direct attention to comparable projects of loss and yearning like that of Greater Germany (*Großdeutschland*), Greater Syria (*la Syrie intégrale*), Panslavism or the Soviet idea of Eurasianism, others to its continuity with the manner in which Asian collections are structured till this very day in modern museums.¹⁰⁵

As is well known, Tagore served as the spiritual mentor of the Greater India Society founded in 1926. However, reliable information about whether his views on the 'Greater India' project remained unchanged during his lifetime, or how such a project relates to his larger vision for a decolonized Asia, remains scarce. Even the details about his trip to Indonesia are currently understudied. For example, Tagore's interactions with members of the educational movement Taman Siswa and the elitist movement Budi Utomo in Java have yet to be researched adequately. In the light of this gap, a thorough and robust analysis of Tagore's views regarding 'Greater India' has yet to be developed.

One starting point could be a close study of the endeavours of those European and North American intellectuals who sought to initiate a 'World

¹⁰⁴ Tamboukou, 'Painting the body', 338.

¹⁰⁵ Susan Bayly, 'Imagining 'Greater India'. French and Indian visions of colonialism in the Indic Mode', *Modern Asian Studies* 38: 3 (2004) 703-744, at 707-708; Marieke Bloembergen,

'The politics of 'Greater India,' a moral geography. Moveable antiquities and charmed knowledge networks between Indonesia, India, and the West', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 63:1 (2021) 170-221.

Institute' in the early decades of the twentieth century. This group, that included the Belgian scholar-activist and woman professor of chemistry Lucia de Brouckère (1904-1982), envisioned an institute that would be able to consider 'vital problems not from the immediate, national or even international standpoint, but as world problems with a world horizon'.¹⁰⁶ As the file in the archives of the Rabindra Bhavan documents, some of these intellectuals requested Tagore to participate in one of their conferences to discuss the promotion of world peace through religion around 1933.¹⁰⁷

Tagore's letter to members of that initiative suggests that he endorsed their vision for a world peace and their means at bringing about that peace (bringing together people who are 'international at heart and are respected by all the nations in consequence').¹⁰⁸ One could also systematically study reports filed by Tagore's entourage after the trip. One such report indicates that their mission for the travel was twofold: a) an engagement with those aspects of the past and present of the region that attested to the civilization of 'Farther India' and b) familiarizing the audiences there with Tagore's educational vision as implemented in his university Visva Bharati that he had founded in 1921.¹⁰⁹ One could also draw into the analysis Tagore's views about his trip. As Arun Das Gupta analyses, Tagore was surprised about what he thought were reified elements of Hindu culture that he encountered in Bali. To quote him: "The past was a great one (...) But still it is after all the Past and its duty was to fall behind the Present, not to come in front of it and stop the way of its self-manifestation. Now the present reduced to a mere steed of the past has to own defeat".¹¹⁰ Or, consider Shamsad Mortuza's

interesting perspective that revisits Tagore's notions of revitalizing a common Asian core tradition under conditions of coloniality. This paper quotes from Tagore's poem 'To Java: from the pilgrim from India' penned before he departed from Java. The poem's last stanza reads:

Remember me, even as I remember thy face,
And recognize in me as thine own
The old that has been lost, to be regained and
made new¹¹¹

A critical analysis of such source material might deliver leads as to whether Tagore's trip to Indonesia might have led him (perhaps subsequently) to reconsider and even distance himself from the notion of a 'Greater India,' if he believed that this notion had been materialized on the Indonesian islands.

Parallel to his reference to the notion of a 'Greater India' in seemingly naïve and problematic ways, at least prior to his trip to Java, my own research on Tagore indicates that he was involved in an intricate reworking of the social imaginary of the Indian colony so that an egalitarian society could be created in which colonial Indians could live in freedom. Part of that project was to hone practices of self-cultivation extant in that social imaginary and develop them such that they could lead up to an experiential awareness of the divine. Drawing from the devotional bhakti tradition of his childhood, Tagore believed that one would through the senses directly experience the interconnectedness of all life, both human and other-than-human in this awareness.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Rabindra Archives, Rabindrabhavan (henceforth: RA), 'World institute: document I' (n.d.).

¹⁰⁷ This document in the archives has a handwritten note with the remark that the letter was part of the (Henry) S.L. (Polak) Polax (1882-1959) file. In a letter to Tagore of March 10, 1933, Polak apparently reminded Tagore of the conference that was to take place to think about the promotion of world peace through religion. The Rabindra Bhavana is a national archive that includes archival material of the Lalit Kala (plastic arts), Sangeet Natak (dance, drama and music) and Sahitya (literature).

¹⁰⁸ RA, 'World Institute: letter from Dr. Tagore' (10 March 1933).

¹⁰⁹ Shamsad Mortuza, 'Beyond 'kalapani' and Tagore's search for a shared regional identity', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 13:3 (2017) 281-296, at 285.

¹¹⁰ Cited in: Arun Das Gupta, "Rabindranath Tagore in Indonesia. An experiment in bridge building", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 158:3 (2002) 451-477, at 463.

¹¹¹ Cited in: Mortuza, 'Beyond 'kalapani'', 14.

¹¹² Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, *Freedom to know. Creating community with Ambedkar, Du Bois, Iqbal, Ramabai and Tagore* (Edinburgh University Press; forthcoming).

II

In one version of his lecture 'What is art?' that predates Tagore's talk with the same title in Surabaya on 9 September 1927, Tagore claims that human beings are born with a 'surplus'.¹¹³ The latter allows them to potentially enjoy knowledge for its own sake. In that enjoyment, humans can experience what it means to be free. Through this reasoning Tagore arrives at his claim that art is born out of freedom, or rather the enjoyment thereof. Elsewhere, he observes that collectives (including societies, nations, and states) demand that those who belong to them fall in line with stipulated ways of thinking. These groups threaten to destroy the inherent surplus in human beings by utilizing and streamlining this first-hand experiential knowledge to buttress the group's own unique access to this knowledge. Such demands of groups on their members make the latter unfree. Also, group claims can lead to inegalitarian practices through which members are considered to be unequal in relation to each other.

Tagore is relatively optimistic that this life in unfreedom can, as can the concomitant inegalitarian practices, be changed by, for example, mindfully borrowing appropriate practices from similarly placed communities. Importantly, a borrowing that openly acknowledges this act is not shameful. For: 'Only mediocrities are ashamed and afraid of borrowing, for they do not know how to pay back the debt in their own coin'.¹¹⁴ The borrowed practice does not have to be returned to the community from which it was appropriated. Rather, it should be, in the Tagorean view, offered to humanity as a gift, if it has been successful in rejuvenating the experience of that surplus in one's own community.

Notably, Tagore seems to have encountered some aesthetic practices that were in his view worthwhile appropriating, in the sense of making one's own, for the Indian subcontinent. His remarks about Javanese dance and drama practices, for

example, suggest that the performers (as well as the audiences) were in his view better positioned to experience *rasa* (an aesthetic relish that points toward the metaphysical) than their counterparts in the Indian colony. Inhabitants on the subcontinent had begun to articulate aesthetic experience so excessively that they had forgotten how to sense that experience such that it could direct them toward the metaphysical. Tagore held that if performance practices aimed at eliciting a *rasa* experience were appropriated and implemented on the Indian subcontinent, they could help to tap into the surplus discussed earlier. If such practices that allowed colonial Indians to feel free were systematically cultivated, they could eventually, very likely back up the introduction of a democratic sociopolitical framework on the subcontinent. Batik, the art of resist-dyeing, was one practice that Tagore borrowed from his Javanese contemporaries and implemented immediately after his return to Visva Bharati.

III

During their trip to Surakarta and Yogyakarta, Tagore and members of his entourage not only bought batik textiles and tools. At least one member took lessons in the Javanese batik technique.¹¹⁵ This technique was introduced to art students at Visva Bharati immediately after the entourage returned to Bengal. Students were encouraged to creatively experiment with the Javanese technique and adapt it to the local context. Soon, the wax pen used in Javanese batik made way for the use of paint brushes and vegetable dyes instead.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, following Tagore's ideas of interconnectedness mentioned earlier, the Javanese motifs were supplemented by those that articulated the relationship of a human being to other-than-human environments. As a result of such adaptations, a distinctive regional batik style arose from Visva Bharati.

After India became politically independent in 1947, Tagore's university was centralized in 1951 and

¹¹³ Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality. Lectures delivered in America* (London 1917) 10-11.

¹¹⁴ Rabindranath Tagore, *The English writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, vol. III, ed. Sisir Kumar Das (New Delhi 1996) 586.

¹¹⁵ Maria Wronska-Friend, 'Batik of Java. Global inspiration', in: *The social fabric. Deep local to pan global. Proceedings of the*

textile society of America 16th Biennial Symposium, Vancouver, 19-23 September 2018 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.32873/unl.dc.tsasp.0007> (accessed 18 December 2023).

¹¹⁶ Oral communication by the former Visva Bharati students, the late Bijoy Mukherjee and Asha Mukherjee.

put on par with the other universities of the country. The streamlining efforts of the central government proved costly. Departments were restructured, others dismantled. To keep alive the industries section of the arts department, Tagore's son Rathindranath Tagore (1888-1961) and his wife Pratima Devi (1893-1969) experimented with products that could be produced and sold to generate funds for the ongoing rural reconstruction program that had hitherto benefited the local community.¹¹⁷ As part of these efforts, the distinct batik technique developed at Visva Bharati was used on leather to make products that could be easily produced by the rural population (especially women) as a means of their sustenance. However, little is known today about how and where batik on leather was developed.

Susan Legêne's own work on the sociopolitical ramifications of the appropriation of the batik technique by the Dutch colonizers could be useful in drawing out hitherto underlit connections.¹¹⁸ For example, had Tagore already encountered the technique in Japan during his stay there at the home of the art collector and silk magnate Hara Tomitarō (1868-1939)?¹¹⁹ Did he borrow the

Javanese batik technique because these patterns allegedly have a metaphysical dimension that point beyond themselves?¹²⁰ In other words, how did Tagore relate the making and experiencing of batik patterns to the *rasa* experience? Did he gather information from activists during his trip about the contribution of batik to the upliftment of the unprivileged? Was this information instrumental in his introduction of this technique at Visva Bharati? Did he cooperate with partners in the Netherlands, especially with regard to printing batik on leather? Finally, were Javanese batik experts encouraged to visit his university so that they (like the Japanese artists that he had invited) could experiment and co-create with members of Visva Bharati new ways of doing and conceptualizing art practice – and through it, reimagine elements of what was taken to be a common regional Asian imaginary? Susan Legêne is ideally placed to work out these details. They could help us better understand both Tagore the anticolonial thinker, and Tagore the champion of a cultural renewal, that resonates with our interdependence on human and other-than-human beings.

¹¹⁷ Kumkum Bhattacharya, *Rabindranath Tagore. Adventure of ideas and innovative practices in education* (Heidelberg 2014).

¹¹⁸ Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam 2010)

¹¹⁹ Contra Wronska-Friend, 'Batik of Java'.

¹²⁰ See James Bennett, *Making art in early modern Java (16th-19th c.). A new reading* (PhD thesis; University of Adelaide 2021).

10. Reukeloos. Geur als koloniale muntslag

Inger Leemans

‘Niets anders als den Nagel reuck treckt der Coopman derwaerts’¹²¹



15. Dirk de Jong, De verovering van de stad Palembang in 1659 (vervaardigd tussen 1779-1805).

Een ijselijke stank

November 1659. De Nederlandse Oost-Indische Compagnie heeft zojuist de stad Palembang op Oost-Sumatra belegerd, ingenomen, en verwoest. Al sinds 1617 onderhield de VOC handelsbetrekkingen met het sultanaat Palembang op Oost-Sumatra, waar de compagnie monopolies probeerde te verzekeren op de handel in peper, opium en textiel. In de jaren 1650 bouwden de spanningen zich op, totdat ze escaleerden in gewelddadige conflicten. In 1658 werden twee VOC-schepen gekaapt, waarbij het grootste deel van de bemanning werd gedood. Als vergelding zond de VOC een expeditie van 11 schepen en 700 soldaten uit, onder leiding van kapitein Jan van der Laan, om de stad Palembang en het fort Kuto Gawang te veroveren en wraak te nemen.

Het verslag dat naar de Heren XVII werd gestuurd (en dat we dankzij het Globalise-project nu makkelijk online kunnen lezen), schept op over deze overwinning. Spottend wordt beschreven hoe de ‘Moorsche papen’ de inwoners hadden overtuigd dat ze veilig waren, omdat ze werden beschermd door geweren en kanonnen. Om deze bewering kracht bij te zetten, hadden imams twee kanonnen twee keer gewassen, ze ingesmeerd met muskus en ze bedekt met scharlakenrode doeken. De VOC-soldaten hadden de kanonnen inderdaad in deze sierlijke en aromatische staat aangetroffen. De geur van muskus was nog steeds ruikbaar rond de kanonnen, zo rapporteerden ze. Zoals de schrijver van het verslag droogjes opmerkt, zagen de inwoners zich echter bedrogen in de verwachte beschermende kracht van het aromatische ritueel.

Het inwrijven van kanonnen met muskus als strategie om goddelijke bescherming op te roepen en mensen een beschermd gevoel te geven, en de waarneming van de achtergebleven geur door de VOC-troepen zijn slechts twee voorbeelden van de manier waarop geuren en het ruiken werden ingezet in koloniale context. Wie verder 'neust' door de documenten komt veel meer geuren tegen. Zo vermeldt het manuscript ook de dikke rook van de afgebrande kruitmagazijnen en rijstopslagplaatsen, en de 'ijselijken stanck' van de burgers en soldaten die waren afgeslacht en verbrand. De 'vuistslag'-geluiden van koloniale oorlogvoering gingen dus gepaard met gewelddadige walmen. Net als geluiden weerklinken deze geuren door de tijd en dampen ze op uit de archieven. Eenmaal in de neus roepen ze de vraag op welke rol geur eigenlijk speelde in koloniale praktijken. En: wat zouden we kunnen leren als we nu, bijvoorbeeld met studenten, een mengeling van muskus en buskruiddampen zouden ruiken? Het zou studenten zich er in ieder geval van bewust kunnen maken dat de *imagineering* van de inname van Palembang, zoals in de ets van Dirk de Jong, de gewelddadige verwoesting tot een esthetisch visueel spektakel maakt, waarbij wel kruitdampen worden verbeeld, maar niet de beschermende muskus en de geur van verbrandende lichamen. Een dergelijke beproeving had ik graag uitgevoerd in de collegezaal samen met Susan Legêne, vertrouwens op haar extensieve kennis over het koloniale verleden en haar altijd open houding ten opzichte van nieuwe vragen en methoden.

Echo's door de tijd

De eerste keer dat ik in aanraking kwam met het werk van Susan Legêne was toen ik in 2005 aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen begon met lesgeven – 'Inleiding in de Cultuurgeschiedenis' voor bachelorstudenten. Omdat ik net was overgestapt van de afdeling Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde naar de afdeling Geschiedenis, was ik een steile leercurve aan het doorlopen. Na wekenlang

'klassiekers' te hebben gelezen met de studenten (Burckhardt, Huizinga, Elias, Foucault), keek ik uit naar (maar ook een beetje op tegen) het college Postmodernisme en postkolonialisme. Hiervoor had ik gekozen voor Susans inspirerende inaugurele rede *Muntslag / vuistslag*, waarin ze munten analyseert als onderdeel van de Nederlandse-Europese natie- en *empire*-vorming.¹²² Als tweede tekst lasen de studenten een hoofdstuk uit het punkige *Lipstick traces* van rockmuziekcriticus Greil Marcus.¹²³ Een punt waarop deze twee verschillende werken elkaar raken, is hun aandacht voor hoe zintuiglijke *clues* – de visualiteit en tastbaarheid van munten, het geluid van kanongebulder en het slaan van munten, de lippenstiftvlekken op een sigarettenpeuk en de geur van rook – blijven hangen, hoe ze door de tijd heen echoën en mensen op onverwachte en vaak onopgemerkte manieren beïnvloeden. Op dat moment had ik nog geen idee dat ik uiteindelijk onderzoek zou doen naar historische geursporen.

Cultuur en macht

En toen ontmoette ik Susan Legêne in het echt, in een academische contactzone: aan de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, waar ik in 2010 als hoogleraar cultuurgeschiedenis was verwelkomd. Ik kreeg zo de kans en het genoegen om met Susan samen te werken en te leren van haar uitgebreide kennis over politieke geschiedenis en cultureel erfgoed. We raakten verbonden door onderwerpen als materiële cultuur, ideeëngeschiedenis en verbeelding – 'betekenisvol beeld' of 'denkbeelden', in de woorden van Susan. Aan de VU ontwikkelden we een programma Cultuur en Macht, waarin we studenten uitnodigden om nieuwe benaderingen van historisch onderzoek te ontwikkelen en kritisch na te denken over hun eigen positie ten opzichte van het verleden. Geïnspireerd door Mary Louise Pratt, Lisa Lowe, Siep Stuurman en anderen lieten we de studenten complexe, omstreden concepten onderzoeken, zoals contactzones, (on) gelijkheid, de mensheid en de intimiteiten tussen

¹²¹ Nationaal Archief, archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (1.04.02), inv.nr. 1099, rapport vanuit Makassar (1631).

¹²² Susan Legêne, *Muntslag/vuistslag*. De historische verbeelding van de politiek (oratie, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2009).

¹²³ Greil Marcus, *Lipstick traces. A secret history of the twentieth century* (Cambridge MA 1989).

continenten. De studenten werden uitgenodigd om voorwerpen mee te nemen die hen persoonlijk verbonden met het koloniale verleden. Ze stelden vervolgens een catalogus van deze voorwerpen samen en werkten samen aan een wiki-achtige website.

Nu ik, jaren later, me aan het verdiepen ben in geschiedenis van het zintuiglijke, specifiek in de rol die geuren spelen in het koloniale verleden, kom ik weer terug bij die colleges. Momenteel spit ik de gedigitaliseerde Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren van de VOC door op geursporen. De vangst is overweldigend. Zo rapporteren de bewindhebbers uitgebreid over de geurlandschappen waarin zij en hun manschappen zich begeven. De confrontatie in contactzones wordt olfactorisch beleefd. Aan de VOC-kant worden volkeren bijvoorbeeld afgeschreven omdat ze 'pikzwart' zijn, niet behoorlijk gekleed en 'stinkende worteltjes' in huis gebruiken. Aan de andere kant zouden 'de moren' hun neus hebben dichtgeknepen om de stank van de christenen niet in de neus te krijgen. VOC-bewindhebbers probeerden de kwalijke dampen in de nederzettingen (de stilstaande grachten, open riolen, en dicht opeengepakte huizen) te controleren, bijvoorbeeld door bebouwing te slopen of fonteinen te plaatsen ('t versche water, als 't dempen der reolen moet nootwendich een soeten lucht ende aengenamen Reuck inde stadt brengen'). Reuk speelt ook een belangrijke rol in diplomatie (wierook is een gewaardeerd geschenk bijvoorbeeld) en in oorlogsvoering. Hierboven zagen we al enkele voorbeelden. De VOC zette ook gericht stinkbommen in. Inheemse bevolkingen werden uit hun 'hoolen' verdreven 'met stanck van swavel en pick als andere benarden reuck'. Andrew Kettler schreef al uitgebreid over 'olfactory othering' in koloniale context, onder andere over de strategische inzet van stank in de slavenhandel.¹²⁴

Het reukeloos durfkapitalisme van de VOC

Die diplomatieke en gewelddadige olfactorische strategieën vormen het politiek-militaire kader voor de economische investering in geuren. Allereerst is

er natuurlijk de handel in geurstoffen. Aziatische specerijen werden niet alleen gewaardeerd vanwege hun smaak, maar ook vanwege hun aromatische kwaliteiten. Kaneel, nootmuskaat en kruidnagel waren inzetbaar voor aromatherapie en als ingrediënt voor parfums, pomanders, pommades en pruikenpoeders. De handel in reukwerken (wieroken) – harsen zoals mirre en benzoin, en geurige basten zoals sandelhout, kamfer en agarhout – was intensief, evenals de handel in animale geurstoffen zoals civet, ambergrijs en de bovengenoemde muskus. Zowel in Azië als in het Westen werden deze geurstoffen gebruikt voor religieuze rituelen, medicinale praktijken, parfumerie en voor allerlei andere vormen van lichamelijk en geestelijk welzijn.

De kwaliteit van de specerijen en reukwerken, evenals die van koffie, thee, tabak en rijst, werd onder andere afgemeten aan de geur. De neus speelt dan ook een belangrijke rol in waardebeoordeling. De VOC-archieven staan vol met observaties over 'fijne geuren', over het gebrek aan geuren ('rooswater [...] soo flauw van reuck dat deselve onbruijckbaer is geweest'; 'Cheijlonse Canneel, bestaende in twee soorten, namentlijk middelbare en grove, welcke grove, daer reuck noch smaeck bij is') of het vermuffen van waren. Mijn vermoeden is dat het jargon dat men hiervoor gebruikte door de decennia heen uitgebreider en preciezer werd.

Dit soort neuswijheid was essentieel voor de controle van de markt omdat 'onder de reuckwercken groot bedroch' was waardoor de 'oncundigen Coopman' zich snel bedrogen kon zien. De VOC investeert dan ook intensief in het opdoen van kennis over de verschillende reukstoffen en het gebruik daarvan in verschillende gemeenschappen. Zo wordt over ambergrijs geschreven dat het heel lastig is om aan grotere hoeveelheden te komen. De inwoners van Madagascarij hebben de geurstof wel, 'dough gebruijken deselve om hunne kleetjes daarmede te roocken, en strijckent met Ambregris. Slaven van antongil eenich ander goet gemencht aent' voorhoofd ende slaep vant hoofts, houdende t'selve wegens sijn krachtige reuck in waerde'. Dit soort 'antropologisch' geuronderzoek stond ten dienste van de marktwerking.

¹²⁴ Andrew Kettler, *The smell of slavery. Olfactory racism and the Atlantic world* (Cambridge 2020).

De brieven documenteren minutieus de prijzen en kwaliteiten van de verschillende geurstoffen, waarbij ze differentiëren naar verschillende markten. Zo wordt de kwaliteit van muskus bemeten aan zuiverheid: hoe meer hertenvel en haren er nog aan geurstof kleven, hoe lager de prijs die de VOC ervoor kan vragen in het vaderland. Maar: die Nederlandse markt heeft een andere waardebeoordeling dan de lokale: 'bij de mogolse moren' wordt de muskus juist 'seer groetigh op gecoght'. De Nederlanders proberen op die markten in te breken en ze te verrijken met nieuwe producten. Dat gaat niet altijd goed. Zo wordt over een partij muskusaarsen geschreven dat ze 'hadden gedacht of bij de mooren, om hare aromatique lucht als seer groote liefhebbers, door de brandt van reuck wercken sijnde, seer soudens wesen begeert, maer nemense daer geen gevallen in, waerom wij die toestellingh mejnen te staecten'.

Neuswijsheid is ook nodig om te zorgen dat de koloniale waren de tocht naar Amsterdam overleven zonder groot verlies aan smaak en geur. Zo leert de VOC om rijst niet samen met kamfer te verschepen, omdat dat de geur aantast. Foelie kan te warm worden onderweg en door diertjes aangetast, maar foelie met water besproeien is ook geen oplossing: een partij 'is geheel Bruijn, swart ende heeft een Brantachtige verbroeijde Reuck, in voegen bij naer van hun natuerlijcken smaek ende Reuck ontbloot is'. De 'speurneuzen' van de VOC gebruikten ook de neus om smokkel op te sporen. Opium is bijvoorbeeld makkelijk visueel te smokkelen omdat kleine hoeveelheden grote waarde hebben. Maar de sterke geur kan de buit verraden. Ook werd gesjoemel met mindere kwaliteit specerijen met de neus opgespoord – en vervolgens vaak zwaar bestraft.

Whiffstory - geurschiedenis

Het feit dat de VOC haar sloepen namen gaf als De Reuk, Snuffelaar en Civetkat geeft al aan hoezeer de onderneming geïnvesteerd was in geur. De

'reukelose' durfkapitalisten van de compagnie (in het vroegmoderne Nederlands betekende reukeloos zowel 'zonder geur' en 'niet in staat om te ruiken' als 'roekeloos', 'avontuurlijk') besnuffelden de Aziatische markten en investeerden fors in neuskennis, zodat ze producten van hoge kwaliteit konden onderscheiden van de 'reukloze' (minder geurige) producten.¹²⁵ Lisa Lowe's these over de 'intimiteit van continenten' is dus ook zeker toepasbaar op de handel in olfactorische kwaliteiten.¹²⁶ De geurstoffen die met zoveel kracht werden bemachtigd zijn bepalend geworden voor de manier waarop Westerse huizen en lichamen ruiken, geuren die wij met schoonheid, gezondheid, geluk, en thuis zijn gaan associëren.

Het zijn maar enkele voorbeelden die – mijns inziens – aangeven dat geur en het zintuiglijke geen niche-onderwerpen zouden moeten zijn in historisch onderzoek. Geschiedenis is tot nu toe te reukloos geweest. Voor de *American Historical Review* pleitten we eerder al voor 'whiffstory', om historici te leren 'denken met geur'.¹²⁷ Zoals Teresa Brennan in *The transmission of affect* betoogt zouden historici hun visuele vooringenomenheid kunnen heroverwegen wanneer ze nadenken over contactzones. Ruimtes zijn atmosferen vol tactiele informatie en agency. Door een ruimte binnen te gaan stemmen we ons zenuwstelsel en onze stemmingen af met die van anderen (Brennan noemt dit 'entrain', een term afkomstig uit de neurowetenschap).¹²⁸ Ruimtes zijn niet leeg, door te voelen en te ruiken leren we plekken in kaart te brengen en beter te begrijpen. Geurbewuste historici zouden zo het gebrek aan interesse van het Westen voor 'het onzichtbare' kunnen tegengaan. Zo kunnen we beter begrijpen welke kracht werd toebedeeld aan de muskus en kleden op de kanonnen in Palembang, en hoeveel munt werd geslagen uit zoiets efemeers als geur.

Multisensorische geschiedschrijving kan zo aan de contactzones, vuistslagen en denkbeelden van het imperiale verleden, geurlandschappen, walmen, denkgeuren, geursporen en neuswijsheid toevoegen.

¹²⁵ Inger Leemans en Josephine Koopman, '1721. Koloniale snuffelaars', in: Lex Heerma van Voss en Nadia Bouras eds., *Nog meer wereldgeschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam 2022) 296-302.

¹²⁶ Lisa Lowe, *The intimacies of four continents* (Londen 2015).

¹²⁷ Inger Leemans, William Tullett, Cecilia Bembibre en Lizzie Marx, 'Whiffstory. Using multidisciplinary methods to represent the olfactory past', *American Historical Review* 127:2 (2022) 849-879.

Part 3. Places

Deel 3. Plaatsen

11. Colonial festivities. Culture in the commodity chain at the sugar mill *maalfest*

Miel Groten, Harmilyanti Sulistyani & Freek Schmidt

Speeches, feasts, and an endless flow of champagne: this is not the description of the farewell gathering of a prominent professor and dear colleague, but of a so-called *maalfest* (literally: ‘milling celebration’) of the Dutch sugar mill Tegowangi near Kediri, East Java in 1909.¹²⁹ On Javanese sugar mills, the annual *maalfest* was the ceremonial inauguration of the production season, in which Indonesian and Dutch staff participated and which took place in the factory buildings.

The photograph below pictures the 1938 edition of the Tegowangi *maalfest* and shows a crowd of people posing in the decorated mill. In the front are men and women, presumably of legal ‘European’ status and mostly – but not exclusively – white

Dutch, who hold long sugarcane and await the moment that they will throw these in the machinery to symbolically start the production process. Behind them, literally ‘second rank’, stand rows of Indonesian men without cane. In the background, the building’s iron frame and part of the machinery are visible; in the foreground run the tracks for the wagons with which the produce was delivered.

We centre our contribution around the practice of the *maalfest* on the factory floor to analyse the production of (architectural) space and its meanings as the outcome of interactions that crossed geographical and cultural borders. The architectural setting, the mill environment, the mill itself, and the machinery to produce the sugar,



17. Photograph of the opening of the Tegowangi sugar mill (1938).

formed the background of, and in some cases also shaped, the work and rituals belonging to the yearly cycle of the production of sugar, emphasising its importance for the local population and economy. About the Javanese sugar industry itself, which predated Dutch colonisation of the island and reached its high point during the early twentieth century, there has certainly been no shortage of studies.¹³⁰ Yet for our contribution, in line with Susan Legêne's characteristic and trend-setting eye for the cultural, meaningful complexities of seemingly straightforward actions, objects, and sites, we practice a cultural and spatial reading of the sugar industry.¹³¹ By taking a specific mill as a case study, and going beyond the established economic histories, we seek to spotlight the ways in which the factories emerged as 'contact zones' of continents and cultures.¹³²

Sugar industry, machine industry

Like almost the entire sugar business in the colony, Tegowangi was in Dutch hands.¹³³ Originally an indigo plantation, in 1899 it had been turned into a sugar factory by the Handelsvereniging Amsterdam (HVA), one of the biggest enterprises in the colony. As the firm's name suggests, though it had multiple offices in Indonesia, its formal head office was in Amsterdam's Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal.¹³⁴

In this period, sugar production took place in several steam-powered stages. The milling room contained cane milling machines and grinding mills powered by a stationary steam engine; in the boiling

room the liquid from the sugarcane was processed; in the next stage, the resulting liquid was thickened by evaporating and vacuum pans before the sugar was extracted in centrifuges. The factory halls that housed these processes were modern, rational constructions with iron frames; at Tegowangi, the exteriors mimicked classical European architecture with cornices and pediments.¹³⁵

In 1899-1900 two machines were installed in Tegowangi.¹³⁶ Their origins could not be traced in the HVA archives, but they might well have been produced in the Netherlands as a significant part of the machinery for producing Javanese sugar was manufactured in the 'own' Dutch metropole. Two firms in particular seem to have focused on the production of machines for the sugar factories on Java. The firm of Van Vlissingen & Dudok van Heel from Amsterdam was among the first, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, to create machines for cane sugar fabrication and the accompanying steam engines to generate power. It had been set up on the island of Oostenburg in Amsterdam, which had once housed VOC shipyards and warehouses, but in the nineteenth century had slowly emerged as an industrial zone with factories for the new steam age. Around the middle of the century, the company was by far the largest producer of steam engines for machines and factories and especially for sugar refining. Named Koninklijke Nederlandsche Fabriek van Werktuigen en Spoormaterieel in 1871, better known as Werkspoor (which later would become the official trade name), an increase in orders required more space. By then, it was the largest machine factory in the country, with 1750 employees. This led

¹²⁸ Teresa Brennan, *The transmission of affect* (Ithaca 2004).

¹²⁹ A. Brondgeest, 'Maalfeest', *Weekblad voor Indië* (6 June 1909).

¹³⁰ Ulbe Bosma's recent *The world of sugar. How the sweet stuff transformed our politics, health, and environment over 2,000 years* (Cambridge, MA and London 2023) must be mentioned here; other relevant works include Warsino, *Kapitalisme bumi putra. Perubahan masyarakat Mangkunegaran* (Yogyakarta 2008) and the work by G. Roger Knight, e.g. *Commodities and colonialism. The story of Big Sugar in Indonesia, 1880-1942* (Leiden and Boston 2013).

¹³¹ In that respect, see also: Alexander Supartono, *Re-imag(in)ing history. Photography and the sugar industry in colonial Java* (PhD thesis; University of St. Andrews 2015).

¹³² Drawing on Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the contact zone', *Profession* (1991) 33-40.

¹³³ Knight, *Commodities and colonialism*, 149-151.

¹³⁴ *Gedenkboek aangeboden door de Handelsvereniging 'Amsterdam'* (Amsterdam [1928]) 8.

¹³⁵ Wereldmuseum, TM-60029297, photograph Tegowangi (s.d.). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/42554> (accessed 19 January 2024).

¹³⁶ *Omschrijving der op Java in gebruik zijnde molen-installaties* (Tegal [ca. 1925]) 6.

to the creation of a number of parallel production halls, designed by the architect and engineer A.L. van Gendt between 1895 and 1905. In 1878 the company hired its own agent to broaden its market share for Indonesia, and especially in Java. In 1883, for instance, 60 mill installations and 8 vacuum pans were shipped to sugar factories in Indonesia, which was a substantial part of that year's revenue.¹³⁷

Although the Dutch factories would also provide boilers for Indonesia, their share in the provision of sugar-related machines was much more significant, and competitive between companies. During these years, Werkspoor competed with the Overijssel firm of Stork, which began producing sugar machines in 1883. Stork would ship 50 installations and other components in the first decade, and in 1895 alone shipped 45 boilers to Java specifically for the sugar industry. Many more smaller companies in the Netherlands also provided parts for the machines of the overseas sugar industry. The fact that the Dutch were rather successful in the production of machines for the production of sugar in Java, a competitive market, was probably caused by close relationships between representatives of trading firms, investors, banks, and machine factories between colonial Indonesia and the Netherlands, and facilitated prompt delivery of products in a Dutch industry able to keep pace with the demand overseas.¹³⁸

When the sugar cane blooms on Java

Once a sugar factory was set up and the cane could be harvested (usually in May-June), it was time for the *maalfest*. Although photographic depictions are easily found, Dutch written descriptions of the ceremonies are surprisingly rare. The accounts that exist describe processions of Indonesian and European employees that transported the first canes

from the field to the mill, where the factory owner's friends and family (including children), Dutch and Indonesian dignitaries had gathered to 'feed' the cane to the grinding mill. Buffalo or goat heads had been placed between the mills by the Indonesian staff as sacrifices to satisfy the spirits housing in the machines, in order to prevent workplace accidents; human-shaped puppets would sometimes be thrown in the mills as well, sacrificial surrogates for real flesh and limb. For the Indonesian staff, there was a ceremonial feast or *selamatan* using the meat of the slaughtered animals. Folk games might be held on the terrain, which could be Indonesian (bull-racing, bull fights) or Dutch (*stroophappen*, *tobbesteken*) and there was a party for the European visitors.¹³⁹

Dutch references to *maalfesten* simply held they were traditional or customary, but the proceedings were clearly a mixture of Indonesian and Dutch elements. The *selamatan* was a religious, ceremonial meal that marked important events and was widely embraced by the Dutch as an 'authentic' part of Javanese culture.¹⁴⁰ The use of sacrificial buffalo heads seems connected to the 'construction sacrifices', where animals were sacrificed to dedicate new buildings, an older custom which the Dutch adopted, too, for public buildings and infrastructural projects.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, some of the games, the soiree and the speeches were more European or Dutch elements. Furthermore, notwithstanding the references to the celebrations being 'customary' or even part of *adat*, they were organised to celebrate the start of an industrial, capitalist production process that the Dutch and other Europeans had brought to Java for economic gain.

This nature of being a contact zone - a social space where cultures collide and interact, frequently in extremely uneven power relations - was made explicit during the *maalfest*.¹⁴² Anthropologist John Pemberton discusses governor-general A.C.D. de

¹³⁷ W.H.P.M. van Hooff, H. Schippers and M.S.C. Bakker, 'Machinebouw', in: H.W. Lintsen et al. ed., *Geschiedenis van de techniek in Nederland. De wording van een moderne samenleving 1800-1890*, vol. IV, *Delfstoffen, machine- en scheepsbouw; stoom; chemie; telegrafie en telefonie* (Zutphen 1993) 36-65, at 42, 53-55, 62-64.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ H.C. Prinsen Geerligts, *Van Java's noordkust* (Amersfoort 1935) 8-10; A. Poutsma, 'De Oosthoek', *Tong Tong* (1 April 1976).

¹⁴⁰ Matthijs Kuipers, *A metropolitan history of the Dutch empire. Popular imperialism in the Netherlands, 1850-1940* (Amsterdam 2022) 43-45.

¹⁴¹ Robert Wessing and Roy E. Jordaan, 'Death at the building site. Construction sacrifice in Southeast Asia', *History of Religions* 37 (1997) 101-121.

¹⁴² Pratt, 'Arts of the contact zone', 34.

Graeff at the maalfest at another sugar mill in 1928, raising his hand above the head of the sacrificial buffalo which was seen as giving a blessing to the activity. According to Pemberton, such dedication ceremonies, which combined technological progress with cultural tradition, increased the focus on an intangible 'power'.¹⁴³ If the Dutch held that they simply respected indigenous custom or satisfied local religious beliefs, the maalfest was as much an invented tradition that served their own interests. Intermingling between Europeans and Indonesians must have taken place; the 1909 description mentioned earlier gave the impression of unusually convivial merry-making with Dutch guests dancing among the Indonesian attendees in a frenzy of champagne and gamelan music.¹⁴⁴ However, this representation seems idealised and maalfesten were also characterised by the clear separation of 'European' and 'native' elements: when the elite Europeans threw the cane in the machines, the Indonesian workers watched; when the Indonesian workers had the *selamatan*, the Europeans watched.

Furthermore, the maalfest was by no means typical of labour relations on the plantation which in practice were much tenser. For instance, like other sugar factories, Tegowangi suffered from fires in its cane fields that the Dutch – in typical fashion – struggled to explain: were these the result of Indonesian hostility, carelessness, or of the colonial authorities becoming 'soft'?¹⁴⁵ Disputes between employees and the so-called 'coolies' sometimes escalated, with overseers using physical violence to coerce workers who might respond in kind.¹⁴⁶ In June 1913, Dutch fears of possible Indonesian political agitation had led to the East Javanese sugar factories arming themselves, Tegowangi allegedly purchasing thousands of guilders worth of weapons

and ammunition.¹⁴⁷ These examples are a far cry from the image of the harmonious maalfest.

Surabaya, sugar city

The maalfest marked the beginning of a sugar campaign that lasted several months. After production, the sugar was transported to sea ports to be shipped. Sugar dominated the exports of most Javanese sea ports (with the exception of Tanjung Priok/Batavia) and was shipped from all cities and towns on the northern coast of East Java, such as Pasuruan and Probolinggo. The undisputed centre of the East Java sugar trade was Surabaya, Java's second-largest city on the banks of the Kali Mas that ran from south to north, where it discharged into the Java Sea. Surabaya alone handled about a third of total Indonesian sugar exports and was home to the offices and warehouses of sugar firms (including the HVA), to the 'Sugar Syndicate' branch organisation and to 'sugar schools' that offered courses on the industry.¹⁴⁸ Exporting sugar also meant that the city imported and distributed the abovementioned machinery and raw materials for the sugar factories, and that its own industries and workshops produced and repaired such products.¹⁴⁹

The sugar from Tegowangi would have reached Surabaya by rail, via a railway network that ran to the city from the sugar-producing regions of Kediri, Madiun, and the *Oosthoek* (the latter line being the first in Indonesia that the colonial state railways had constructed in the 1870s).¹⁵⁰ By the interwar period, Surabaya also had the modern commercial sea port that it had long lacked next to the naval port, its docks symbolically named after the European ports that the colonial shipping lines ran

¹⁴³ John Pemberton, 'The ghost in the machine', in: Rosalind C. Morris ed., *Photographies east. The camera and its histories in East and Southeast Asia* (Durham and London 2009) 29-57.

¹⁴⁴ Brondgeest, 'Maalfest'.

¹⁴⁵ M. van Geuns, *Het rietbranden-vraagstuk in Pasoeroean, Madioen en Kediri* (Surabaya 1911).

¹⁴⁶ E.g. 'Tropenkoller', *De Preanger-bode* (22 November 1912); 'Koelie-aanslag op fabrieksemploye', *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (5 May 1931).

¹⁴⁷ 'De toestand op de suikerondernemingen in den Oosthoek', *Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (5 June 1913).

¹⁴⁸ Leiden University Libraries, KK 043-01-04/05, map of Java cash crops (Batavia 1925), <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2013048> (accessed 8 January 2024); G.H. von Faber, *Nieuw Soerabaia. De geschiedenis van Indië's voornaamste koopstad in de eerste kwarteeuw sedert hare instelling 1906-1931* (Surabaya and Bussum [1935]) 199, 233; *De geëmployeerde bij de Java suikerindustrie* (second edition; The Hague 1917) 47-48.

¹⁴⁹ Von Faber, *Nieuw Soerabaia*, 199.

¹⁵⁰ Harmilyanti Sulistyani, *The railway station in Java. Creation of the new power structure 1862-1942* (PhD thesis; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2022) 100-101.

to: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Genoa, Marseille. Prior, merchant vessels had to anchor off the coast to be supplied by proas which had to sail up the Kali Mas all the way to the customs house and warehouses in the city centre. By the late nineteenth century this arrangement reached its limits as the amount of traffic increased. Besides the army of proas and barges, it also required an army of labourers to carry the bamboo baskets of sugar. The new port constructed in stages starting in 1912 fundamentally changed this situation, as its docks were suitable for seagoing vessels (putting many of the local Javanese and Madurese proas out of business) and its railway yard provided transshipment opportunities. The port drew new 'goedangs' or warehouses, constructed of iron and stone along the Kali Mas, and by the 1930s an uninterrupted string of warehouses, shops, and other buildings covered the river's banks from its mouth all the way to the city centre.¹⁵¹ All the while, sugar quite literally saturated Surabaya, as eyewitnesses (including historian Annie Romein-Verschoor in her memoirs) described the heavy, sweet smell of the full sugar warehouses along the river where syrupy molasses dripped from out under the doors. Street vendors looked for sugar that had been spilled while being loaded or unloaded and turned the remnants into new confectionery.¹⁵²

If in the nineteenth century Javanese sugar was destined mostly for Europe, by the interwar period the sugar was shipped mainly to Asian markets. European traders were rivalled or surpassed by Japanese, Chinese, and Indian firms and British India received about half of all Indonesian exports. Here again, cultural preferences played a role, as the Javanese sugar was often refined or mixed with local sugars to suit local taste and habits.¹⁵³ Thus the architectural setup of the factories, centred around the machinery delivered by workshops in the Netherlands and assembled in Java, created the stage where the sugar production became a mixture of colonial hegemony, local ecology, and intercultural social interaction. The specific product was thus

the outcome of intercontinental, if not global endeavours, perhaps initiated by colonial power, but appropriated, crafted, and determined by local culture and ambition.

Conclusion

The architectural space of the sugar factory was not only a central part of the intercontinental commodity chain from cane field to consumer, but also the site where vertical power relations between colonisers and colonised played out. The *maalfest* was a peculiar, recurring part of that interplay in which Javanese and Dutch cultural expressions met, yet framed by the political economy and hierarchy of the colonial system. The city of Surabaya was the setting for the next stage in the process that the *maalfest* symbolically initiated: storing, selling, and shipping. Our brief exploration of the *maalfest* exemplifies the kind of culturally and spatially sensitive, interdisciplinary, and critical analysis that we have come to associate with Susan Legêne's work over the past decades and that will continue to inspire future research into the intricacies of colonial history.

¹⁵¹ Von Faber, *Nieuw Soerabaia*, 199-207, 219.

¹⁵² Annie Romein-Verschoor, *Omzien in verwondering*, vol. I (Amsterdam 1970) 44; Anthonie Heidinga, *Nergens thuis tussen Goeree en de Oost. Het leven van zee-officier Adriaan Goekoop 1871-1912* (Hilversum 2022) 105, 115.

¹⁵³ H.Ch.G.J. van der Mandere, *De Javasuikerindustrie in heden en verleden* (Amsterdam 1928) 95-96; Ulbe Bosma, *The sugar plantation in India and Indonesia. Industrial production, 1770-2010* (Cambridge 2013) 170-172.

12. Kerkorgels en het slavernijverleden

Dienke Hondius

Inleiding

Bij haar vroegere werkgever het Tropenmuseum, bij de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam en bij haar werk voor beroepsorganisaties zoals het KNHG heeft Susan Legêne zich onvermoeibaar en langdurig ingezet voor wat zij zelf noemt de bevordering van meerstemmigheid in historisch onderzoek, onderwijs en museum- en erfgoedstudies. De muzikale metaforen van stem en tegenstem, samenspel en samenklank van stemmen spreken haar aan en een pleidooi voor het herkennen van meerstemmigheid is een van haar belangrijke bijdragen aan het wetenschappelijk historisch debat. Dit stuk wil ruimte scheppen voor een studie naar het kerkorgel: een instrument en een object dat in de Nederlandse en Europese geschiedenis zowel overzee als aan wal meer dan duizendvoudig is gebouwd. Tot nu toe zijn de verbanden van het kerkorgel met de Europese en koloniale geschiedenis en het slavernijverleden nog niet expliciet onderwerp van onderzoek geweest.¹⁵⁴

Overall in Europa en in de voormalige koloniale gebieden zijn nog eeuwenoude orgels terug te vinden. Dat is niet vanzelfsprekend, maar het resultaat van een keten van bewuste initiatieven, keuzes, besluiten – van het verlangen naar en het plan tot het bouwen van een orgel, de opdrachtverlening, uitvoering en daarna tot het laten doen van onderhoud en restauratie. Kerkorgels zijn verbonden met Europese christelijke cultuur, en daarmee ook met koloniale geschiedenis. Net als huizen, gebouwen, buitenplaatsen en kerken zijn kerkorgels boeiende objecten die meer aandacht

van historici van het koloniale en dekoloniserende verleden en geheugen verdienen.

In deze verkennende opmerkingen over een dekoloniserende biografie van het kerkorgel overzee en in Europa maak ik gebruik van een door Susan Legêne en een aantal van onze VU-studenten en -collega's tussen 2015 en 2019 geformuleerde handleiding bij het kritisch bestuderen van museale objecten en historische tentoonstellingen. Wat laat een eerste toepassing op het kerkorgel zien? Relevant voor inzicht in het verband met het koloniale en slavernijverleden zijn ontwikkelingen in materiële cultuur, gebruikte materialen, initiatief tot de bouw van kerkorgels, de betrokken netwerken en de financiering.

Ook de sociale en politieke aspecten van het kerkorgel zijn nader te onderzoeken. Wat kunnen we nog achterhalen over het beoogde doel van een kerkorgel ten aanzien van de gemeentelieden, het orgel in actie bij samenkomsten, de rol van publiek en gehoor, het beleven en ondergaan van orgelmuziek? Het begint met adem, lucht, de basis van muziek. Orgeltonen zijn stemmen. Een stem lijkt alledaags, aldus H.K. Schutte, maar is een complex fenomeen, waarbij altijd sprake is van 'een boodschap over te brengen over een afstand'.¹⁵⁵

De Oostkerk in Middelburg

Een voorbeeld van een direct en indirect met de lokale en wereldwijde geschiedenis verbonden kerkorgel is dat van de Oostkerk in Middelburg; een van de nog bestaande bijzondere gebouwen in de

¹⁵⁴ Voor hun suggesties bij het schrijven van dit artikel bedank ik Annemarie de Wildt, Rudi van Straten, Simon Jongepier, Miel Groten, Caroline Drieënhuizen, Hans Fidom, Jan Holtland en Niek Hemmen. Inspiratie biedt het lopende NWO-onderzoeksproject 'Church and Slavery' waarin de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, de Protestantse Theologische Universiteit en de University of Curaçao samenwerken. Zie www.kerkslavernijverleden.nl.

¹⁵⁵ 'Stem is niet zo eenvoudig te definiëren. De stem is een complex fenomeen en vereist verschillende metingen om de kenmerken te beschrijven. (...) De stem wordt in het dagelijks leven gebruikt om een boodschap over te brengen over een afstand.' H.K. Schutte, 'Registreren aan stem, spraak en taal. Meten aan stem' in: H.F.M. Peters ed., *Handboek stem-, spraak, taalpathologie* afl. 14 (2004) 1-41, aldaar 4, 14.

stad. Deze kerk werd in gebruik genomen in 1667 maar pas ruim een eeuw later werd er een orgel in geplaatst. De bouw van de kerk werd gefinancierd door leningen en via belastingverhoging op bier en wijn.¹⁵⁶

Net als in Amsterdam investeerden in Middelburg en elders op Walcheren families in slavenhandel en slavernij, zowel in de West (Suriname, de Antillen en de Amerika's) als in de Oost (het VOC-gebied). Zeeland was vroeg en stevig betrokken bij deze ontwikkelingen, zowel georganiseerd in clubs van kooplieden als met particuliere initiatieven. Het is goed mogelijk en waarschijnlijk dat die betrokkenen elkaar op zondag troffen in de verschillende kerken van Middelburg, waaronder ook de Oostkerk. Ze legden geld bij elkaar voor investeringen in bijvoorbeeld schepen of een scheepsuitrusting of verzekeringen, en dus ook voor een nieuw kerkgebouw met daarin een mooi orgel. Of er ook slaafgemaakte Afrikanen, Aziaten of Amerikanen in dit kerkgebouw zijn geweest, of hier bijvoorbeeld zijn gedoopt, weten we nog niet. Dat zou uitgezocht kunnen worden. Van andere kerken op Walcheren weten we al dat er hier en daar een uit Suriname of uit Afrika afkomstige man of vrouw werd gedoopt, bijvoorbeeld in Vlissingen, Meliskerke en Grijpskerke.¹⁵⁷

Hoe en door wie werd het orgel van de Oostkerk gefinancierd? Een artikelenbundel onder redactie van Sijnke en Van Waarden-Koets uit 1997 biedt veel informatie.¹⁵⁸ Het initiatief voor het maken van een orgel kwam in 1763 van Daniel Radermacher. Op dat moment was er nog niet voldoende geld beschikbaar, maar ruim tien jaar later lukte het wel om een aantal inwoners in korte tijd een flink kapitaal, ruim 14.000 gulden, te laten geven. De gebroeders Petrus en Johannes de Rijckere uit Kortrijk in Vlaanderen kregen de opdracht om een orgel in de Oostkerk



18. De Oostkerk in Middelburg (2004).

te bouwen. Het werd een groot en indrukwekkend hoog bouwwerk. Radermacher doneerde in 1798 onder meer de vergulde en verzilverde ornamenten op het orgel zoals de muziekinstrumenten.¹⁵⁹

Via de families Radermacher, Gyse en Van der Mandere komen we de financiering van het orgel op het spoor en daarmee de banden met het slavernijverleden. Daniel Radermacher was vanaf 1769-1803 directeur van het Zeeuws Genootschap der Wetenschappen, bewindhebber van de Oost-Indische en hoofdparticipant van de West-Indische Compagnie en de Middelburgse

¹⁵⁶ Zie over het orgel in de Oostkerk, Middelburg: 'De Oostkerk', <https://deoostkerk.nl/over-ons/geschiedenis> (geraadpleegd 4 november 2024).

¹⁵⁷ Zie Dienne Hondius, teksten over Zeeland in de *Gids Slavernijverleden Nederland* (2018) en in de *Gids Kerk en Slavernijverleden* (2023), beide verschenen bij LM Publishers, Edam.

¹⁵⁸ J.H. Kluiver, 'Geschiedenis van het orgel in de Oostkerk', in: P.W. Sijnke en A. van Waarden-Koets ed., *De Oostkerk: 'Een heerlyk stuk der hedendaagsche bouwkunde'. Geschiedenis en*

restauratie van de Middelburgse Oostkerk (Goes 1997) 67-73. In de kerk bij het orgel o.a. wapenschilden van Reynier van der Beke, Jacob de Keyser. Uitvoerige reparaties in onder andere 1783. Illustraties en ornamenten: genoemd worden onder andere ramskoppen, een witte vaas en een wit vrouwenbeeld, gegroepete vergulde muziekinstrumenten, vergulde laurierbladen en eikenbladeren, en veel andere verzilverde en vergulde onderdelen, waaronder de in het oog springende adelaar, verguld en in zwart uitgevoerd.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem, 51, 61.

Commercie Compagnie. Als zodanig was hij bekend met en betrokken bij de slavenhandel. Behalve in Middelburg woonde hij in de buitenplaats Poppenroede-ambacht aan de Seisweg, nu ook deel van Middelburg. Daar liet hij een uitgebreide classicistische tuin aanleggen en een dierentuin met onder meer kraanvogels en een kaketoet, aldus Dorothee Sturkenboom. Zij vermeldt ook dat Betje Wolff met Radermacher was bevriend.¹⁶⁰

Een van de andere financiers van het orgel – er waren er meer – was de familie Gyse, afkomstig uit Veere en later in Middelburg gevestigd. Over de band van Cornelis Gyse (1750-1797) met de Oostkerk weten we iets meer: hij werd er gedoopt en was er in de loop van zijn leven sterk mee verbonden. Hij was graanhandelaar en kruidenier en werd in 1788 bewindhebber van de West-Indische Compagnie. Hij volgde mr. E.J. van der Mandere op. Die werd bewindhebber van de VOC. Zo zien we hoe de families zowel in de Oost als in de West investeerden.

Bij zijn overlijden had Gyse een flink kapitaal: vijf huizen, twee stukken grond en allerlei luxe zaken, waaronder een grote hoeveelheid zilverwerk. Een zilveren doopbekken uit die collectie was in 1997 nog steeds in bezit van de Oostkerk. Waarschijnlijk is dat nog steeds zo.¹⁶¹ Op de in de kerk aanwezige wapenschilden herkennen we veel namen van families die eveneens betrokken geweest zijn bij de internationale handel, waaronder ook de slavenhandel, en bij investeringen in verband met slavernij. De geschiedenis van dit orgel laat competitie zien tussen de oudere Middelburgse elite en de destijds nieuwe groep van rijke Vlamingen. Over de toon en stemming van het orgel blijkt veel ruzie te kunnen ontstaan, bijvoorbeeld over het belang van wind, krachtige luchtstromen die nodig zijn om het orgel een goed volume te geven waarmee het indruk kan maken en de zingende gemeente kan leiden.¹⁶²

Bladgoud, arduinsteen, ebbenhout

Ook de materiële kant van het orgel is boeiend. We zien veelvuldig gebruik van bladgoud en bladzilver, blauwe arduinsteen, ivoor, 'swart ebbenhout' en verschillende houtsoorten. Waar kwam dat allemaal vandaan? De bestellingen en leveringen zijn wellicht nog te achterhalen. Wie nu in de kerk zit of rondloopt kan nadenken over meerdere perspectieven. Dat van de orgelbouwers, de financiers, en de kerkgangers die opkijken naar het orgel, de muziek ondergaan, en soms mogen of moeten meezingen met de psalmen en gezangen, maar vaak ook stil moeten luisteren. Wat nog ontbreekt is het perspectief van de slaafgemaakten en de vrije zwarten, mogelijk bedienden die op Walcheren hebben gewoond en mogelijk ook deze kerk hebben bezocht. Nieuw onderzoek is hopelijk nog mogelijk.

Niet alleen in Nederland maar ook in alle voormalige koloniale gebieden zijn nog duizenden orgels te vinden: in Suriname, in Indonesië. Op een lijst met orgels in Nederland met monumentale waarde stonden er maar liefst 1.528 in februari 2023.¹⁶³ Ook bij het herstel van een orgel is nu nog sprake van cofinanciering door zowel Nederland als voormalige, door Nederland overheerste, gebieden; bijvoorbeeld voor het Maarschalkerweerd-orgel in Paramaribo, dat hangt in de houten grote kerk, de kathedraal, aan de Gravenstraat in Paramaribo.¹⁶⁴ Die kerk is van Surinaamse houtsoorten gemaakt, waaronder veel cederhout en mahonie. De Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed heeft een 'Inventarisatie Klinkend Erfgoed Paramaribo' laten doen waarin onderzoeker Rudi van Straten kerkorgels onderzoekt. Hij noemt onder meer mahoniehout en tin als belangrijke onderdelen en gaat in op de herkomst.¹⁶⁵ Soms werden complete kerken verplaatst. Van Straten

¹⁶⁰ Dorothee Sturkenboom, 'Begeesterd door de Natuur. Radermachers maidenspeech voor het Natuurkundig Genootschap der Dames in Middelburg, 1790', *De Achttiende Eeuw* 36:2 (2004) 123-130.

¹⁶¹ Kluiver, 'Geschiedenis van het orgel', 47-49. Waarschijnlijk nog steeds zo in 2024: mondelinge mededeling door dr. Kool-Blokland aan de auteur (27 maart 2024).

¹⁶² Kluiver, 'Geschiedenis van het orgel', 49.

¹⁶³ Zie de Organ database, <http://www.orgbase.nl/>.

¹⁶⁴ 'De goede doelen, erfgoedprojecten, van de Surinaamse

Maanden 2023', Stadsherstel Amsterdam (24 mei 2023), <https://stadsherstel.nl/nieuws/de-goede-doelen-erfgoedprojecten-van-de-surinaamse-maanden-2023> (geraadpleegd 4 November 2024). De Stichting Klinkend Erfgoed Suriname zet zich in voor de restauratie van het orgel, waarbij de drijvende kracht Rudi van Straten van de Rijksdienst Cultureel Erfgoed is; hij is senior specialist orgels, luidklokken, uurwerken en carillons. Zie voor meer informatie de website van de stichting: <https://klinkend-erfgoed-suriname.nl/>.

¹⁶⁵ Rudi van Straten, e-mail aan auteur (15 januari 2024).

noemt in de betekenisvolle wijk Frimangron (de 'grond van vrije mensen', een wijk in Paramaribo waar veel voormalige slaafgemaakten woonden) de 'Rust en Vredekerk', ook Annakerk genoemd. Dit was voorheen een kerk voor een plantage, 'Anna's Zorg' aan de Warapperkreek in het district Commewijne. In 1882 is deze hele kerk overgebracht naar Paramaribo.¹⁶⁶ Dit gebeurde relatief kort na de emancipatie. Hoe de kerkgang en het gebruik van het orgel zich in Suriname en in Nederlands Indië na de emancipatie ontwikkelde zou interessant zijn om nader te onderzoeken.

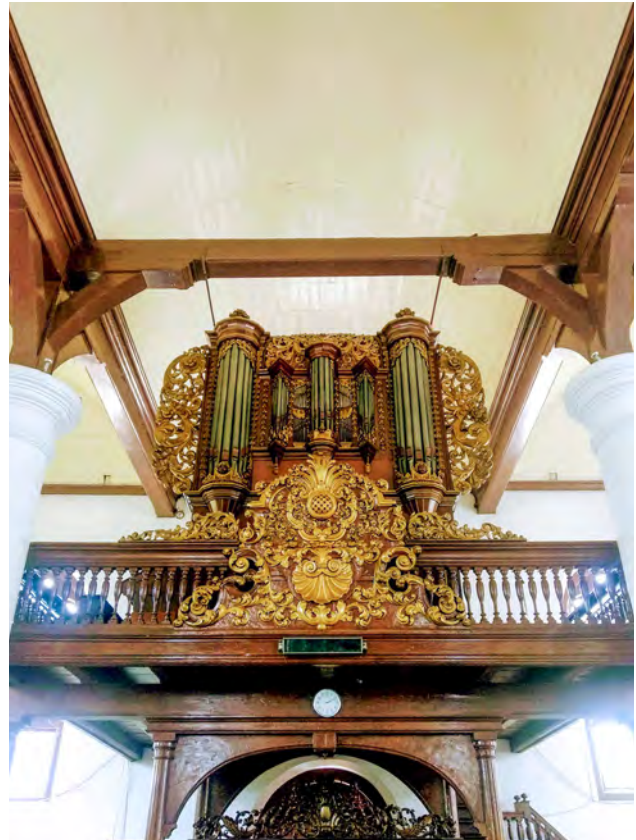
In de Oost, in het gehele voormalige VOC-gebied, zijn nog uit Nederland afkomstige orgels te vinden. Van Straten bracht in 2019 als eerste informatie bij elkaar in het rapport *Sounding Heritage Indonesia: 'Connecting People'*.¹⁶⁷ Een bijzonder orgel, en mogelijk vergelijkbaar met de kerk in Frimangron in Paramaribo, is het orgel in Jakarta, in de 'Portugese Buitenkerk'. Volgens sommige bronnen zou het één van de oudste (of zelfs oudste), nog in werking zijnde, orgels in Indonesië zijn én de Portugese Buitenkerk was de kerk voor vrijgemaakte tot slaafgemaakten. Het orgel hangt er nog.¹⁶⁸ Nader onderzoek is mogelijk en gewenst, naar het gebruik van de orgels, vermeldingen ervan in verschillende bronnen en naar herinneringen en gebruikssporen tijdens en na de slavernij.

Er zijn in de orgelbouw ook banden tussen de Oost en de West en Nederland te vinden. Dezelfde orgelbouwer Jonathan Bätz bouwde in 1841-1843 een orgel in de Willemskerk, nu Gereja Immanuel, in Batavia, nu Jakarta, in 1831 een orgel in Paramaribo voor de Maarten Lutherkerk¹⁶⁹, en in 1842 een orgel in Paleis Kneuterdijk in Den Haag.

Mahoniehout werd bijvoorbeeld geïmporteerd uit Suriname, verwerkt in orgels, en 'daarna weer geëxporteerd naar Suriname, Curaçao, Indonesië'; en tin kwam vanaf ongeveer 1700 uit het 'Banka eiland'.

¹⁶⁶ Rudi van Straten, 'Rust en Vredekerk (Annakerk)', in: idem ed., *Inventarisatie Klinkend Erfgoed Paramaribo. Instandhouding klinkend erfgoed als maatschappelijke uitdaging in historisch perspectief* (RCE: Amersfoort 2014) 43. Van Straten vermeldt als bron: *De Ware Tijd* (12 november 2012). De klok in de toren heeft als opschrift 'Plantage Catwijk'.

¹⁶⁷ Rudi van Straten, *Sounding heritage Indonesia. Connecting people* (RCE: Amersfoort 2019). Van Straten bedankt een aantal Indonesische experts in zijn rapport.



19. Het orgel van de Portugese Buitenkerk/Gereja Sion in Jakarta (2020).

Het kerkorgel is uiteraard een meerstemmig instrument. Wat leert een toepassing op het orgel van de *methodological toolkit for fieldwork* die Legêne en haar studenten ten aanzien van objecten en tentoonstellingen in verband met 'decolonising Europe' hebben gemaakt? Aan de orde komen de narratieve dimensie: welk verhaal vertelt het orgel, welke teksten en beelden toont het ons? De materiële dimensie van het orgel betreft de gebruikte

¹⁶⁸ E-mail van Caroline Drieënhuizen aan auteur (30 november 2023). Zie van Straten, *Sounding heritage*; 'Gereja Sion', Pipe Organs of Indonesia, clacklinevalleyolives.com.au; Nico Gamaliel, 'Jakarta – GPIB Sion Jakarta (2021)', <https://www.organisindonesia.org/post/organ-pipa-gpib-sion-jakarta-menjadi-saksi-setia-dengan-keindahannya> (geraadpleegd 4 november 2024).

¹⁶⁹ Deze kerk brandde in september 1832 af en het orgel, onderweg vanuit Nederland, werd pas in 1835, in de opgebouwde kerk geplaatst. Zie: <https://www.orgelsite.nl/paramaribo-maarten-lutherkerk/> (geraadpleegd 4 november 2024).

grondstoffen, de constructies, de onderdelen, de bouw, de positionering. Uiteraard is dan de herkomst van het gebruikte hout, goud en zilver van belang. Ook is er de institutionele context waarin het orgel bestaat van de bouw tot de ingebruikname en de lange geschiedenis van het onderhoud. Wie betaalde en bepaalde wat er met het orgel gebeurde, hoe het eruitzag, wat eraan veranderde in de loop van de tijd? Tenslotte is er de politieke dimensie van het kerkorgel: een uitdrukking van macht, met posities van machtige initiatiefnemers en financiers, stedelijke netwerken waarin een verlangen naar een eigen gezamenlijk gefinancierd kerkorgel het proces in gang zette waarin een wat bredere kring hielp met betalen en de grotere gemeente kwam luisteren naar het resultaat.¹⁷⁰ Bleef de religieuze dominantie overzee onveranderd intact of was er sprake van verandering, vermenging?

In Nederland doen nieuwe ontwikkelingen in het denken over verbanden tussen de kerken en het slavernijverleden betrokken kerkleden, voorbijgangers en predikanten met nieuwe ogen naar de objecten in en bij hun kerkgebouwen kijken. Dat kan over allerlei objecten gaan: voorwerpen die recent zijn aangewezen als door herkomst en financiers verbonden met het slavernijverleden zijn bijvoorbeeld een gouden avondmaal-stel in Dordrecht of de bankjes voor prominente families met de familienamen en -wapens erop, bijvoorbeeld voor de Amsterdamse familie Van Loon in de Maartenskerk in Hillegom, waar zij een buitenplaats hadden.¹⁷¹ Predikant Herman Koetsveld schreef

in 2023 over afbeeldingen op die orgelluiken: de ontmoeting van de koningin van Sheba met koning Salomo. Volgens Koetsveld zou de koningin een zwarte vrouw moeten zijn, maar op de orgelluiken is ze wit. Wel als zwart afgebeeld is een jongeman die geschenken komt brengen. Koetsveld: 'Op tal van schilderijen, plafond- en wandschilderingen hier in Amsterdam en andere VOC-steden staat een vergelijkbare tafereel. Die ene afgebeelde zwarte jongen staat daar als een symbool van de uitdijende rijkdom van de stad. Een statussymbool dus voor: wij kunnen het ons veroorloven slaven voor ons te laten werken en het brengt ons geld en goed in handen.'¹⁷²

Tenslotte is er een bijzonder archief dat geheel gericht is op orgels, de 'Collectie Legêne' van de Universiteit Utrecht. Johannes G. Legêne (Paramaribo 1915- Delft 1996) heeft een 'Orgelarchief' samengesteld waarvan een uitgebreide inventarisatie is gemaakt.¹⁷³ De vader van deze Legêne was zendeling van de Evangelische Broedergemeente, specialiseerde zich in orgelbouw en was adviseur bij restauraties. Zijn inventarisatie van kerkorgels en de stemming daarvan is een indrukwekkend levenswerk. Met het oog op haar veelzijdige expertise eindig ik met de hoop dat Susan Legêne dit onderzoek voortzet. Het is tijd voor nieuwe stappen naar uitbreiding van de kennis en inzicht over bekende en onbekende kerkorgels, hun context en de vermoedelijk veelzijdige en meerstemmige verbanden met het koloniale- en slavernijverleden.

¹⁷⁰ Voor een versie van de toolkit: Lonneke Geerlings et al., 'Manifesto. Towards a historical critique of exhibitions', Historici.nl (16 March 2015). https://www.historici.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2015-03-15_historical-critique-of-exhibitions_draft-for-OPG.pdf (accessed 22 November 2024)); Susan Legêne, 'Dossier tentoonstellingskritiek deel 3: Rondetafeldiscussie historische tentoonstellingskritiek', Historici.nl (5 november 2019), <https://www.historici.nl/dossier-tentoonstellingskritiek-deel-3-susan-legene-ronde-tafel-discussie-historische-tentoonstellingskritiek/> (geraadpleegd 4 november 2024).

¹⁷¹ Zie Dienne Hondius en Niek Hemmen, *Gids kerk en slavernijverleden* (Edam 2023) 48, 70.

¹⁷² Herman Koetsveld, predikant van de Westerkerk, in het tijdschrift *Volzin* (2023): 'Over afbeeldingen op de luiken van het orgel in de Westerkerk'. Met dank aan Jan Holtland.

¹⁷³ J.F. van Os, Overzicht van stukken uit het Orgelarchief van Johannes G. Legêne. Op 9/9/1998 overgedragen aan de Eduard Reeser-Stichting en gedeponneerd in het orgelarchief der Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, Faculteit Letteren, vakgroep Muziekwetenschap (s.d.).

13. Mosul and Yogyakarta; World Heritage, coloniality, and local contestations

Martijn Eickhoff, Ghufra Sabri & Tular Sudarmadi

In this paper we briefly discuss two sites that have, for different reasons, become the object of UNESCO (world-)heritage politics in the last decade: the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul (Iraq) which, after Mosul was devastated by ISIS/Daesh during the three-year occupation (2014-2017), became part of the UNESCO initiative Revive the Spirit of Mosul in 2018, and the Cosmological Axis of Yogyakarta and its Historic Landmarks (Indonesia) which was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2023.

As heritage scholars with diverse cultural backgrounds and specialisations, we share an interest in critically examining the local politics and local impact of world heritage. In this contribution we briefly introduce and analyse the developments in Mosul and Yogyakarta, as places that have acquired UNESCO status in recent years. Among critical heritage scholars, the coloniality of heritage formation, especially in the context of UNESCO, is beyond discussion. It is in particular the imbalance of power that manifests itself when UNESCO decides about World Heritage proposals from former colonised countries on the basis of 'expert' knowledge. Yet at the same time, tracing how and in which contexts this coloniality manifests itself is a challenge. For that reason, we question to what extent 'arguing against colonial determinism' - an approach introduced by Susan Legêne and Henk Schulte Nordholt in their introduction 'Imagining heritage and heritage as imagined history' of the edited volume *Sites, bodies and stories* from 2015 - can help in developing a sophisticated critical heritage perspective.¹⁷⁴ In their opinion, the concept of 'colonial determinism' can help to identify how heritage developments, that often reach back

to colonial times, are not necessarily defined by colonialism, or a representation of the colonial past in the present.

Mosul's heritage

The influence of Western countries on Iraq and its processes of heritage formation is a long and multifaceted history of which colonialism is part and parcel. In 1922, with the end of the Ottoman Empire, the country became a British Mandate for more than a decade, while European countries had already undertaken many archaeological excavations from the start of the nineteenth century, and played a key role in defining the heritage of Iraq.¹⁷⁵ Yet, the history of heritage formation is even more complex, as Iraq is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious society. Mosul, the example we have chosen for this essay, is currently the centre and capital of the Nineveh Governorate, and the home of various ethnicities and cultures, such as the Sunnis, Shias, Kurds, Christians, Turkmen, Shabaks, and Yezidis, and it includes all the sects of Nineveh.¹⁷⁶

What stands out is that throughout history, and up to this day, Mosul has been the location of political attempts to break the bonds of Nineveh society by manipulating its ethnic components. This has been done by imposing political and religious ideologies that have led to a chasm in Mosul society. Between the monarchy (1922) and the republic (1958) until the fall of Baghdad (2003), Mosul saw the emergence of various ideologies and religions: Pan-Arabism, nationalism, communism, Baathism, and autonomy (self-determination), which came

¹⁷⁴ Susan Legêne and Henk Schulte Nordholt, 'Introduction. Imagining heritage and heritage as imagined history' in: Susan Legêne, Bambang Purwanto and Henk Schulte Nordholt ed., *Sites, bodies and stories. Imagining Indonesian history* (Singapore 2015) 1-30.

¹⁷⁵ Henry Albert Foster, *The making of modern Iraq. A product of world forces* (Norman 1935).

¹⁷⁶ *City profile of Mosul. Multi-sector assessment of a city under siege* (UN-Habitat 2016).

together with the traditional religious worldviews of Shiism and Sunnism.¹⁷⁷ These ideologies have been associated with regional and international political currents that have impacted Mosul's social fabric, and they developed further within other ideologies associated with the chaos of the US invasion of Iraq, that brought with it the ideology of freedom, the rights of the Shiites, and the division of power in Iraq.

On the other hand, the ideology of Jihadism emerged in Mosul and other Sunni regions with the Sunnis' claim to power, which ended with the fall of Mosul to ISIS and their ideology of a caliphate in accordance with the prophetic method. Political clashes led to the displacement and killing of populations of different ethnicities, which resulted in the outbreak of sectarian conflicts for geopolitical gain. These conflicts eventually led to ISIS taking control of Mosul in 2014, destroying the city's society and its cultural heritage.

After the liberation of Mosul in 2017, UNESCO launched the pioneering initiative 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' to reconstruct the city's cultural heritage and its social fabric. Heritage was considered, as usual in the context of UNESCO, as a global, unifying human factor. The core mission behind the revival of Mosul's diverse cultural heritage is to bind Nineveh's multi-ethnic communities together to maintain strength and peace.¹⁷⁸ Reconstructing this cultural heritage is not UNESCO's only goal, but it empowers citizens as actors to sustain their community through education and culture. However, this reconstruction may encounter a difference in approaches between UNESCO – with international actors – and the local actors of the Mosul community. UNESCO's approach to the reconstruction of cultural heritage aims to produce social cohesion and reconstruct the social fabric, but in this they face challenges.

Take, for example, the Al-Nuri mosque and its hunchback minaret (840 years old, a landmark of the city of Mosul), which is 45 metres high. The



20. The leaning 'hunchback' minaret of Mosul, built in the twelfth century (1932).

main point of the reconstruction of the historic site of the Al-Nuri mosque, is for it to be a milestone in promoting reconciliation among the war-torn Mosul community. However, the design that won the UNESCO competition faced local criticism.¹⁷⁹ Some community actors criticised the design for not representing the spirit of Mosul, as its scope extends far beyond its original space and allows people of different ethnicities to converge in the mosque's courtyard. The mosque would therefore lose its sanctity, they argue. In addition, the term 'reconciliation', which is one of the reasons for rebuilding the mosque, was ambiguous; reconciliation with whom?

¹⁷⁷ Sherko Kirmanj, 'The clash of identities in Iraq', in: Amatzia Baram, Achim Rohde and Ronen Zeidel ed., *Iraq between occupations. Perspectives from 1920 to the present* (New York 2010) 43-59.

¹⁷⁸ Benjamin Isakhan and Lynn Meskell, 'UNESCO's Project to 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul'. Iraqi and Syrian opinion on

heritage reconstruction after the Islamic State', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25:11 (2019) 1189-1204.

¹⁷⁹ Ahmed Al-Dabbagh, 'Contrasting the city's design and civilization... for these reasons, Mosulis reject the UNESCO plan for the reconstruction of the Al-Nouri mosque', *Al-Jazeera news* (28 April 2021).

Yogyakarta's heritage

In the Indonesian island Java, just as in Iraq, there is a long and multifaceted history of the influence of Western countries on its processes of heritage formation, of which colonialism is an integral part. Yet, for Javanese people, cultural heritage is in the first place considered a phenomenon created through myths of origin, supernatural power, strength, and authority. Taken together they legitimise claims to the inheritance and continued ownership of cultural heritage. On that basis, Javanese cultural heritage is a snapshot of memories of past human experiences stored in their mind. This constellation makes aspects of time and space insignificant in explaining the coherent process of the formation of cultural heritage from beginning to the end.

The 'Cosmological Axis of Yogyakarta and its Historic Landmarks', which became World Heritage in 2023, is a good example of this constellation. According to the UNESCO description the Cosmological Axis was established in the eighteenth century by sultan Mangkubumi, and has since then continued as the centre of Javanese government and cultural traditions. The six-kilometre north-south axis is positioned to link Mount Merapi and the Indian Ocean, with the *kraton* (palace) at its centre, and key cultural monuments lining the axis to the north and south that are connected through rituals. It embodies key beliefs about the cosmos in Javanese culture, including the marking of the cycles of life.

The initiative to grant the assemblage of buildings world heritage status was motivated by the idea that the cultural heritage involved was in danger of being lost and misunderstood. In an attempt to carry out cultural preservation according to principles of proper conduct, intellectual advancement, and education – at least for the Yogyakarta citizens – the Yogyakarta Special Province government installed the Yogyakarta



21. The eighteenth-century Tugu Yogyakarta, marker of the Cosmological Axis (2015).

Cosmological Axis management centre.¹⁸⁰ With its mandate, this official body holds management authority in shaping, displaying, and even fabricating the Axis. In the end, this centre designed the Yogyakarta city landscape into an utopian representation which provides people with the happy and hedonic experience of an imaginary world to fulfil their dream of an ideal life.

The Cosmological Axis landscape is, for example, home to many buildings and monuments that invite visitors to explore the made-up stories which lie behind the places. The Beringharjo market has a fictional story called 'The desire for wealth' that was explicitly created for the shop as a storytelling device.¹⁸¹ This simulacrum works incredibly well when the source material already has a shop where visitors can buy merchandise to take home. Furthermore, establishments like Teras Malioboro I and the Mirota Gallery (in front of Beringharjo market) provide retail entertainment in the form of 'watch the craftsman' and 'build your own' activities, which include creating batiks, paintings, caricatures, handicrafts, and silhouettes.¹⁸² In this regard, experts have chastised theme park retailers for purposefully mixing up heritage and consumption in the overall experience. So, visitors incessantly buy things, thinking they are still in the game.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *Berita Daerah Daerah Istimewa* (Yogyakarta 2020).

¹⁸¹ 'Sumbu Filosofi Yogyakarta, pengejawantahan asal dan tujuan hidup', *Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat* (11 August 2022) <https://www.kratonjogja.id/tata-rakiting/21-sumbu-filosofi-yogyakarta-pengejawantahan-asal-dan-tujuan-hidup/> (accessed 4 November 2024); Umar Priyono, *Buku profil Yogyakarta, city of philosophy* (Yogyakarta 2015) 77-102.

¹⁸² Harminanto, 'Teras Malioboro I Gelar Pekan Budaya,

Sengkuyung Sumbu Filosofi Yogyakarta', *Krjogja.com* (3 November 2023), <https://www.krjogja.com/yogyakarta/1243217040/teras-malioboro-1-gelar-pekan-budaya-sengkuyung-sumbu-filosofi-yogyakarta?page=1> (accessed 4 November 2024).

¹⁸³ Umberto Eco, *Travels in hyperreality. Essays*, transl. W. Weaver (New York 1986) 43; Alan Bryman, *The Disneyization of society* (London 2004) 34.

Eating and drinking in the Cosmological Axis is a must, since visitors spend more than a few hours completing their journey from one side to another. It makes sense that the Axis environment offers eating options that satisfy the dietary requirements, tastes, and preferences of their audience for business reasons. In order to meet this need, the abovementioned management centre collaborates with traditional food producers and eateries to provide distinctive dining venues and food locations. This effort enables visitors to not only immerse themselves in the experience, but also transform dining, into an attraction and source of entertainment. For example, at Bale Raos Restaurant, which is situated in the royal surroundings (kraton) of the back of the palace (*kamagangan*), the residence of the sultan and his families, the food and drinks offered are the favourites of the consecutive sultans over the past two centuries. Certain days feature live gamelan music and traditional Javanese dance performances in addition to the regular cuisine. The well-known *beksan* style of traditional Javanese dance of the kraton is performed for essential occasions, together with *gamelan siteran* Javanese traditional music. Live *keroncong* music performances take place every Saturday night at Bale Raos. With any luck, tourists will be able to connect, greet, and take photos with members of the sultan's family. This is an attraction for a number of visitors, particularly those who get cultural capital from these encounters and frequently invest a significant amount of time and effort in meeting 'noble' public figures.¹⁸⁴

In that respect, the Yogyakarta Cosmological Axis has distorted the present and future along ideological lines. Creating and maintaining such a cosmological and social order means that cultural investments are harnessed to strengthen the political authority and legitimacy of the Yogyakarta government. From this perspective, the utopian

myth was the immersive reconstruction of past times and civilisations, whether real or invented. The myth of imagination also entices citizens to escape from hard everyday life and experience dreams that might come true through the myth. As a result, the myth of the Cosmological Axis became a commodity consumed by the public. Thus, it is a landscape of consumption similar to a theme park that has four characteristics, namely rides, merchandise and retail, dining, and entertainment.

To conclude

When critically following and analysing the recent heritage formation in Mosul and Yogyakarta, we see how, in the context of UNESCO, spatial layouts are being arranged which are, to a certain respect, comparable. Yet the intention behind, and impact of, the heritage initiatives involved differ enormously, while at the same time in both cases the role of colonialism is relatively marginal. The structures that come with heritage, that as a concept is strongly defined by colonial power structures, are meanwhile part and parcel of contemporary power constellations. As such they have a strong impact on local society and invoke local contestations. These developments demand our attention more urgently than interpreting the coloniality of heritage in a broader sense.

¹⁸⁴ Rebecca Williams, *Theme park fandom. Spatial transmedia, materiality and participatory cultures* (Amsterdam 2020) 148.

14. Gedichten om bij stil te staan. Een andere omgang met het verleden

Judy Jaffe-Schagen & Bettine Siertsema

Omgang met het verleden

In haar inaugurele rede 'Muntslag/vuistslag' (2009) pleitte Susan Legêne voor een grotere wetenschappelijke betrokkenheid van historici bij publieksgeschiedenis, met meer aandacht voor hedendaagse uitingsvormen.¹⁸⁵ Herdenkingspraktijken laten bij uitstek zien hoe de omgang met het verleden in het heden verandert, misschien diverser wordt,¹⁸⁶ en tegelijkertijd verankerd is in al bestaande rituelen. Nieuwe generaties, al dan niet met een nieuwe blik, bestaan niet alleen uit hen die direct met deze geschiedenis verbonden zijn. Ook diegenen die zich vanwege andere beweegredenen bezighouden met herdenken spelen een rol in het vormgeven van de herinneringscultuur.

Het vormgeven kan hier ook letterlijk worden genomen doordat het fysieke landschap wordt (her)ingericht waarbij het verleden weer aanwezig wordt door bijvoorbeeld het plaatsen van *Stolpersteine*, koperen plaatjes voor huizen die ooit bewoond werden door Joodse burgers. Vaak vormt het schrijven en voorlezen van gedichten onderdeel van een nieuw ritueel dat uitgevoerd wordt op het moment dat *Stolpersteine* geplaatst worden. Na het plaatsen worden zij onderdeel van het straatbeeld net als ooit de mensen waren wier namen op de steen staan. Het plaatsingsritueel gebeurt niet op vaste tijdstippen in het jaar maar is afhankelijk van wanneer de vervaardiger van de steen deze kan komen plaatsen. Dit is in tegenstelling tot andere rituelen die onderdeel zijn van herdenkingen,

zoals bijvoorbeeld op 4 mei. Het komt wel voor dat de gedichten die geschreven waren voor de steenlegging later bij andere herdenkingsmomenten, op andere locaties, opnieuw worden voorgedragen. Tegelijkertijd vormt een 'struikelsteen' een nieuw individueel monument waar men bijvoorbeeld op nationale herdenkingsdagen naartoe gaat om daar dan het bestaande seculiere of religieuze ritueel van herdenken uit te voeren. Particulieren, vertegenwoordigers van de gemeente of van lokale groepen plaatsen bloemen of leggen steentjes. Ook nemen zij vaak stilte in acht en houden zij een korte toespraak. Hierbij wordt het gedicht dat geschreven was naar aanleiding van de plaatsing vaak niet meer opnieuw voorgedragen.

Historici hebben nog nauwelijks aandacht geschonken aan gedichten die inmiddels onderdeel uitmaken van de herdenkingscultuur. In dit artikel schetsen we een beeld van een eerste verkenning van die hedendaagse uitingsvorm van de herinneringscultuur: gedichten van stadsdichters geschreven ter gelegenheid van het plaatsen van struikelstenen.¹⁸⁷ Hierbij leggen we de nadruk op het fysieke landschap en kijken we of en hoe dit in de gedichten benoemd wordt en hoe deze gedichten bijdragen aan de biografie van een landschap. We hopen dat dit aanzet tot verder onderzoek naar dit aspect van publieksgeschiedenis en dat deze verkenning bijdraagt, om Legêne nogmaals te citeren 'aan een breder begrip voor waar we staan in de samenleving. Anders gaat het te veel over 'onderwerpen' in het verleden en te weinig over onze samenleving in het heden.'¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ S. Legêne, *Muntslag/vuistslag: De historische verbeelding van de politiek* (oratie leerstoel Politieke Geschiedenis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2009).

¹⁸⁶ Nationale Herdenking 15 augustus 1945, toespraak Susan Legêne 'Verschil in herinnering' (2011), <https://www.15augustus1945.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2011-Toespraak-Susan-Leg%C3%A4ne.pdf> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

¹⁸⁷ Zie ook, voor meer over de discussie betreffende praktijken, uitdagingen en verantwoordelijkheden van historici bij publieksgeschiedenis: Berber Bevernage en Lutz Raphael ed. *Professional historians in public. Old and new roles revisited*, dl. V (Berlijn 2023).

¹⁸⁸ Greetje Bijl, 'Hoe we ons in het heden verhouden tot het verleden. Genderview Susan Legêne', *Historica. Tijdschrift voor Gendergeschiedenis* (2020) afl. 1, 16-20.

Stolpersteine gemetseld in het landschap

‘Een mens is pas vergeten als zijn naam vergeten is.’ Deze gedachte binnen de Joodse rouwtraditie inspireerde de Duitse kunstenaar Gunter Demnig (1947) tot zijn kunstwerk ‘Stolpersteine’.¹⁸⁹ In 1995 plaatste Demnig in Keulen de eerste Stolperstein, toen nog zonder toestemming van de autoriteiten. De eerste Stolpersteine in Nederland werden in 2007 gelegd in Borne.¹⁹⁰ Inmiddels liggen Stolpersteine, oftewel struikelstenen,¹⁹¹ overal in Europa, keitjes van 10 bij 10 cm, voorzien van een gegraveerd messingplaatje met een naam, geboorte-, deportatie- en/of sterfdatum en -plaats. De stenen worden ondanks de grote hoeveelheid nog steeds met de hand gemaakt, in overeenstemming met Demnigs intentie dat aan de slachtoffers, die vaak op industriële wijze gedood werden, steeds individuele aandacht gegeven wordt.

De Stolpersteine werden aanvankelijk aangevraagd ter herinnering aan weggevoerde en vermoorde Joden. Maar de stichting staat nu ook open voor aanvragen voor andere slachtoffers van het nationaalsocialisme. De stichting, zo staat vermeld op de website, wil ‘geen oordeel uitspreken over wie kan worden aangemerkt als slachtoffer en wie niet.’¹⁹²

Iedereen kan een Stolperstein aanvragen, men hoeft dus niet een nabestaande van een slachtoffer te zijn. Diegene die de aanvraag doet neemt de kosten voor het maken en plaatsen op zich. De plaatsing van de Stolpersteine gebeurt in de openbare ruimte. Het is geen privé-evenement en iedereen kan deelnemen. Gemeenten

gaan in principe altijd akkoord. De enigen die bezwaar kunnen maken zijn de nabestaanden en familieleden van slachtoffers.¹⁹³

De steentjes worden geplaatst in de stoep voor de laatste zelfgekozen woning van slachtoffers van het nationaalsocialisme; het gaat om de plek waar het slachtoffer voor het laatst in vrijheid geleefd heeft. De steentjes steken niet uit boven de straatstenen eromheen. ‘Men moet erover struikelen, met hoofd en hart,’ is de gedachte. Je moet je buigen om de tekst goed te kunnen lezen.¹⁹⁴ De informatie voor de teksten komt van familie, bekenden, scholen, instanties en vooral uit de database van Yad Vashem in Jeruzalem en van de Arolsen Archives in Duitsland. Stolpersteine zijn erkend als cultureel erfgoed en als zodanig opgenomen in de database van Europeana, het Europese webportaal voor cultureel erfgoed.¹⁹⁵

Bij uitstek dwingen Stolpersteine om na te denken over het vermoorde individu.¹⁹⁶ Emile Schrijver, directeur van het Joods Cultureel Kwartier in Amsterdam, pleit voor het actief in stand houden van een collectieve herdenkingspraktijk, waarvan het plaatsen van Stolpersteine deel uitmaakt, naast de individuele. Het verregaand individualiseren van de herdenkingspraktijk brengt het risico met zich mee dat het gevoel van collectieve verantwoordelijkheid voor historische misstanden steeds verder afneemt.¹⁹⁷

In deze context dringt de vraag zich op of een nationale herdenking afgelast zou kunnen worden vanwege de dreiging van een aanslag of de politieke situatie in de wereld, met name in bijvoorbeeld de oorlog in Israël en Gaza. Eerder gebeurde dit bij individuele herdenkingen zoals dat het geval was bij

¹⁸⁹ ‘Struikelstenen. Herdenken en sociale sculptuur’, Joods Cultureel Kwartier (2018), <https://jck.nl/agenda/struikelstenen-herdenken-en-sociale-sculptuur> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

¹⁹⁰ David de Leeuw, ‘Stenen des aanstoots? *Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad* (4 maart 2016).

¹⁹¹ De verantwoordelijke organisatie in Nederland heeft een voorkeur voor het gebruik van de Duitse term.

¹⁹² Hanaloes Pen, ‘Hij fabriceert de Stolpersteine, en heeft een lange wachtlijst. “Tijdens het maken stop ik mijn gevoel weg”, *Het Parool* (23 juni 2022).

¹⁹³ Stichting Stolpersteine, ‘Wie kan aanvragen?’ [https://stichting-](https://stichting-stolpersteine.nl/stolpersteine-aanvragen/)

[stolpersteine.nl/stolpersteine-aanvragen/](https://stichting-stolpersteine.nl/stolpersteine-aanvragen/) (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

¹⁹⁴ De Leeuw, ‘Stenen des aanstoots?’.

¹⁹⁵ Europeana, ‘Stolperstein: remembering those lost in the Holocaust’, <https://www.europeana.eu/en/blog/stolperstein-remembering-those-lost-in-the-holocaust> (geraadpleegd 7 juli 2024).

¹⁹⁶ Emile Schrijver, ‘Hou zowel de individuele als collectieve herdenking van de oorlog in ere’, *Het Parool* (3 mei 2023). Zie ook: <https://www.stolpersteineschiedam.nl/>

¹⁹⁷ Ibidem.

de afgelaste plaatsing van Stolpersteine in Coevorden in oktober 2023.¹⁹⁸ De 4 mei-herdenking van 2024, die weliswaar met een beperkt publiek en strengere veiligheidsmaatregelen plaatsvond, laat zien dat, ondanks bestaande dreiging, niet snel besloten zal worden tot het afzeggen van een nationale herdenking. Dit laat duidelijk de kwetsbaarheid van de individuele herdenkingspraktijk zien. Een ander voorbeeld is de ontvreemding van Stolpersteine. Over deze gebeurtenis heeft in 2019 Yvette Neuschwanger, stadsdichter van Schiedam, een gedicht geschreven.¹⁹⁹ Met de plaatsing van de eerste Stolperstein heeft de stadsdichter een nieuw onderwerp gekregen.

Stadsdichters en Stolpersteine

Het fenomeen van de stadsdichter maakt deze eeuw een nieuwe bloeiperiode door.²⁰⁰ Grote steden hebben doorgaans een stadsdichter die al (enige) naam heeft gemaakt.²⁰¹ Bij middelgrote en kleine steden gaat het meer om zondagsdichters en vaak ook om mensen die als tekstschrijver of performer actief zijn. Van stadsdichters wordt verwacht dat ze enkele keren per jaar een gedicht leveren over iets wat de stad aangaat. Het leggen van een Stolperstein kan, met name in kleinere gemeenten, zo'n aanleiding zijn. In een stad als Amsterdam, waar per maand tientallen van zulke stenen worden gelegd, ligt dat minder voor de hand. 'Stolperstein-gedichten' worden vrijwel alleen gepubliceerd in de plaatselijke krant en op de websites van de dichters of de gemeente in kwestie. We hebben zo 23 gedichten gevonden.

Het is vaak voelbaar dat de dichter zich persoonlijk geraakt voelt door het onderwerp, maar de meeste gedichten zijn naar vorm of inhoud niet bijzonder verrassend, misschien mede door de toegankelijkheid die de stadsdichters zichzelf als norm lijken op te leggen. Daar het gedicht doorgaans voorgedragen wordt bij het leggen van de steen, moet het immers snel begrepen kunnen worden. Soms leidt dat tot een wat clichématige woordkeus of gedachte, zoals '(...) door 't duister van die gruwelijke nacht'.²⁰²

In dit korte bestek noemen we slechts de belangrijkste thema's, waarbij aandacht voor de fysieke vorm en omgeving centraal staan. De meeste stadsdichters sluiten aan bij de grondgedachte van het Stolpersteine-project: de naam en daarmee de identiteit teruggeven aan individuele slachtoffers van het nationaalsocialisme, soms gekoppeld aan de oproep de namen niet te vergeten.²⁰³ Toch worden slechts in drie gevallen die namen genoemd. Dat is een afspiegeling van de spanning die bestaat tussen het individuele van elke afzonderlijke Stolperstein en het generieke van de herdenkingscultuur. Dat generieke brengt veel dichters ertoe om aan de herdenking ook een aanmaning te koppelen niet onverschillig te blijven en onder andere in ieders politieke keuzes een herhaling van 'het ontoelaatbare'²⁰⁴ te voorkomen. Soms wordt dat actueel gemaakt, zoals in het gedicht van Moes Wagenaar (Enschede) 'Stolpersteine' met als ondertitel 'en over Sami Al-Obeidi, stemgerecht (sic) in Nederland sinds 1989'. Het legt een verbinding tussen de geschiedenis van nazi-Duitsland en de recente politieke geschiedenis van Irak én ons stemgedrag bij verkiezingen. Wat die drie verbindt is

¹⁹⁸ Gerton Albers, 'Stolpersteine in Coevorden worden niet onthuld vanwege oorlog in Israël en Gaza. 'Uitstel lijkt ons beter'', *Dagblad van het Noorden* (30 oktober 2023).

¹⁹⁹ Stolpersteine Schiedam, '75 + 3 jaar geleden (7)' (2020), <https://www.stolpersteineschiedam.nl/2020/06/20/75-3-jaar-geleden-7/> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024). Zie voor een ander incident: <https://www.omroepbrabant.nl/nieuws/1067085/gedenksteentjes-joodse-onderduikers-gestolen-in-roosendaal>.

²⁰⁰ Zie Laurens Ham et al., 'Krijg je nog rente voor een lied?' Stadsdichterschap als eer en verdienste sinds de middeleeuwen', *Nederlandse Letterkunde* 25:1 (2020) 99-131.

²⁰¹ Anke Martens inventariseerde in 2020 de gang van zaken in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Eindhoven en Groningen.

Anke Martens, Het bonte palet dat stadsdichterschap heet. Een onderzoek naar het stadsdichterschap in vijf Nederlandse steden (bachelorwerkstuk Moderne Letterkunde; Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen 2020).

²⁰² Aad van der Waal, 'Namen van betekenis' Apeldoorn Direct (2018), <https://www.apeldoorndirect.nl/stad/verdreven-en-vermoord-maar-niet-vergeten-20181028/>, geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024.

²⁰³ Zie de gedichten van Klara Smeets, Inez Meter en Jeffrey van Geenen, alle drie uit Gouda, op www.stadsdichtersgouda.nl.

²⁰⁴ In een gedicht van Larissa Verhoeff uit Ede: 'Negen struikelstenen in Otterlo herinneren aan Joodse slachtoffers', *Barneveldsekrant.nl* (2023), <https://www.barneveldsekrant.nl>.

het maken van foute politieke keuzes en de gevolgen die dat kan hebben. De slotregel laat die grote werkelijkheid direct contact maken met de fysieke omgeving van de Stolpersteine:

Laten we dat niet vergeten
in het stemhokje – en gewoon op straat
bij de stolpersteine in de Enschedese
stoepen.²⁰⁵

Van de drie bovenvermelde gedichten over een steen met een individuele naam, zijn er twee van Kitty Schaap (Oss), over de Stolperstein voor de zes leden van de familie Van Dijk en over haar verbijstering dat zo'n heel gezin zomaar weggehaald kon worden en waarin ze oproept van deze namen 'stenen des aanstoots' te maken,²⁰⁶ en één gedicht over Eduard en Rosa Beem.²⁰⁷ Dat laatste gedicht gaat in op de uiterlijke verschijningsvorm van de steen, waarin de personen in kwestie niet meer dan 'dit beknopte uitzicht' gegund is, 'Samen schuilen zij als slakken / in een voorgoed verkalkt fossiel'. Door het vervolgens noemen van namen en adres wordt duidelijk dat dit fossiel de Stolperstein is. Het derde gedicht over een individuele naam is van Sef Derkx (Venlo), over Arthur Spira, die op dezelfde dag jarig geweest zou zijn als de dichter, maar vermoord werd in Auschwitz, zes maanden oud.²⁰⁸ De vormgeving met onregelmatige regelopbouw en het ontbreken van leestekens roept iets van stotterende verlegenheid op. Door twee regels in Limburgs dialect, ' 'n kroèkestöpke / 'n half jaor ald', wordt de persoon dichterbij gehaald en tegelijk de

plaatsgebondenheid van persoon en Stolperstein benadrukt.²⁰⁹

De meeste generieke gedichten draaien veelal om de afwezigheid van de persoon en het toch present stellen door het noemen van diens naam.²¹⁰ Inez Meter (Gouda) verbindt dat thema met de – overigens niet genoemde – stad van waaruit de herdachte mensen weggevoerd werden:

hun namen worden gered
keren terug in de stad
waar zij woonden de weggevoerden²¹¹

Yanaika Zomer is de enige die expliciet een verband legt met de bebouwde omgeving van een Stolperstein, namelijk Den Helder met zijn wederopbouw-architectuur vanwege de vele bombardementen tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Aan de Shoah wordt één keer gerefereerd:

Daar woonde ooit
een onbezorgd gezin. Nu een herinnering in
struikelsteen
voor winkelend publiek.

Het gedicht eindigt met de dubbelzinnige aansporing in ogenschouw te nemen 'dat ook de vrijheid waarop wij bouwden / ons onderhoud behoeft.' Met die slotzin krijgt de concrete bebouwde omgeving een politiek-actuele verdieping.

Enkele gedichten richten zich op de fysieke verschijningsvorm van de Stolperstein. Ton Delemarre (Dordrecht) spreekt over 'deze koperen

nl/lokaal/maatschappelijk/920021/negen-struikelstenen-in-otterlo-herinneren-aan-joodse-slachto (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

²⁰⁵ Moes Wagenaar, 'Stolpersteine', Stadsdichter Enschede (2012), <https://www.stadsdichterenschede.nl/moes-wagenaar/stolpersteine-67A6AC.html> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

²⁰⁶ 'De stadsdichter over Geffen', Struikelstenen Oss (2016), <https://struikelstenenoss.blogspot.com/2016/12/de-stadsdichter-over-geffen.html> (7 december 2016).

²⁰⁷ 'Struikelstenen Oss', Struikelstenen Oss (2016), <https://struikelstenenoss.blogspot.com/2016/09/blog-post.html> (7 december 2016).

²⁰⁸ Sef Derkx, 'Een struikelsteen voor Arthur Spira', Venlo van binnen (2023), <https://venlovanbinnen.nl/columns/>

venlovanvruuger-een-struikelsteen-voor-arthur-spira/ (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

²⁰⁹ 'n Kroèkestöpke betekent een kleintje. De letterlijke vertaling luidt kruikenstop/-dop.

²¹⁰ Bijvoorbeeld bij Klara Smeets, die haar gedicht zo laat eindigen: 'een mens die moest verdwijnen / verschijnt in dit herdenken'. Klara Smeets, 'Stolperstein', Stadsdichters Gouda (2012), <https://stadsdichtersgouda.nl/klarasmeets/stolperstein/> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

²¹¹ Inez Meter, 'Godlof', Stadsdichters Gouda (2003), <https://stadsdichtersgouda.nl/category/inezmeter/> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024). De titel van haar gedicht, 'Godlof', doet wellicht vreemd aan, maar verwijst naar het Kaddisj, het Joodse gebed voor overledenen.

tuin van 10 bij 10 centimeter als laatste rustplaats', en Marieke van Leeuwen (Dordrecht) stelt: 'er is grond voor namen / tegels die anders zijn / tussen het grijs', waarbij grond mooi dubbelzinnig verwijst naar de plek én naar de reden voor de steen. Het korte gedicht van Jannes Kuik (Ommen) verwijst naar de grond waarin de steen gelegd is, waarbij het adjectief *warme* de impliciete tegenstelling met de koude steen suggereert.

De steen in warme
aarde neergelegd vertelt in dood-
se stilte zijn verhaal.

Door de ongewone afbreking van de tweede regel, springt het woorddeel *dood* in het oog, terwijl de alliteratie van *steen* en *stilte* die woorden met elkaar verbindt. Ook Peter Noordhoek (Gouda) onderstreept het stille karakter van de Stolpersteine. Na een verwijzing naar de Talmoed, die stilte meer waard acht dan woorden, benoemt hij de concrete plek en zowel de stilte als de namen van de Stolperstein:

En daarom zijn op onze Goudse straten
in stilte, woord en Stolperstein
hun namen steeds opnieuw te horen

Yvette Neuschwanger (Schiedam) ten slotte, wijdde een kort gedicht aan de afwezigheid, door ontvreemding, van een Stolperstein, waarbij 'rukte' en 'het licht' dubbel functioneren, als deel van het voorgaande en het volgende zinsdeel. Subtiel wordt daarmee het ontbreken van iets, in dit geval de steen, gesuggereerd.

toen jij die steen uit de straat
rukte je ook een hart uit
je ontnam hem opnieuw
het licht
was nog nooit zo donker²¹²

²¹² Stolpersteine Schiedam, '75 + 3 jaar geleden'.

²¹³ 'Weerzien': in hun namen keren zij weer, Stichting Gouds Metaheerhuis (z.j.), <https://www.goudsmetaheerhuis.nl/weerzien-in-hun-namen-keren-zij-weer/> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

Weerzien

Stolpersteine zorgen ervoor, aldus Meter in Gouda, dat 'Hun namen worden gered / keren terug in de stad.' Inmiddels zijn de dichtregels zelf ook onderdeel van het fysieke landschap geworden. Kunstenaar Edwin Vreeken verwerkte in zijn muurkunstwerk 'Weerzien', een aantal zinnen uit Meters gedicht (zie afbeelding). Het volledige gedicht is op een plaquette naast het kunstwerk te lezen. Najaar 2016 werd aan de blinde gevel van de Schoolmeesterwoning aan het Raoul Wallenbergplantsoen in Gouda dit kunstwerk aangebracht.²¹³ Deze locatie is gekozen vanwege de nabijheid van het Joodse poortje; een oorlogsmonument.²¹⁴

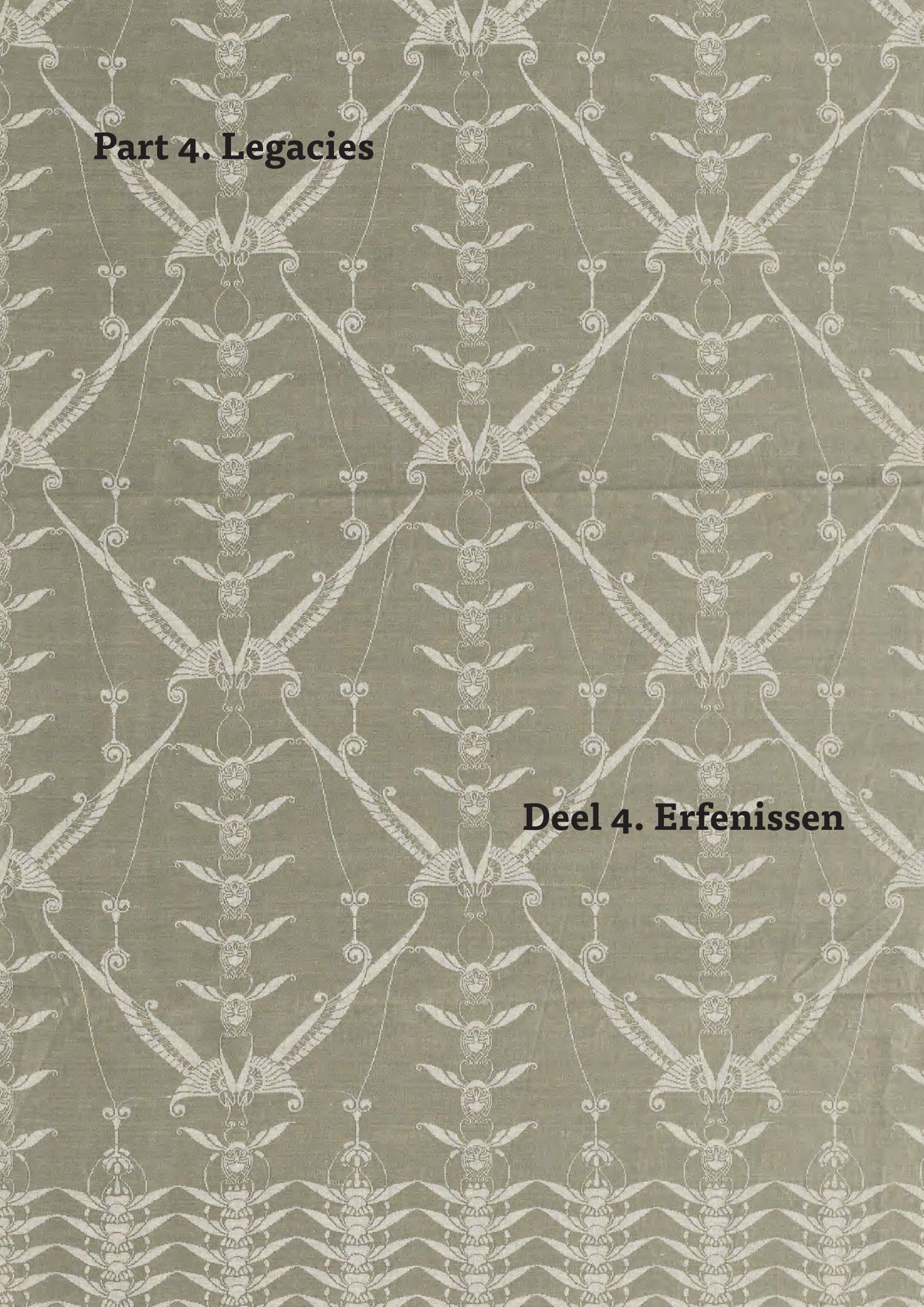


22. Dichtregel aangebracht op een gevel aan het Raoul Wallenbergplantsoen, Gouda.

²¹⁴ 'Stolpersteine', Straatpoëzie (z.j.), <https://straatpoezie.nl/gedicht/stolpersteine/> (geraadpleegd 17 juli 2024).

Stolpersteine en de gedichten die stadsdichters over deze nieuwe monumenten schrijven plaatsen letterlijk en figuurlijk geschiedenis terug in het fysieke landschap. De stenen en de rituelen die daarbij zijn gaan horen, zijn inmiddels onderdeel van publieksgeschiedenis. Interdisciplinair onderzoek naar het belang van gedichten en de rol van individuele verhalen en de actuele, politieke en sociale boodschappen binnen de herinneringscultuur die deze gedichten behelzen zal meer inzicht kunnen geven in hoe het verleden telkens opnieuw wordt vormgegeven en de plaats van geschiedenis in onze samenleving in het heden. We volgen hiermee Susan Legêne die in het door ons eerder aangehaalde Genderview-interview zegt: 'De relevantie van historisch onderzoek is dat het bijdraagt aan een breder begrip voor waar we staan in de samenleving. Anders gaat het te veel over 'onderwerpen' in het verleden en te weinig over onze samenleving in het heden.'²¹⁵

²¹⁵ Bijl, 'Hoe we ons in het heden verhouden tot het verleden', 18.

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of stylized birds, possibly swallows or swifts, with their wings spread. They are arranged in vertical columns, with a smaller bird at the top of each column. The birds are white or light beige against a dark, textured background. The pattern is dense and covers the entire page.

Part 4. Legacies

Deel 4. Erfenissen

15. Some thoughts about decolonisation and decoloniality, but mainly about Susan Legêne

Gert Oostindie

It's a pleasure and an honour to add my penny's worth to this *liber amicorum*. I was assigned to write something about decolonisation. I would actually have preferred to contribute some sort of written dialogue jointly with colleagues from former Dutch colonies on this large topic, rather than to offer my personal musings. That would have fitted much better with the ways Susan approached whatever she did in our shared fields of interest. But here I am, on my own. These are just some thoughts, and whatever their merits, my main objective is not to come up with anything innovative, original, wise, or whatever, but simply to sing the praise of Susan's role in the Dutch historiography of colonialism and its legacies. Well, praise alone may be a bit too pious, so I'll see whether there might be one or two nuts to crack as well.

Susan and I were born in the same year, 1955. We both studied in Amsterdam, but at different universities and I do not think we ever met until much later, in the 1990s, when Susan was publisher and later head of museum affairs at the former Tropenmuseum, the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen), and I was working at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (KITLV) in Leiden and held a professorship at Utrecht University. In 2011, Susan kindly agreed to become the chairperson of the Learned Society of KITLV. At the time, I had become KITLV's director. We therefore worked together in these years, at times rather intensively in times of government austerity policies that hit hard in our fields.

So I got to know Susan pretty well. And here's what I admire. Dedication, seemingly endless energy, sharp analysis, an amazing number and variety of networks, high principles combined with a sense of pragmatism. And, no less important and remarkable, an unwavering determination to make a difference when it comes to practicing diversity, both in ensuring multiperspectivity in research and in hiring practices. So *chapeau* to all of that.

It so happens that over the decades, we both engaged in colonial and postcolonial history and in issues of decolonisation and the legacies of colonialism, but I think that except for one workshop I organised many years ago in South Africa and invited Susan to participate, we never worked together in a joint academic project. This may be a bit coincidental and I am pretty sure that this had nothing to do with ill feelings on either side. But it may, in the end, have reflected a slight difference in our approach to the field.

Looking back, I unduly overstated this difference in a book published in 2010, *Postkoloniaaal Nederland*, published in translation a year later as *Postcolonial Netherlands. Sixty-five years of forgetting, commemorating, silencing*. In my research for this book, I had read tons of articles and books in the field of postcolonial studies, and in the end got pretty much fed up with the often undecipherable jargon and self-righteous political wisdoms espoused by a good deal of authors in this field. (Incidentally, with praise for abstract and, if need be, near-incromprehensible theorising.) And so I ended up writing in the book a rather critical if not dismissive section on postcolonial studies and why in my view it was not that bad that this strand of scholarship had remained rather peripheral to Dutch scholarship. And I also made a point about postcolonial identity as a matter of choice rather than evident destiny.

Looking back, I still think the arguments hold, but I regret that many colleagues for whom I hold much respect apparently did not appreciate these passages whatsoever. Perhaps I already felt this coming, when I wrote in this section of *Postcolonial Netherlands* that my criticism did not target the 'supporters of a moderate version of the postcolonial paradigm'²¹⁶ and included Susan among these. Either way, I probably closed off some venues for debate that would have enlightened me. Not that I didn't try. I remember a

²¹⁶ Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands. Sixty-five years of forgetting, commemorating, silencing* (Amsterdam 2011) 238.

many-hours-long discussion with Gloria Wekker in which at one point it became rather personal about how to deal with racism in Dutch society. With all due mutual respect, I said I still didn't see why postcolonial theorising would be the only, much less the best way to understand, let alone eradicate this – also to me – quite evident racism. (And mind you, this was over ten years ago, and things have surely not brightened up since.) As I write these lines, I realise and regret that for all I remember, Susan and I never had a similar discussion – not even after she had published a very critical yet absolutely fair and nuanced criticism of *Postcolonial Netherlands* and the project that this book aimed to summarise.²¹⁷

Meanwhile Susan, of course, was really all over the place when it came to making the point that Dutch history could not be properly understood without taking the colonial dimension on board. She did so in her own books and articles, but was also very influential in the field of public history. Small wonder she was invited to sit on the committee entrusted by the Dutch government to propose an historical *Canon van Nederland*, and even less so that this blueprint for teaching Dutch history published in 2006 included far more entries on and references to colonial history than ever before. No jargon, no moralising, just setting the record straight: colonialism, slavery, hence racism, violence are all an integral part of Dutch history. Small wonder she served on a host of other committees, directed research programmes, helped bridging gaps between academia and the arts, Dutch academia and colleagues abroad, and academia and activism. Many lives in one.²¹⁸

Perhaps I have dwelled too much on Susan and on dealings with postcolonialism or – the kind of jargon I tend to avoid – 'decoloniality'. What about the basic questions regarding decolonisation, in the Dutch colonial orbit? What if I carefully follow the prescriptions Susan and her co-authors offer to young historians in the state of the art and utterly down-to-earth textbook *Geschiedenis schrijven!*

Wegwijzer voor historici (2016)? Start, they write time and again, by formulating a good research question. Well, there are many good questions to pose, and who is to say what questions are really the best? No need to be exclusive here. But surely, a 'good' research question should be a clear one. As Susan and her co-authors emphasise, the formulation of a good question is half the job. So I offer just a few of the many issues that I would have loved to discuss with Susan and other colleagues, particularly colleagues and friends from former Dutch colonies.

One first question would be a recurring one – or at least, one I often raised and still ponder. To what extent is it really helpful to think of one Dutch colonial empire at the eve of decolonisation? Unlike the British and French, previously also the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires, the Dutch empire had only a few constituent parts: one metropole, officially just three colonies. Of course, there was a particular colonial mindset reigning in Dutch political and economic elites, in parliament and the Ministry of the Colonies, and so on. But there was an enormous contrast in economic and geopolitical importance, and in demography (around 1940, Indonesia had some 70 million inhabitants, the Netherlands 9 million, Suriname and the Antilles taken together less than half a million). Surely there were internal migratory links (the Javanese in Suriname, Surinamese in Curaçao, colonial bureaucrats, students from the colonies and anticolonial activists in the Netherlands). But if we emphasise these links, are we de-centring Dutch colonialism and the metropole, or rather doing the opposite? Small wonder, Susan has some relevant things to say about this, too.²¹⁹

Then, the question of paths out of the colonial situation. Colonialism was sort of the original sin. The ethical policy may be seen as a step forward, but remained colonial, benevolent but still very much paternalistic and in the end all too often openly racist. But what about a good way out? What was

²¹⁷ Susan Legêne, 'Bringing history home. Postcolonial immigrants and the Dutch cultural arena', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 126 (2011) 54-70.

²¹⁸ A succinct analysis of the changes in the Dutch memory landscape may be found in the recent chapter by Maria Grever and Susan Legêne, 'Histories of an old empire. The ever-changing acknowledgement of Dutch imperialism as a present

past' in: Ander Delgado and Andrew Mycock ed., *Conflicts in history education in Europe. Political context, history teaching, and national identity* (Charlotte, NC 2023) 27-48.

²¹⁹ Susan Legêne, 'The European character of the intellectual history of Dutch Empire', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 132 (2017) 110-120.

'good', as seen from the perspective of the colonised? In Indonesia, the Dutch admitted to have been 'at the wrong side of history', in 1945-1949 (what about before?). In Suriname, the Dutch congratulated themselves for helping to achieve a 'model decolonisation' in 1975 – which mainly means there was a negotiated transfer of sovereignty, no fighting. But for whose benefit did the Netherlands and Suriname part ways? And how should we understand the Antillean refusal to become independent, and the lukewarm Dutch acceptance of the impossibility to simply impose independence? Big questions, undoubtedly not meeting the prescriptions of *Geschiedenis schrijven!* But in the end questions that do matter, even if they are located in the field of counterfactual history. One imagines that things could have gone better, even after the original sin...

Or another issue, this time about the weight of the past in the present. Over the decades, I have come to conclude that it is often less delicate to discuss the bloody trajectory of Indonesian independence, including the 100,000+ casualties from Dutch warfare with Indonesians, than it is to have open conversations with Surinamese or Antilleans, on either side of the Atlantic, about the negotiated outcomes of the two opposing trajectories of decolonisation in the Dutch Caribbean. The hypothesis – *Geschiedenis schrijven!* urges young historians to bring up one or two – might be that the weight of colonial history becomes heavier as the felt impossibility to break up is more evident.

All three processes of decolonisation caused substantial postcolonial migrations. The postcolonial migrant communities brought colonial history back home and stimulated the rediscovery of colonialism. Yet the claims made by the various communities were very dissimilar and facilitated a very unbalanced 'rediscovery'. Here's where my initial ideas against overly simplified ideas about postcolonial identity and solidarity came from. The open question: do we see any substantial change, in memory-making, in postcolonial politics?

I could go on and on, but I will stop here. When I retired in December 2021, my idea for a farewell workshop was to venture into terrains I had mostly neglected or willingly avoided in my work as a historian – emotions and the imagination. These are dimensions most historians do not feel comfortable with. That is why I wanted to liven up my farewell

moment with a symposium in which my close colleagues would say something on that aspect: which image, or perhaps sound or smell, do you associate with colonial or postcolonial history, why, and what effect does it have on you? I had hoped that this improvised sculpture garden would give a glimpse not just of this history, but also of my fellow historians' souls. A glimpse of the emotions that most scholars in my discipline do not really know what to do with, the creative tension between a warm heart and a cool head, shall we say. Unfortunately, Covid-19 threw a spanner in the works at the time and the opportunity did not return.

All the better that the contributors to this liber amicorum were requested to think of an object to inspire or at least accompany their contribution. This is of course very much in line with Susan's career, in which she, unlike most fellow historians, never shied away from objects, bodies and emotions, next to the traditional sources for historical enquiry. So, for an object that goes with these meandering thoughts, here's a snapshot of a tiny bird glued to an equally tiny clothespin, 3 centimetres, no more. A gift by Susan to her fellow KITLV board members and



23. The wooden pin Susan Legêne gifted to me in 2019.

me – the director serving as secretary to the board – as she stepped down, in 2019. The present came with a speech and it were the words that mattered. The present, I think, was typically Susan. With a few well-chosen words she infused an unpretentious work of handicraft of little monetary value with life of its own, a testimony to years well spent. So this little wooden bird is still clipped to one book after another in my study. And whenever I see it, I think of Susan, with gratitude.

16. Representations and objects of corruption in the Dutch-Indonesian relationship

Farabi Fakhri, Ronald Kroeze, Otto Linde & Uji Winardi

Questioning self-evident ‘facts’?

The Netherlands is regarded one of the least corrupt countries in the world, and Indonesia one of the most corrupt, at least according to rankings such as the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of anticorruption NGO, Transparency International (TI). When the first CPI was published in 1995, Indonesia even carried the red lantern. It caused unease among Indonesian ministers of the then Suharto-regime but Dutch companies were also held responsible for they were accused of bribing Indonesian officials in order to win business contracts.²²⁰

The role of corruption in the Dutch-Indonesian relationship is presented to us in other ways too. For example, when we look at two recent Amsterdam museum expositions. In the exposition *Our Colonial Inheritance* at the Amsterdam Wereldmuseum (Tropenmuseum) visitors encounter an explicit mentioning of corruption in the Dutch-Indonesian historical relationship. In a section dedicated to ‘Indonesian’s International Network’ corruption is linked to the history of the VOC. On the information plate one could read:

The Dutch East India Company (... VOC) was founded in 1602. In the 17th century, the VOC built up a huge international network, backed by the colonial army. (...) The network spread throughout Southeast Asia and via Africa to Europe, trading in enslaved people, spices ... and other valuable commodities. Late in the 18th century, the company began to decline due to stiff British and French competition, the cost of waging war, as well as corruption and maladministration. In 1798, the VOC was dissolved.

At *De Grote Indonesië Tentoonstelling* in de Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, which we visited together, corruption was explicitly mentioned at two ‘places’. On an information plate adjoining a painting of Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch, who introduced the infamous nineteenth-century Cultivation System, one could read:

The Dutch treasury benefits [from the Cultivation System]. The Indonesian people suffer from corruption, poverty and famine.

Additionally, in a room dedicated to the Suharto regime (1967-1998) and the *Reformasi* (the protests that lead to Suharto’s overthrow in 1998), one could read:

Reformasi. The corruption of the Suharto regime was tolerated for many years, until a monetary crisis broke out in 1997. (...) students demanded (...) reforms. (...). Violence erupted (...). Suharto finally stepped down. Habibie (...) succeeded him and introduced democratic reforms.

The presented examples of corruption in various episodes of the Dutch-Indonesian historical relationship – VOC, Cultivation System, Suharto regime – are well chosen. They rightly suggest that corruption does not occur in isolation, but in the context of imperial and global connections, mutually reinforcing relationships, and specific power dynamics.²²¹ For the audience, however, this is all left rather implicit. One is left without answers to questions such as: what types of corruption are we talking about here, why was corruption

²²⁰ ‘Smeergelden leiden tot de verkeerde beslissingen’, *NRC Handelsblad* (30 January 1996).

²²¹ See also Ronald Kroeze, ‘Colonial normativity? Corruption in the Dutch-Indonesian relationship in the nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries’, in: Ronald Kroeze, Pol Dalmau and Frédéric Monier ed., *Corruption, empire and colonialism in the modern era. A global perspective* (Singapore 2021) 173-208.

tolerated at one moment while protested against at another (and by whom?), and how did practices and understandings of corruption undergird and reflect changing power structures? It is precisely these kinds of questions that we are trying to answer in our joint historical project with Susan Legêne: ‘Colonial Normativity – Corruption and difference in colonial and postcolonial histories of empire and nations: an entangled history of the Netherlands and Indonesia 1870s-2010s’.²²² We collaborated with Susan at different moments in our careers but as a group most intensively, and together with Bambang Purwanto, in this NWO-funded project.

The programme investigates corruption in Dutch and Indonesian histories of state-formation and economic development. It analyses the changing discursive understanding of corruption and how discourses were linked to maintaining (and challenging) norms that undergirded power structures in (post)colonial settings. A first subproject investigates how ‘Multatulian notions’ of corruption dominated in the period of late-colonial state formation (1870s-1920s), a second one how Indonesian nationalists criticised the corruption of the colonial state in order to establish an independent state (1920s-1950s). A third subproject looks at how scandals and the silencing of corruption were linked to political dynamics of the Cold War period (1960s-1990s), while the fourth and last sub-project examines how the ‘global fight against corruption’ became a rallying cry in the era of ‘good governance’ and affected the legitimacy of regimes, not least that of Suharto (1990s-2010s). The sources we analyse include parliamentary records, policy documents, investigative reports, novels, and media accounts.

In this collaborative project, Susan’s role is crucial as she operates as the intellectual *liaison officer* between us as representatives of different subdisciplines: European political history, New Corruption History, New Imperial History, Southeast

Asian studies, and Indonesian economic history. Susan’s distinctive ‘cultural’ perspective on politics and colonialism is also a source of inspiration for our approach. It is informed by her career in the world of museums and heritage. In this contribution, we discuss the link between heritage and corruption. This relationship has received some scholarly attention already²²³ but we would like to explore it for the Dutch-Indonesian historical relationship. If ‘corruption of power and money has been the main story of empire’, as Nicolas Dirks once stated,²²⁴ and if heritage can be broadly defined as the ‘features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance’²²⁵, how have the two been related in the history of the Dutch-Indonesian relationship? We provide two examples below.

Theft of cultural heritage

In the Dutch-Indonesian relationship one can find examples that link corruption to theft of tangible cultural objects. Take this example from the ‘liberal era’ (1870-1901), a period that was in colonial Indonesian history above all an era of ambiguity. While Dutch liberals tended to associate a liberal colonial policy with the notion of ‘security of property’, in the colonies liberalism meant something different. There, the liberal period was marked by massive land grabs by the colonial state. It was undergirded by an official policy based on the notion that the colonial state in the Indonesian Archipelago was the *de jure* successor to the ‘precolonial’ Indonesian states, where the rulers were the masters of all land – or so it was argued at the time. This claim was then utilised to declare all ‘wastelands’ (*woeste gronden*) – that is, ‘wasteland’ in the eyes of colonial bureaucrats – to belong to the colonial state. In this way, such land could be

²²² The project commenced late 2019 and is envisioned to be finalised in 2025. See also: www.colonial-normativity.com.

²²³ E.g. Michael Herzfeld, ‘Heritage and corruption: the two faces of the nation-state’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21 (2015) 531–544.

²²⁴ N. Dirks, *The scandal of empire. India and the creation of imperial Britain* (Duke 2006).

²²⁵ Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Dictionary (online), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heritage> (accessed 11 March 2024).

leased to European and Chinese entrepreneurs.²²⁶ It was directly related to the issue of heritage, as the colonial state usurped land that contained sacred sites, historical monuments, archaeological sites, and other antiquities.

By redefining the 'historical' and the 'cultural' as something 'public' (state property), embezzlement of movable tangible heritage was also occasionally the subject of corruption debates within the colonial society. This becomes clear when we analyse a contribution from an author writing under the pseudonym 'C.' in the *Bataviaasch Handelsblad* in 1885.²²⁷ He or she responded to a whistleblowing article in the *Indisch Vaderland*, which described rampant corruption encountered in Brebes (Tegal residency, Java). Interestingly, while the article in the *Indisch Vaderland* described more cases, C. focused on a case that revolved around the theft of Javanese cultural heritage.²²⁸ Typical of the corruption discourse of late nineteenth-century colonial Indonesia was the utilisation of the 'Multatullan' conception²²⁹ by those who wrote about corruption that emphasised the 'extortion' of the Javanese peasantry by Javanese colonial officials. The primary culprit, however, in this harrowing story of 'abuse of office' and theft of cultural heritage was a European lower-ranking colonial official (*controleur*).

The story goes as follows. Two Javanese visited the local *controleur* to ask for his help in a legal affair. The *controleur* promised to help but only on the condition that they would do something for him first: they were asked to bring him 'gifts' ('geschenken') in the form of all Javanese antiquities they could find in their settlement. The two did what they were asked – by what means they acquired the antiquities is left to the imagination – and came back to the *controleur*, who, after accepting

the antiquities showed the two Javanese the door without helping them. The two Javanese decided to take up the case with the superior of the *controleur*. This man – the local *assistent-resident* – apparently left both of them to their fate by 'covering up' ('in den doofpot stoppen') the whole affair.

The historian reading such articles is left with a number of questions. What was at stake here: was it the classical 'Multatullan' fate of the Javanese individuals involved to be extorted, or was the theft of Indonesian heritage a case of special interest? We are inclined towards the latter explanation, as for the *controleur* himself the antiquities were obviously of value. This, then, begs the question as to what the *controleur* aimed to do with the stolen heritage. Would it end up as a *souvenir* on his desk? Would it serve as a decoration in his residence? Would he perhaps give it as a gift to his bureaucratic superior on a special occasion? Or would he auction the objects, making a handsome profit out of it? And why was the *assistent-resident* so eager to 'cover up' the case? Was he perhaps involved in it? For the time being, such questions will remain unanswered but these topics would be interesting for future research.

Devil Wagon

Another, but different example that links corruption and heritage is provided by the case of the 'devil wagon'. In August 2023, Bambang Soesatyo, the speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly and a car enthusiast, announced a plan to bring a historic car back to Indonesia for regular display: a Benz Victoria Phaeton currently on display at the Louwman Museum in The Hague. He believed that the car held great importance as it represented

²²⁶ For an account of nineteenth-century liberalism in the Netherlands see Siep Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden. Het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat* (Amsterdam 1992). For the usurpation of 'wastelands' by the colonial state via the legal tool of the *domeinverklaring* in parts of the Indonesian archipelago under direct rule, see J. Slingenberg, *De staatsinrichting van Nederl.-Indië: Kortelijk toegelicht vooral met het oog op de agrarische en de arbeidswetgeving* (Haarlem 1924) 180-181.

²²⁷ 'Samarangsche brieven', *Bataviaasch Handelsblad* (15 April 1885).

²²⁸ 'Heritage' in this context is a somewhat anachronistic term. In C.'s letter it was referred to as 'Sculptures of the Buddha and other antiquities' ('Boedha-beeldjes en andere oudheden').

²²⁹ Multatuli, the pseudonym for Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820-1887), was a popular whistleblower and novelist who sought to 'expose' to the reading public in the Netherlands how Javanese colonial officials 'extorted' the Javanese peasantry while the colonial state looked the other way. Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* set the norm in how Dutch citizens, politicians and bureaucrats would conceptualise 'corruption' during the liberal era.



24. The Benz Phaeton in the Louwman Museum (2019).

‘a milestone in automotive and transportation history in Indonesia’.²³⁰ The automobile had been purchased by Susuhunan Pakubuwana X (1866-1939) in 1894. At the time, it had been the focus of public attention and, for years, the source of an obscure notion of anti-colonial pride. This artifact challenged colonial superiority because, as the story goes, the Susuhunan had bought the car a few years before the first Dutchman owned a motor car, in the Netherlands or the colony.

For the Susuhunan, becoming the first automobile owner was a political statement. As a traditional ruler who was ultimately subservient to the colonial state, he used symbolic displays of power, such as riding in his car while throwing coins as alms, to compensate for his political defeats. His glamorous royal lifestyle made him the

last great Javanese king, also according to Dutch commentators. As the Susuhunan’s intemperate habits cost the plight of his subjects, the wagon may contain hidden comments and insights into how corruption was understood and feared too.

The ordinary Javanese, who were held in awe, named the Susuhunan’s car *Kreta Setan* (*duivelswagen*, devil wagon) since they believed that invisible horses moved it.²³¹ For the anti-monarchical nationalist, Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo (1886-1943), the car might somehow appear as an actual devil as it represented a rotten institution (‘veroot pranatan’).²³² This pronouncement echoed a notion of corruption in the wider sense of misuse of power and perverted government. With a price tag of fl. 10,000 – the equivalent of 125 years’ income for a Javanese household – the car was only affordable to

²³⁰ Habib Harsono, ‘Ketum IMI ingin bawa pulang mobil Benz Victoria Phaeton dari Jerman milik Sultan Kasunanan Surakarta Pakubuwono X’, <https://www.lintasparlemen.com/> (25 August 2023), accessed 15 December 2023.

²³¹ F.F. Habnit, *Krèta sètan. ‘De duivelswagen’*. *Autopioniers van Insulinde* (The Hague 1977); Peter Mingaars et.al., *Indisch*

lexicon: Indische woorden in de Nederlandse literatuur: Een vervliegende woordenschat (‘t Goy-Houten 2005) 250.

²³² *Volksraad Handelingen 1919*, 5de Vergadering (26 June 1919) 72-73.

the king because he generated income from various sources based on his primordial privilege, not to mention forced labour and abstruse taxation. In the land of the Susuhunan, the myriad practices of extortion and traditional arbitrariness that Max Havelaar had condemned more than half a century earlier still continued. Tjipto also criticised the king for profiteering by working hand in hand with the European planters, which yielded enormous profits from the sweat of the ill-fated *kromo* (subjects). Illustrating the fate of the Susuhunan's subjects, Tjipto stated: '[I]t surprises me that they are still alive after all their blood has been constantly squeezed and sucked out by someone who drives a car every day between Tjojoedan and Kreteg Gantoeng.'²³³ The monarchy was extractive and predatory, it was already outdated in the age of trade unions and strikes. Tjipto therefore had no hesitation in proposing the abolition of the royal house and the retirement of the king.

In the wider context, a car exclusively owned by Indonesians often emerged as circumstantial evidence to suggest corrupt behaviour. For example, it was used to denounce the abuse of power by bupati (regent) Tjokrodjojo of Purworejo, who was suspected of pocketing a large sum of money from a sugar factory.²³⁴ Another good example is the corruption scandal within the huge nationalist organisation Sarekat Islam. The possession of a car had provided the communist Darsono with arguments to denounce embezzlement by the chairman and some elite members of the organisation.²³⁵ Tjipto and Darsono saw a car – which only a few privileged Indonesians could afford – as the epitome of a materialistic obsession and a strategy to perpetuate difference. Denouncing car ownership was helped to instil the ultimate fear of corruption in those heavily influenced by the Class Struggle. In this context, the Indonesian nationalists' main concern about corruption was that it testified to the embourgeoisement within Indonesian colonial society, contributing to the growing inequality among fellow Indonesians.

This case (and object) illustrates another element of corruption and heritage: how different groups in different places and at different times view objects of corruption differently. These and other findings make the study of heritage in relation to corruption in (post)colonial societies a fruitful avenue for further research, as we hope to have demonstrated here.

On the relevance of the Dutch-Indonesian relationship

In both two cases of corruption and heritage, the prominence of empire is evident as a context to understand their significance. The discussed objects of heritage – as in the case of the Susuhunan's automobile or the 'gifts' of Javanese antiquities – all note the intense asymmetrical relationship that emerged and was sustained within the Dutch empire. Their ongoing movements and 'thefts' within the circuits of the Dutch empire, ultimately ending up in the centre from their original colonial peripheries, note again the imminent and continuing relevance of empire despite already ending some 70 years ago. Just as resources, objects and persons were extracted and forced from the colonial periphery towards its metropolitan centres, knowledge and its production also followed these same circuits.

Perhaps one of Susan Legêne's strongest influences on our collaborative project has been her steadfast commitment to a broad understanding of (Dutch) political history and to continue a postcolonial dialogue of Dutch-Indonesian relationships. For the latter, her long and dedicated association with the History Department of UGM, through her extensive personal relationship with Bambang Purwanto and others in the department, is reflected in the emphasis on colonial and postcolonial relations as well as in the methodological framework of our project.

The research takes on the connections and asymmetries to understand how relationships

²³³ 'Het moet veranderen. Rechtvaardige vorst', *Panggoegah* (9 June 1919), as reported in: *Overzicht van de Inlandsche Pers* 1919, no. 24 (9 April 1919) 9-10.

²³⁴ Tirta Adhi Soerjo, 'Oleh-oleh dari pembuangan' [1910], in: Pramoedya Ananta Toer ed., *Sang Pemula* (Jakarta 1985) 267.

²³⁵ Darsono, 'Pimpinan Centraal Sarekat Islam', *Sinar Hindia* (7 October 1920) 1.

between heritage and corruption is maintained in the postcolonial period. Susan's unwavering decolonial perspectives and engagement with young Dutch and Indonesian scholars, as is reflected in the project too, point to the essential nature of symmetrical dialogue and fruitful knowledge production that continues the Dutch-Indonesian relationship but is subversive in its structure and decolonial in intent. In this regard, we hope for the continuation of this relationship into the future.

17. The future of ancestral remains: two case studies

Jos van Beurden, Sadiya Boonstra, Klaas Stutje & Wouter Veraart

Introduction

In 2006, Susan Legêne, as head of the Amsterdam Tropenmuseum's²³⁶ curatorial department, started a research project and discussion forum around ancestral remains²³⁷ in the Tropenmuseum. She thought it was high time not only to subject the history of ancestral remains to scientific investigation but also to break the silence around it and go public with the results of the research. An important outcome was the book *Physical anthropology reconsidered. Human remains at the Tropenmuseum*, written by David van Duuren.²³⁸ One remark in the book's policy advice forms the inspiration for this contribution. '[I]t is important to understand that restitution is not about restitution of [human] remains primarily, but about the restitution of authority over these remains.'²³⁹ This contribution focuses on two case studies in which access to, and the authority and power to decide on, the fate of ancestral remains are heavily contested: the excavation of a cemetery of enslaved people on St. Eustatius and the quest of the Moluccan-Dutch group Budaya Kita to repatriate 15 skulls to a Maluku island.

We use Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the 'contact zone' as a way to understand the dynamics at play in the two case studies which we took from the 'East' and 'West' of the Dutch colonial past. To Pratt, the 'contact zone' is a 'space of imperial encounters' which offers a framework to analyse relations between colonisers and colonised 'in terms of co-

presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.'²⁴⁰ Even though after the age of formal decolonisation, contact zones have changed considerably, we notice that, as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo argue, a refusal to appreciate systems of knowing, being, and creating of Indigenous communities, continues to influence the attitude of Western scholars and institutions.²⁴¹

Case 1: To whom belong the dead in the cemetery?

In 2021, in the context of planned extensions of airport facilities, Dutch and American archaeologists, affiliated to the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research, excavated a cemetery on the Caribbean island of St. Eustatius. Colonised by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, St. Eustatius is presently a special municipality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, known locally as Statia. At a construction site near the former *Gouden Rots* (Golden Rock) plantation the archaeologists found bodies of at least sixty-nine enslaved Africans, who had been put to work there since the end of the eighteenth century.²⁴² Some residents, however, protested against the excavations. Although the archaeologists had casually informed them about their work, the residents felt left out, the dead being ancestors of the living St. Eustatius population.

²³⁶ In this contribution, we use the name Tropenmuseum, as the institution was called in 2006. Since 2023, however, it has been called 'Wereldmuseum Amsterdam'.

²³⁷ In 2006, the term 'human remains' was common. At present the term 'ancestral remains' is increasingly used, as it is more respectful to communities of origin.

²³⁸ David van Duuren et al., *Physical anthropology reconsidered. Human remains at the Tropenmuseum*, bulletin 375 of the Royal Tropical Institute (Amsterdam 2007).

²³⁹ Ibid., 91.

²⁴⁰ Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes. Travel writing and transculturation* (London 2008) 18.

²⁴¹ See for example: Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality and modernity/rationality', *Cultural Studies* 21:2-3 (2007) 168-178; Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On decoloniality. Concepts, analytics, praxis* (London 2018).

²⁴² On 9 October 2024, the importance of this cemetery was further underlined when news came that UNESCO has nominated not only Gouden Rots but also the Godet Afrikan burial sites in St Eustatius as significant sites tied to the legacies of enslavement. See 'Afrikan Burial Grounds St. Eustatius recognized by UNESCO', 721News (2 October 2024), <https://www.721news.com/2024/10/afrikan-burial-grounds-st-eustatius-recognized-by-unesco> (accessed 21 October 2024).



25. Fort Oranje on St. Eustatius.

In response to the public outcry, an independent committee, the Statia Heritage Research Commission (SHRC) was established by mandate of the island's Executive Council. The SHRC reviewed the process and concluded in its final report that the time of 'the 'blind-eye' approach to conducting scientific research' was over. The archaeological research effort had failed to 'provide appropriate communication with the public and among key stakeholders to be inclusive and engaging in the representation of a community perspective'. The SHRC also criticised the island's government for 'systematic and administrative failure'. Future research proposals should be based 'on international standards for respectful practices'.²⁴³

Blurring categories, overcoming disciplinary divides

In the SHRC-report, the following observation caught our attention:

When the researcher declared they [the archaeologists] did try to have Town Hall meetings and school visits to the site, or tried to recruit

Caribbean specialists but could not, they are clearly showing they did not see the far more significant issues of emotional attachment and affinity for the human remains of St. Eustatius's ancestors, nor did they see the vital role that ancestors have for the surviving population of St. Eustatius today.²⁴⁴

This passage is indicative of the wider implications of a shift in the contact zone of focus and power towards the living population of St. Eustatius and their representatives. Taking care of the ancestors calls into question asymmetrical and dominant scientific and commercial ways of handling and researching ancestral remains. In this regard, the SHRC-report criticises the Western concept of ownership, with its emphasis on the right to exclude others from the use of one's property and the freedom of disposal and transfer of objects. It approvingly refers to the current Code of Ethics of the International Association for Caribbean Archaeology (IACA) and to the United States' NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) of 1990, as an 'international standard' of how one could offer 'a more conscious respect for ancestral remains'.²⁴⁵

In other words, a shift of focus and power towards local communities and the formerly colonised challenges dominant Western notions of property and the asymmetry in the contact zone. On an epistemic level, the 'concerns of science and academia' are placed in perspective, and the wishes, interests and forms of knowledge of 'living stakeholder communities' are prioritised, as the IACA Code of Ethics also underlines.²⁴⁶ On a legal-philosophical level, within the notion of 'ancestral remains' the traditional distinction between subject and object collapses, and opens a space in which legal notions of 'ownership' and 'property' are problematised or even profoundly transformed.²⁴⁷

²⁴³ Jay Haviser ed., *Report of the Statia Heritage Research Commission (SHRC) for the Government of St. Eustatius, Netherlands Caribbean* (10 January 2022) 3.

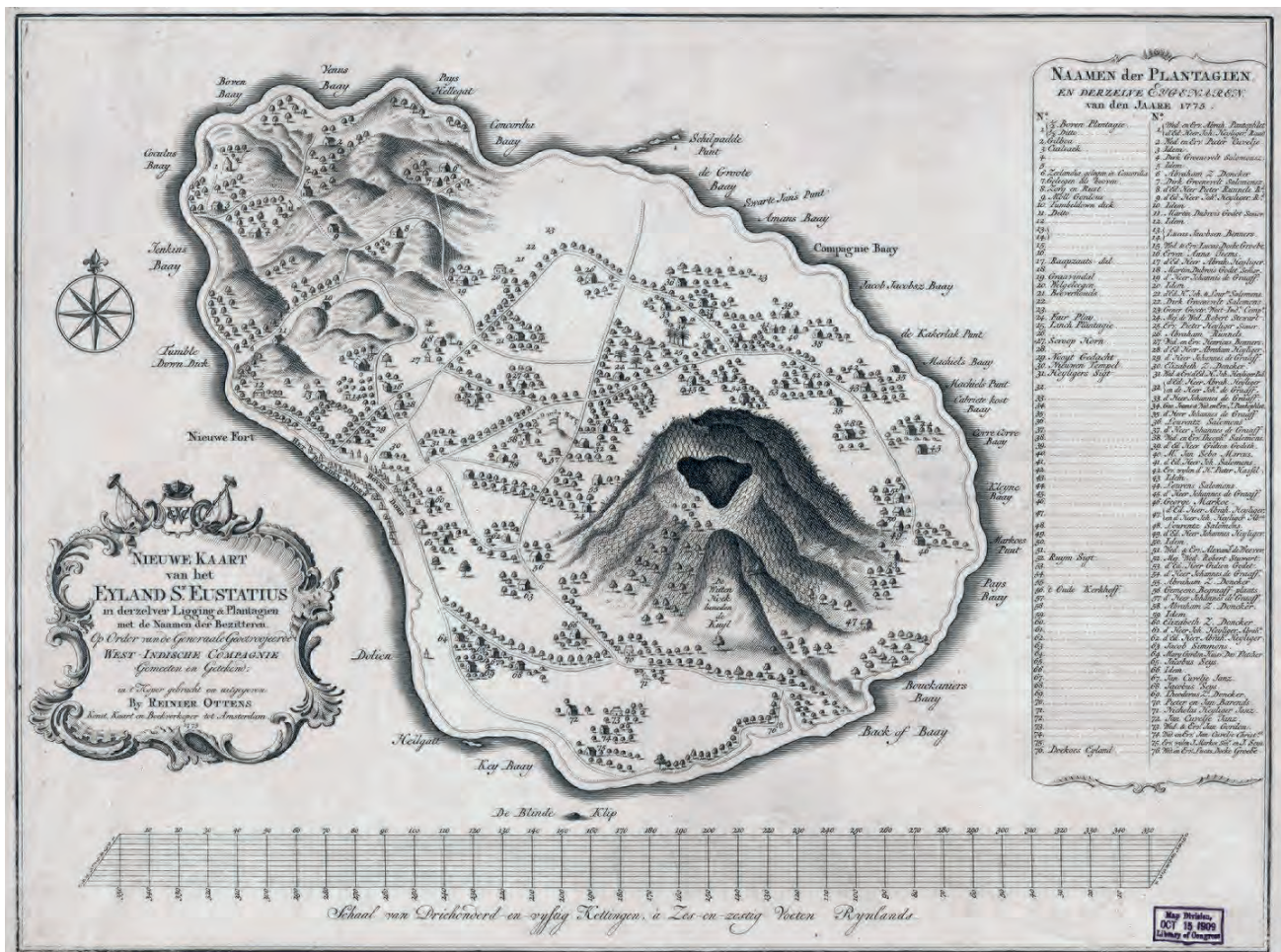
²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16, 28.

²⁴⁶ See Code of Ethics of the International Association for Caribbean Archaeology (IACA) 2022, Section 2.2: 'The wishes and needs of living stakeholder communities should be

prioritized above the concerns of science and academia.'

²⁴⁷ See Code of Ethics IACA 2022, section 2.1: 'Human remains should not be viewed or regarded as property save in practical applications for legal compliance, and should therefore never be bought and sold.' For an in-depth legal-theoretical discussion, see Marie-Sophie de Clippele, *Restes humains et patrimoine culturel. De quels droits?* (Limal 2023).



26. Reinier Ottens, Dutch map of St. Eustatius with plantations and their owners (1775).

In a certain way, the human body has always been a site in which the traditional Western distinction between subject and object reaches an impasse. We never knew and will never know whether we 'are' or 'have' the bodies we inhabit, which makes the history of colonial chattel slavery, in which human bodies were bought and sold as mere commodities, a dehumanising practice from its very beginning. Not accidentally, the French-Caribbean, decolonial scholar Malcom Ferdinand uses the verb 'inhabit' in an ecological sense, not only to overcome subject-object dichotomies between humans, but also to blur, or soften, other categorical divisions, such as between humans and non-humans, between ancestral remains and cultural objects, and between cultural heritage and the natural environment.²⁴⁸ Thus, a decolonial perspective on the pressing

matter of ancestral remains leads to a rethinking of the traditional, Western notion of 'ownership' in all directions and to more emphasis on 'guardianship'.

Moreover, while engaging with ancestral remains, and for that matter also ethnographic and other collections acquired in a colonial context, physical anthropological research and provenance research is too often naively presented as a value-free and positivist undertaking that enables a better understanding of remains and collections, and creates the necessary conditions for processes of restitution, redress, and even reconciliation. However, the scholarly disciplines of anthropology, ethnography, archaeology and (art) history, as well as curatorial practices developed to a great degree in the contact zone. As such, they have a long pre-history as colonial disciplines to

²⁴⁸ Malcom Ferdinand, *Decolonial ecology. Thinking from the Caribbean world* (Cambridge 2021).

‘discover’, appropriate, dissect, categorise, and ultimately master the sites, bodies, and material culture of the colonised populations. Historians and archaeologists may regard their work as being in service of overcoming and reconciling with a troubled colonial past, but may also be regarded as the latest representatives of a long line of investigative outsiders.

Case 2: To whom belong Moluccan skulls in a Dutch collection?²⁴⁹

In 2022, a Moluccan-Dutch group, Budaya Kita (‘Our Culture’ in Bahasa Indonesia), discovered that sixteen skulls from the Maluku Islands in Eastern Indonesia were taken for research to the Netherlands in the early twentieth century, with the promise of their return once the research was completed. Budaya Kita is a group of people without specific training in provenance research, but with a strong connection to their region of origin. Chairperson Menucha Latumaerissa came across an essay from 1917, in which Dutch anthropologist Johannes Pieter Kleiweg de Zwaan (1875-1971) wrote that he had received ‘sixteen skulls from a colonial health officer’.²⁵⁰ The anthropologist also mentioned the name of the village: Amtoefoe on the island of Yamdena, the largest of the Tanimbar Islands in the province of Maluku.

After Latumaerissa discovered the reference, he found that fifteen of these skulls are currently held in the anatomical historical Museum Vrolik of the Amsterdam Medical Centre. Budaya Kita contacted the village elders, who remembered that these skulls had been venerated in their original context on an elevation in a niche in a rock. They also stated that the Dutch had not fulfilled the promise of their return and wanted the skulls to be repatriated. Museum Vrolik supports their repatriation. Budaya Kita keeps looking for the sixteenth and other skulls. Their repatriation is scheduled for the end of 2024.

The case of the Amtoefoe-skulls shows that provenance research is not only a matter of academics and museum professionals but also of

communities of origin and connected diasporic communities. They miss their ancestors and strive to ensure that those who once took the skulls for research promising to return them once the research was finished, still fulfil their promise. Current researchers often do not sufficiently recognise their role and the value of information from communities of origin and diaspora-groups. The case also reveals changes in the contact zone. The actions of the village elders of Amtoefoe and the diaspora in the Netherlands slowly alter the asymmetrical power relations between a former coloniser and formerly colonised people.

Transferring responsibilities, overcoming divides with source and diasporic communities

The above cases help reflect on how provenance research is currently organised and what can be done to achieve (more) symmetry in the ‘contact zone’. The case of St. Eustatius shows that part of the tension between the American and European researchers on the one hand, and St. Eustatius’s communities on the other, roots in the scientific objectification of ancestral remains and the communities’ resistance against it. In the case of the repatriation efforts of Budaya Kita, the group resists the objectification of the bodily remains of the ancestors as museum and research objects by demanding their repatriation to the village from which they came where they can be rehumanised and properly honoured.

As a result of the continuing asymmetry in the ‘contact zone’ provenance research runs the risk to remain a matter solely of concern to Western scientists and institutions, as illustrated by the two cases. Programmes are conceived in the West, subjects are selected there, and they are subsidised on the terms of Western funders. However, there is increasing pressure from former colonies and diaspora groups to have a greater say in the organisation and content of provenance research programmes. No research about us without us, is what many source communities want. This is all

²⁴⁹ The information of this case study is from: Jos van Beurden, *The empty showcase syndrome. Tough questions about cultural heritage from colonial regions* (Amsterdam 2024), chapter 7.

²⁵⁰ Jan-Pieter Kleiweg de Zwaan, ‘Tanimbarschedels’, *Volkenkundige Opstellen - Mededeeling IX* (1917) 1.

the more true for provenance research of ancestral remains.

Western researchers need to understand processes of knowledge production, restitution, and repatriation as opportunities to rewrite dominant narratives constructed and perpetuated by the institutions of the former colonising powers. Even if the historical and social backgrounds of ancestral remains in Western institutions can no longer be uncovered and repatriation remains out of sight, they will provide possibilities to rewrite histories, *herstories*, and *theirstories* from a decolonial and intersectional perspective. The notion of social provenance history, where the trajectory of objects and human remains is followed not only through time, but also through a variety of social environments and regimes of signification, will be important here.

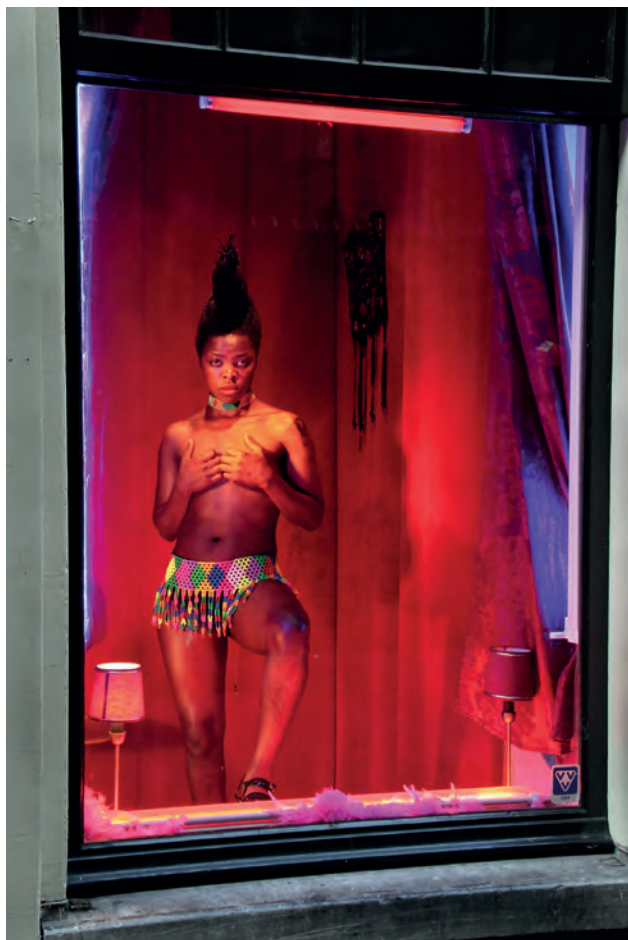
We plead for the overturn of the 'contact zone', for a paradigm shift which transfers much more decision-making power to local stake-holding communities and former colonies. Let them decide which collections should be researched, who will do it and which key questions need to be answered. Access to funding is also vital in this regard. Give source communities the control over the process,

without forgetting the responsibility of Western museums, archives, and other heritage institutions to know their own collections, enhance transparency of what their collections contain, and to facilitate access to the objects, ancestral remains and related archival documentation. The fact that Latumaerissa had to find his own way through the archives and was dependent on the museum institution's willingness to cooperate, *in casu* Museum Vrolik, should be a wake-up call.

In rewriting histories and placing objects and ancestral remains in their social provenance history, Susan Legêne has led the way. Resistance against the impact of ethnographic traditions and colonial thinking in the construction of difference and racialised colonial hierarchies runs as a red thread through her work. Legêne transformed the way museum professionals and academics are thinking about and dealing with ancestral remains today. 'The Colonial Theatre', part of the groundbreaking 'Eastward Bound!' exhibition (2003) at the Tropenmuseum, disrupted the practice of staging historical archetypes to address the anonymous categorisation and representation of people. Now almost two decades later, our two case studies show that there is still a world to win.

18. Publieke vrouwen?

Pim Westerkamp & Annemarie de Wildt



27. Being (T)here Amsterdam IV (2009). Documentatie van interventie, red light district, Amsterdam © Zanele Muholi

Veel museale collecties bestaan uit verbeeldingen van menselijke lichamen, vastgelegd op schilderijen, tekeningen, foto's, of in houten, stenen, bronzen of porseleinen beelden. Een groot deel van deze tot kunst gemaakte lichamen was al sinds het begin van de jaartelling voornamelijk bestemd voor de elite. Veel van die kunst kwam uiteindelijk in musea

terecht, waar het de bezoekers op verschillende manieren raakt.

Tegenwoordig kijkt de samenleving op nieuwe manieren naar deze kunst door veranderende historische opvattingen. Musea zien steeds meer onder ogen hoe bevooroordeeld en eenzijdig hun presentaties en collecties zijn (geweest). Vanaf de jaren 1980 ontmaskerden de Guerrilla Girls en andere feministische critici de *male gaze*. Queer activisten hekelen de heteronormativiteit van musea en postkoloniale activisten de manier waarop objecten verworven zijn en de westerse blik waarmee ze beschreven zijn, zoals ook Susan Legêne deed in de publicatie *Colonial collections revisited*.²⁵¹

Aan de hand van twee musea kijken we hoe er in het verleden om is gegaan met (vrouwen) lichamen, die mogelijk zonder instemming of tegen hun wil vereeuwigd zijn en nu in museale collecties terecht zijn gekomen; lichamen die gemarginaliseerd werden vanwege een sociale of etnische status. Denk aan de afbeeldingen van de Surinamers en Indonesiërs, die in levenden lijve geëxposeerd werden op de Internationale Koloniale en Uitvoerhandel Tentoonstelling in Amsterdam van 1883, een prostituee gefotografeerd achter het raam op de Amsterdamse Wallen, of een *ronggeng* of 'dansmeid', vastgelegd door Europeanen in koloniaal Indonesië. Hoe gaan musea om met deze beelden en het miskennen van *agency* van de geportretteerden? Soms is het niet tonen een keuze. Timo Demollin besloot in *The presence of absence* (Stedelijk Museum, 2020) lege *passe-partouts* te tonen zonder de ansichtkaarten van 1883.²⁵²

Publieke vrouwen is de ouderwetse benaming van vrouwen, die tegenwoordig meestal sekswerkers genoemd worden. Vrouwen die voor geld seks

het Amsterdam Museum deze beelden en foto's wel te tonen in de expositie 'De Gouden Koets'. Zie ook: Inez Blanca van der Scheer e.a., 'Polyphonic curation. Looking back and ahead to the colonial past at the Amsterdam Museum', in: Eliza Steinbock and Hester Dibbitts ed., *The critical visitor. Changing heritage practices* (Amsterdam 2024) 125-157.

²⁵¹ Susan Legêne, 'Enlightenment, empathy, retreat. The cultural heritage of the Ethische Politiek', in: Pieter ter Keurs ed., *Colonial collections revisited* (Leiden 2007) 220-245.

²⁵² 'Timo Demollin', Stedelijk Museum (2 September 2020), <https://www.stedelijk.nl/nl/digdieper/timo-demollin> (geraadpleegd 1 November 2024). Na uitvoerig debat besloot

aanbieden, en daarom door iedereen blijkbaar ongegeneerd bekeken mogen worden. De stickers 'fotografie verboden' helpen niet veel op de Amsterdamse Wallen, waar dagelijks drommen toeristen langs de ramen trekken. Sinds de jaren zestig van de twintigste eeuw veranderde de geheimzinnige rosse buurt in een toeristenattractie waar seks handelswaar is.

In de exposities *Liefde te Koop* (2002) en *The Hoerengracht* (2010) toonde het Amsterdam Museum kunstwerken en documentaire foto's van vrouwen (en een enkele man) die met seks hun geld verdienen. De asymmetrische machtsrelaties in sekswerk, zowel wat betreft gender, klasse en etniciteit, zijn niet altijd zichtbaar in de beelden van het werk en de werkomgeving. Zo zijn er nauwelijks foto's of kunstwerken die de harde realiteit van mensenhandel tonen. In beide tentoonstellingen werkte het Amsterdam Museum nauw samen met organisaties van sekswerkers, die deze exposities in een stadsmuseum verwelkomden als een manier om de vele perspectieven op hun werk te tonen. Met onder andere werk van Cor Jaring, die Parijse Leen achter haar raam fotografeerde, en een serie van Arnold Karskens over aan heroïne verslaafde sekswerkers, toonde het museum sekswerk als (soms noodgedwongen) arbeid. Uitzonderlijk vanwege de focus op de ongelijke machtsverhoudingen is het schilderij 'Slachtoffer van de ellende' van Marie de Roode-Heijermans uit 1896, waarop een oudere man zich aankleedt, terwijl een jong naakt meisje beschaamd wegstijgt van de neergelegde bankbiljetten. Het werk werd na protesten verwijderd van de Internationale Expositie in Brussel in 1897, omdat het 'immoreel' en 'schaamteloos' zou zijn.²⁵³ Voor het Amsterdam Museum was dit werk (collectie Stedelijk Museum) juist een waardevolle

vrouwelijke blik op prostitutie, die sterk afweek van dergelijke schilderijen en tekeningen van de mannelijke kunstenaars van het eind van de negentiende eeuw.²⁵⁴

De video-installatie *How much?* (1989) waar bezoekers vanachter een raam de (gefilmde) blikken en opmerkingen van langlopende mannen kunnen ervaren, is ook het werk van twee vrouwen: kunstenaar Marieken Verheyen die met een voormalig sekswerker samenwerkte om deze beelden (clandestien) te kunnen vastleggen. Het door Susan Legêne begeleide onderzoek *Framing Prostitution* analyseerde hoe bezoekers dit kunstwerk ervoeren.²⁵⁵ Voor de bezoekers was de confrontatie met de opdringerige blikken van mannen en hun constante vraag 'How much?' een schokkende ervaring. Interessant was dat de sekswerkers die meededen met het onderzoek, het werk verwierpen als onrealistisch, omdat er in de video-installatie geen sprake was van agency van de sekswerker. Ze vertelden dat ze door wegstijgen of juist uitnodigend kijken, zelf meester van de situatie kunnen blijven.

Hoe gaat het Wereldmuseum om met afbeeldingen en terminologie voor 'sekswerkers' en is dat in de context van Indonesië wel een juiste term? Hoe werden Javaanse vrouwen, die in publieke ruimtes dansten voor geld, op straat of feesten, genoemd en beschreven?

Sinds de achttiende eeuw komen ze voor in reisverhalen of etnografische beschrijvingen van mannelijke Europeanen en worden deze vrouwen 'danshoeren' (François Valentijn, 1726²⁵⁶), *ronging* (krant, 1744²⁵⁷), *ronggeng* en *lichtekooi* (Abraham Jacob van der Aa, 1846²⁵⁸) en *ontuchtige vrouwen* en *dansmeiden* (Ritter, 1855²⁵⁹) genoemd. Wat valt er naast uit benamingen en de beschrijvingen op te maken? Etymologisch is *hoer* verwant met

²⁵³ Marian Sterckx, 'The Heijermans case. Censorship of the female (artist's) gaze in fin-de-siècle Brussels', in: L. Dixon & G.P. Weisberg ed., *Making waves. Crosscurrents in the study of nineteenth-century art* (Turnhout 2019) 115-123.

²⁵⁴ Nienke Bakker e.a., *Splendours and miseries. Images of prostitution in France, 1850-1910* (Parijs 2016).

²⁵⁵ In 2015-2017 verrichtte Annemarie de Wildt dit onderzoek onder supervisie van Susan Legêne in het kader van het programma Museumbeurzen. Zie: 'Contact. Framing prostitution in a city museum', in Simon Knell ed., *The*

contemporary museum. Shaping museums for the global now (Abingdon 2019) 185-201.

²⁵⁶ F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, dl. III (Den Haag 1858) 424, 438, 439, 441, 442.

²⁵⁷ 'Samarang, den 5. October', *Bataviase nouvelles* (12 oktober 1744).

²⁵⁸ A.J. van der Aa, *Nederlandsch Oost-Indië*, dl. I (Amsterdam 1846) 178-179.

²⁵⁹ W.L. Ritter, *Java: toneelen uit het leven. Karakterschetsen en kleederdragten van Java's bewoners* ('s-Gravenhage 1855) 122, 211.



28. Foto van een danseres met gamelanorkest (ca. 1875).

overspel en *ontuchtig* met 'onkuisheid en het zich niet onthouden van zinnelijk genot'.²⁶⁰ Voor Van der Aa zijn de namen *ronggeng* en *lichtekooi* synoniem. Bij de term *lichtekooi* komt het lichamelijke naar voren, want 'kooi' verwijst naar het vrouwelijke geslachtsdeel. Het gaat dus niet alleen om de benaming van de vrouwen, maar ook om hun lichamen. Van der Aa omschrijft hun lichaamsbewegingen als 'ruw, lomp en gewrongen' en 'onnatuurlijk', terwijl de lichamen voor Ritter 'lenig' zijn en zich in allerlei bochten kunnen buigen. Vooral de handen zijn heel soepel, een bekende stereotyperende beschrijving. De zang van de vrouwen was een derde aspect, waarop commentaar kwam: 'schel, bars en wanklinkend' volgens Van der Aa en 'heesch' volgens Ritter. De vrouwen zijn afkomstig 'van de laagste klasse' (Van der Aa). Tot slot associëren Ritter en Van der Aa het optreden van deze vrouwen met andere vormen van twijfelachtig

tijdverdrijf, zoals opiumgebruik, hanengevechten en dobbelen. Al die benamingen, de beschrijvingen van lichaam en stem, hun sociale positie en hun rol in tijdverdrijf, wijzen op zowel fascinatie als afkeur en dedain en zetten de dansende vrouwen weg als wellustig, sensueel en onbeschaafd. Deze citaten weerspiegelen koloniale visies: de emotionele Javaan tegenover de rationele Europeaan.

Vanaf de jaren zestig van de negentiende eeuw legden (professionele) fotografen de leefomgeving in Indonesië vast en ook hier waren dansende vrouwen in publieke ruimtes of studio's geregeld het onderwerp. Bij een groot aantal van de foto's had de vrouw in kwestie geen keus of ze wel of niet op de foto wilde. Het ongemak straalt er vaak vanaf. Opvallend is dat een zestal van deze beelden vrouwen toont, die hun danssjerp voor het gezicht houden. Duidt dit op bescheidenheid, schaamte, geheimzinnigheid of woede? We weten het helaas niet.

²⁶⁰ 'Hoer' en 'Ontuchtig', etymologiebank.nl, <https://etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/hoer1> en <https://www.>

etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/ontucht (geraadpleegd 1 november 2024).

Terug nu naar de terminologie. De vrouwen worden in de objectbeschrijvingen aangeduid als vrouw, danseres, dansmeisje of -meid, publieke danseres of -vrouw, beroepsdanseres, straatdanseres, *tandak*-danseres, *ronggeng*, *taledhek* en *nayuk*.²⁶¹ Dit taalgebruik blijft bovengenoemde citaten en visies ondersteunen en daarmee een koloniaal discours handhaven. Of niet? Tegenwoordig treden deze danseressen nog steeds op tijdens Javaanse bruiloften en dansen met mannelijke gasten. Ze worden *tayub* of *taledhek* genoemd.²⁶² Hoe kunnen we beter recht doen aan deze vrouwen, zowel in de objectbeschrijvingen als in de verhalen die de musea vertellen, zonder te vervallen in de ongemakkelijke en vernederende terminologie van het verleden? Tegenwoordig kunnen zij niet langer als exotisch of erotisch omschreven worden. Tegelijkertijd willen we ze ook niet louter wegzetten als slachtoffer. Is er sprake van zeggenschap en veerkracht van deze vrouwen, die de musea kunnen belichten? Op welke manier kunnen de vrouwen respect krijgen en hoe kunnen we de museumbezoeker uitnodigen hierover na te denken?

Woorden doen ertoe, zoals gesteld wordt in de gelijknamige publicatie van het Wereldmuseum uit 2018.²⁶³ Voor de Indonesische vrouwen lijkt 'danseres' het beste woord; een veilige optie, omdat het niet zeker is of ze ook een sekswerker is. Voor Nederlandse vrouwen, die geld verdienen met seks, lijkt sekswerker de beste optie. Dit kan echter versluieren dat er soms sprake is van dwang. Het veranderen van museale woorden en termen kan ook de historische context veronachtzamen. Een aanduiding als sekswerker voor het meisje op het bovengenoemde schilderij 'Slachtoffer van de ellende' suggereert meer *agency* dan een jonge vrouw in haar omstandigheden had. Het (ook) toegankelijk houden van historische termen in museumregistraties, waarborgt de aandacht voor de veranderende betekenissen en inzicht in racistisch en seksistisch woordgebruik in het verleden. Tegenwoordig is het gebruikelijk om voor het

publiek anachronistische termen, zoals het N-woord, te gebruiken om herhaling van de ongelijkheid of de neerbuigendheid van het verleden te vermijden.

Maar beelden doen er ook toe. Een kunstwerk kan toeschouwers aan het denken zetten over de implicaties van een beeld. We kozen het indrukwekkende geënceneerde 'zelfportret' van Zanele Muholi om te filosoferen over de verbeelding van 'publieke' vrouwen in de collecties en exposities van het Amsterdam Museum en Wereldmuseum en de manier waarop zij daar mee omgaan.

De Zuid-Afrikaanse non-binaire kunstenaar Zanele Muholi (Umlazi, Durban, 1972) positioneert zichzelf als visueel activist. Hen pakt met hun foto's wél de *agency* over beelden terug. Muholis fotografische oeuvre is een gevoelig en geestig onderzoek naar representaties van de (Zuid-Afrikaanse) LGBTQI-identiteit. De fotoserie *Being (T) here, Amsterdam* documenteert een interventie die Zanele Muholi uitvoerde op de Wallen in Amsterdam tijdens hun Thami Mnyele Foundation Residency in 2009. Zaneles houding van een vrouw achter een raam die haar borsten bedenkt, ondergraaft de stereotiepe verbeelding van Amsterdamse sekswerkers en de lange etnografische traditie van geseksualiseerde 'exotische' vrouwenportretten. Zanele maakt het vaak onderhuidse exotisme binnen sekswerk zichtbaar met hun *umutsha* (een taillieriem met isiZulu-kralen). Hen stelt de colonial gaze ter discussie, maar Zaneles krachtige blik weerstaat ook de male gaze in de voornamelijk heteroseksuele wereld van de 'rosse buurt'. De verwarring die hen daarmee schept bij kijkers, geeft ook ruimte voor helderheid en inzicht in wat beelden teweeg kunnen brengen en laat mensen nadenken over de gecompliceerde verhalen die erachter schuilgaan.

²⁶¹ Mogelijk is hier een foute notering gemaakt en moet het *nayub* of *tayub* zijn.

²⁶² Septa Suryanto, Mugijatna en Susanto, 'Deconstruction of the symbolic meaning of Tayub Sragen dance', *Social Values & Society* 1:3 (2019) 13-15.

²⁶³ Wayne Modest en Robin Lelijveld ed., *Woorden doen ertoe. Een incomplete gids voor woordkeuze binnen de culturele sector* (Amsterdam 2018).

19. Dutch universities' responses to Gaza and White Innocence

Pepijn Brandon and Gloria Wekker

From the final months of 2023, Dutch universities like their counterparts elsewhere in Europe and the US saw serious stand-offs between university administrators, students and staff on how to respond to the Israeli onslaught on Gaza. University outlets and national news media have reported extensively on what many considered to amount to serious limits to academic freedom when addressing the plight of the Palestinians.²⁶⁴ With the benefit of hindsight, we argue that internal strife over the limits of academic freedom was merely a precursor to direct government interventions targeting campus protests that followed in 2024 and 2025, particularly in the US. In line with Susan Legêne's career-spanning commitment to socially engaged scholarship and critical study of the legacies of colonialism, in this essay we will attempt to provide a critical analysis of the earliest official university responses to the Gaza massacre as a form of white innocence. We focus our analysis on the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) and Utrecht University (UU) because of our affiliations, but we believe that the elements that we highlight in the responses by the boards of these universities were in line with those of most other Dutch academic institutions. At the time of writing this essay, the new wave of atrocities that started on 7 October 2023 is still ongoing. This short and by no means comprehensive essay focuses solely on university administrators' initial responses from October - December 2023. For our analysis, we have chosen to utilize published statements, rather than relying on our experience of organizing and participating in teach-ins or private communication with university administrators. This provides a basis for our critique that is more traceable. During the period that we concentrate on, even the question whether Israel's conduct in Gaza could be seen as



29. Impromptu library, created during student and staff encampment at the University of Amsterdam on 6 May 2024. Refaat Alareer was a scholar, writer and poet from Gaza, who became famous for his poem "If I must die". He was killed by an Israeli airstrike on 6 December 2023.

a form of genocide was often deemed "polarizing" and "unacademic" by university administrators. Since that time the seemingly never-ending list of atrocities committed against Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, successive rulings by the ICJ and the ICC, the student encampments and the response to them by university administrators and far-right governments, and the cries of warning of an

²⁶⁴ 'Universiteiten moeten discussie over de oorlog in Gaza mogelijk maken', *Trouw* (20 November 2023); Peter Breedveld, 'Israël vs Palestina. Kun je daar wel veilig over debatteren?', *Ad*

Valvas (December 2023/January 2024); Margreet Fogteloo and Ruben Stift, 'Academisch mijnenveld', *De Groene Amsterdammer* (13 December 2023).

ever-increasing list of human rights organizations, genocide scholars and other specialists have continued to shift the terms of intellectual debate without this leading to a fundamental change in policies by universities or other major institutions. Nevertheless, or perhaps rather precisely because of this, we believe that these first responses, at a moment when the contours of the horror about to unfold were already clear to those willing to look, are symptomatic of deeper structural patterns that require analysis.

Neutrality, bothsidesism, securitization and diversity

Official statements by Dutch universities came quickly after October 7.²⁶⁵ Despite their shortness and bland managerial tone, these statements did illustrate some important patterns that would be reproduced in later university communications. The first is to frame responses within the university community as primarily driven by emotions and concerns, rather than by a scholarly analysis of the unfolding events and their historical context. This aversion from engaging with the pressing issues in a scholarly way dovetails with an all-pervasive, dominant commitment to (purported) neutrality. A second feature of these statements is a firm commitment to what has been termed 'bothsidesism'.²⁶⁶ Bothsidesism can be defined as an understanding of events in Israël/Palestine as the outcome of a clash of two ethnic or religious groups, rather than a situation of long-lasting oppression creating severe power imbalances between the Israeli state and Palestinians. Additionally, a noticeable feature of the UU and VU statements is that they concentrated all responsibility for action

by universities on the issue of the safety and security of university space. This, again, was thought to contribute to the much desired neutrality.

Statements of the VU and UU made in late October, when massive bombing and Israeli ground operations had already evicted over one million Palestinians from the North of Gaza, contained these same features but amplified the message that the main challenge for universities was to prevent unrest on campus. Official university statements stuck closely to the parameters set in early October, while shifting the responsibilities of the university from one of emotional care to one of maintaining the peace – within the university community, that is. On 20 October, the VU published a statement saying: 'The situation in Israel and the Palestinian regions has a long, complex history and is highly polarized.' Rather than continuing with the challenges for academia to provide context, clarity, and intellectual guidance in such difficult circumstances, the statement proceeded with the following call focused solely on the internal life of the university: '[W]e believe it is very important not to drive [sic] further polarization. ... We can and may disagree with each other but should accept each other with respect and dignity in all our diversity.'²⁶⁷ Four days later, the Executive Board of UU issued a statement with similar content: 'We ... urgently appeal to our entire community to maintain peace and unity, with attention and respect for each other.'²⁶⁸

Together, these statements can be characterized as stressing the need for emotional containment among students and employees, an emotional requirement strictly situated within the institution, while turning away from universities' core business: intellectual labor to make sense of a world event with major implications. Meanwhile, the statements were carefully drafted to balance the language of

²⁶⁵ Utrecht University, 'Message in response to the situation in Israel and the Gaza strip' (9 October 2023) <https://students.uu.nl/en/news/message-in-response-to-the-situation-in-israel-and-the-gaza-strip>; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 'Concerning situation Israel and Palestinian regions' (10 October 2023), <https://vu.nl/en/news/2023/concerning-situation-israel-and-palestinian-regions> (both accessed 20 December 2023).

²⁶⁶ Anja Meulenbelt, *Nooit meer is nu. Over Israëls kolonialisme en Palestijns verzet* (Amsterdam 2024).

²⁶⁷ VU, 'Concerns around the situation Israel and Palestinian regions/update' (20 October 2023) <https://vu.nl/en/news/2023/concerns-around-the-situation-israel-and-palestinian-regions-update> (accessed 10 January 2024).

²⁶⁸ UU, 'Concern about the situation in Israel and the Palestinian Territories' (24 October 2023) <https://www.uu.nl/en/news/concern-about-the-situation-in-israel-and-the-palestinian-territories> (accessed 10 January 2024).

diversity and respect for a multiplicity of viewpoints to that of neutrality, interpreted as the purported absence of any recognizable viewpoint from the side of the institution's official representatives.

Inequal realities behind the language of neutrality

To support teaching staff in the aim of 'maintaining peace and unity' in the classroom, Utrecht's message contained a link to educational guidelines produced by TerInfo, a project founded by Utrecht professor and terrorism expert Beatrice de Graaf, intended to 'aid [secondary] schools in talking about terrorism, political violence, and extreme societal events'. These same guidelines were also initially included as the key reference by the VU crisis team in its message to teaching staff but were later removed. One loaded choice made in these guidelines was to pick 'terrorism' as the overarching framework in determining classroom responses to a situation that many within the university approach from a framework of geopolitics; human rights; colonial occupation and (sometimes non-violent, sometimes violent) resistance; war crimes; or social justice and race. Furthermore, in the context of Europe and the US, since 9/11 discourses around terrorism, especially in relation to the Middle East, are consistently coupled to political Islam. In the context of Gaza, the chosen framing worked against the stated aims of neutrality by designating the Hamas attacks as the only legitimate starting point of the debate, overriding decades-long state violence by Israel towards Palestinians. This far-from-neutral framing is also made clear by the introduction to the TerInfo guidelines:

On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas fired hundreds of rockets from the Gaza strip at various aims in Israel. Hamas members also started an attack on festival participants in the South of Israel, executed Israeli

citizens and kidnapped tens of women and children. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu called this 'a war against Israel' and announced a state of war. Israel responded with hundreds of airstrikes and attacks with ground troops on the Gaza strip.²⁶⁹

This is an updated version of the introduction from early November 2023. An earlier version merely stated that Netanyahu had promised to 'strike back hard' after 7 October, at a time when the Israeli cabinet had already installed a complete siege of Gaza that included depriving the civilian population of water and electricity and at which Israeli government ministers and army commanders had already made statements that would later be included in the ICJ case as proof of genocidal intent.²⁷⁰

The TerInfo guidelines are revealing because they show the extent to which the 'bothsidesism' embraced by universities is in fact far from neutral. Furthermore, by sidelining analyses starting from geopolitics and the colonial and racist nature of the Israeli state, university statements effectively embraced a reading of events that prioritized the language of inter-ethnic conflict. Within that framework, it was easy for the fear of 'polarization' within universities in practice to become a question of managing diversity – especially in relation to real and perceived tensions between students of Palestinian, Arab or Islamic and Jewish backgrounds.

Making sense of the connections

How can we make sense of the universities' statements and acts, and more pointedly, which connections between dominant thought on the Israel-Gaza war and white innocence can be made? By white innocence we mean the dominant Dutch attitude regarding race, based on four hundred years of Dutch colonial rule, which reflects the 'cultural archive' and is observable in ideas, affects

²⁶⁹ TerInfo, 'Lesbrief: Hoe bespreek je het Israëlisch-Palestijnse conflict?', <https://ter-info.nl/hoe-bespreek-je-het-israelisch-palestijns-conflict/> (accessed 10 January 2024).

²⁷⁰ For the statements and their timing, see the database

gathered and regularly updated by Law for Palestine, <https://law4palestine.org/law-for-palestine-releases-database-with-500-instances-of-israeli-incitement-to-genocide-continuously-updated/> (accessed 3 April 2025).

and actions.²⁷¹ The analysis that follows takes as its starting point that Israeli state policies against the Palestinians and Palestinian resistance to these policies, both violent and non-violent, should be seen in the context of the long history of Western colonialism in the region and beyond.²⁷² It also takes into account the longstanding connections between Dutch academia and Israeli universities complicit in Israeli occupation and apartheid.²⁷³ Within these parameters, for university boards to posit themselves as neutral arbiters in a conflict driven by emotions of two groups of ethnic “others” that threatens the feelings of safety within Dutch institutions, reflects certain blind spots that resonate deeply with Dutch colonial history and its legacies.

In her 2010 book *Spiegelreflex*, Susan Legêne gave a clarion call by stating that Dutch culture has in many respects developed like a colonial culture and that the traces of this coloniality are observable in our contemporary society.²⁷⁴ She was not just writing about the formal colonial period of four hundred years in ‘Our Indies’, Indonesia, or in the Dutch Caribbean colonies but about the current state of the Netherlands. Already in her PhD thesis, she had set her sights on the Dutch culture of imperialism, while placing it in the context of European imperialism.²⁷⁵ She heralded a critical, self-reflexive turn in the study of Dutch history, while simultaneously bringing the European colonial project, in its broadest sense, into a single analytical field with the Netherlands. In doing so, she facilitated the uncovering of a Dutch imperial culture, which many of her colleagues had assumed did not exist.

Let us note that all the transformations proposed by Susan Legêne take place against a deeply colonial backdrop in the discipline of history, which has a significant influence on dominant thought in society. It is not only the fact that for the most part the colonies in the East and the West were studied in

isolation from each other, and from developments in the Netherlands; it is also how the (former) colonies were studied. The key concept of the plural society for Suriname, for instance, championed by Surinamese Dutch historian and sociologist Rudolf van Lier, resulted in a vertical approach to the different population groups. People were supposed to live and die within the confines of their ethnic group, not forming meaningful connections to members of other groups.²⁷⁶ Thus, the emphasis has always been on managing the interactions between disparate groups and cultures, Native Surinamese, Europeans, Creoles, Maroons, Hindustani, Javanese etc., while hardly any attention was paid to a shared culture that was possibly formed by and among groups. Central to this conglomeration is the metropolitan need, purportedly acting as a neutral force without its own specific interests on the ground, to keep these population groups apart, to control them, and to maintain ‘peace’ and ‘harmony’.

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and the Jewish and Palestinian Other Colonial strategies of ‘managing diversity’, however, always relied heavily on creating implicit and explicit hierarchies among the racialized Others. With the dominant Dutch assessment of the Israel-Gaza war in mind, we need to examine the Dutch ‘cultural archive’ for what it contains regarding the representations of Jews, on the one hand, and Palestinians, on the other. While a full analysis of this complex issue is not possible here, we argue that a quasi-automatic agreement with the acts of Israel is dominant, which contrasts with the quasi-automatic dismissal of the actions of Palestinians. The disparate formal and informal reactions to the appearance and showcasing of the Israeli and the Palestinian flags, the disparate reactions to public demonstrations in favor of one or the other party, are indicative of this chasm.

²⁷¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London 1993); Gloria Wekker, *White innocence. Paradoxes of colonialism and race* (Amsterdam 2018).

²⁷² For a powerful recent restatement, see Rashid Khalidi, *The hundred years’ war on Palestine. A history of settler colonialism and resistance, 1917-2017* (New York 2020).

²⁷³ Maya Wind, *Towers of ivory and steel. How Israeli universities deny Palestinian freedom* (London and New York 2023).

²⁷⁴ Susan Legêne, *Spiegelreflex. Culturele sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam 2010).

²⁷⁵ Susan Legêne, *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel. Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de negentiende-eeuwse cultuur van het imperialisme* (Amsterdam 1998).

²⁷⁶ Rudolf van Lier, *Samenleving in een grensgebied. Een sociaal-historische studie van de maatschappij in Suriname* (Den Haag 1949).

Racialization is noteworthy as a cultural archival gesture, organizing the distance felt toward particular groups in the population, but this distance may change over time, growing or waning. Jews have simultaneously and consecutively been regarded as belonging to the Dutch nation and being external to the Dutch nation, while Palestinians are not granted this position of Dutchness. Today, Jewish staff and students are collectively imagined as exceptional, smart, talented, affluent, Western, morally elevated, and, simultaneously, eternal victims. Such stereotypes, both those framed positively and those framed negatively and themselves heavily laden with antisemitic connotations, all make it almost impossible in the post-1945 West to acknowledge instances in which a self-professed Jewish state commits atrocious war crimes. This contradictory set of ascribed characteristics is filtered through (un)conscious feelings of white Dutch guilt toward Jews because of the Holocaust. As many have noted before, coupling the acceptance of European guilt for the Holocaust to unconditional support for the actions of the state of Israel creates a Gordian knot where condemning antisemitism seems to become premised on accepting the oppression of the Palestinians.²⁷⁷ In university responses to Gaza, we note that a silent but powerful construction is operative where purportedly Jewish, but effectively only pro-Israeli Jewish staff and students need to feel safe and have their viewpoints acknowledged. At the same time, their Palestinians or Arab counterparts are considered dangerous, needing to be restrained and securitized. Pro-Israeli voices on campus further fueled this inequality by blatantly conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism and equating (their) safety with the absence of dissent.²⁷⁸ Basing themselves on similarly motivated feelings of unsafety among pro-Israeli Jewish students and staff, university boards sometimes resorted to quite extreme measures to suppress opposition against Israel on campus, including banning Palestinian

insignia as somehow inherently offensive for Jews. This took its most absurd proportions at Leiden's The Hague campus, where a suppressed teach-in for Palestine ended in university personnel chasing speakers and organizers into the city center.²⁷⁹

While mainstream attitudes towards Jews are shaped by a deeply problematic and racializing form of philosemitism, strong negative imagery is in place about people of Middle Eastern or North African descent. For example, the panic that any pro-Palestinian activity on campus would bring with it the risk of extreme violence can only be understood in relationship to deeply entrenched islamophobia. Strong gendered patterns are visible here. One of the most prominent reactions to Middle Eastern men, especially after 9/11, is that they are violent, criminal, and prone to terrorism. Women of this background are predominantly represented as veiled or burqa'd, are violently treated and policed by their husbands and sons, are pitiful and not emancipated. What unites the official university language about each of these groups – pro-Israeli Jews, Arab men and women – is the assumption that their sympathies regarding Israel and Palestine are completely ethnically determined and purely emotional in nature, steered by culturally if not biologically innate and unchangeable preferences and biases. The disparate imperial messages spread about Jews and Palestinians in popular culture, in government policy and in media content, infuse universities' understandings and utterances, and have not been deconstructed.

Post-script

The importance of understanding such disparities for decoding Dutch politics, especially in the context of the global resurgence of the far-right at the heart of power, was underscored by Geert Wilders' PVV's November 2023 election victory. The PVV is

²⁷⁷ Alana Lentin, *Why race still matters* (Cambridge and Medford, MA 2020). For an analysis that starts from the current context, see Pankaj Mishra, *The world after Gaza* (London 2025), and for a comment that takes Jewish-Dutch experience as its point of departure, see Pepijn Brandon, 'Witte schuld in Gaza', *Hollands Maandblad* 24:11 (2024) 10-13.

²⁷⁸ Mirjam van Praag et al., 'Universiteit is voor Joden nu erg

onveilig; elke nuance ontbreekt', *NRC Handelsblad* (16 January 2023).

²⁷⁹ Mark Reid and Tamar Tros, 'Hoe een Palestina-protest uitliep op een achtervolging (en een vlucht tussen de kledingrekken)', *Mare* (10 January 2023) <https://www.mareonline.nl/achtergrond/hoe-een-protest-van-students-for-palestine-uitliep-op-een-achtervolging/> (accessed 15 January 2024).

simultaneously far-right, viciously Islamophobic and aggressively pro-Israel. Among its global allies are some of the world's most prominent anti-Semites including Hungary's president Victor Orbán, as well as Netanyahu and representatives of the Israeli settler movement. In the era of Trump, such alliances have become hardly surprising, but the implications for the ethnicised language of securitization of university life are still under-explored. It is interesting to see that in the case of the election results, universities mobilized a language formally similar to that employed for Gaza, but with a different social and political significance. The VU statement, for example, expressed 'concern' over the election results and decried 'polarizing politics' as part of an active and vital stance against 'social exclusion'.²⁸⁰ In the case of Gaza, similar words carried a very different meaning. Rather than a form of standing up against social injustice, they were part of an active policy of suppressing dissent. In our view, the failure to recognize the discrepancies in the functioning and outcomes of the language of diversity and exclusion when applied to these two important policy issues highlights the limitations of the recent verbal embrace of the cause of racial justice by universities, especially in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. The mobilization of the same language of diversity and inclusion to stifle dissent in the face of a life-streamed genocide therefore may well spell the end of Western universities' 'liberal moment'. The bravery of turning the critical gaze inwards, so characteristic of Susan Legêne's work, is direly needed here.

²⁸⁰ VU, 'Response after Dutch election results' (24 November 2023) <https://vu.nl/en/news/2023/response-after-dutch-election-result> (accessed 15 January 2024).

20. Kunnen Europese universiteiten eigenlijk wel gedekoloniseerd worden? Overwegingen om aan Susan Legêne voor te leggen

Thomas Spijkerboer

Verschillende wereldkaartjes die visumverplichtingen visualiseren laten zien dat Europeanen en de onderdanen van Europese vestigingskolonies in Noord-Amerika, Australië en Nieuw Zeeland snel, veilig en goedkoop de wereld over kunnen reizen, terwijl de inwoners van Afrika en Azië (met uitzondering van superrijke landen als Japan, Zuid-Korea, de Golfstaten, Maleisië) dat voorrecht niet hebben. Mensen uit landen in Midden- en Zuid-Amerika, waar over het algemeen net als in de Verenigde Staten de Europese kolonisten hun landen onafhankelijk van de Europese metropool verklaarden, hebben meest geen visum nodig voor de Europese Unie terwijl ze wel een visum nodig hebben voor de VS, waarmee ze dankzij de Monroe doctrine en de Roosevelt corollary een neokoloniale band hebben. Deze wereldkaartjes bieden een heldere samenvatting van het internationale migratierecht, dat deze ongelijkheid tussen Europeanen en hun nakomelingen in vestigingskolonies enerzijds, en voormalige koloniale onderdanen anderzijds in het leven roept en legitimeert.

In de internationale wetenschappelijke bestudering van het migratierecht wordt het verband met koloniale verhoudingen nauwelijks waargenomen. Dat is zowel een kwestie van amnesie (het vergeten van het verleden²⁸¹) als van afasie (een onvermogen om de dingen bij hun naam te noemen).²⁸² In mijn bijdrage zal ik me niet richten op het aantonen van de juistheid van de diagnose.

In plaats daarvan zal ik die veronderstellenderwijs aannemen, en me richten op de mogelijkheden voor Europese academici om hun eigen aandoening te behandelen. Wat kunnen we er aan doen, en op welke uitdagingen stuiten we daarbij?

Wat kunnen we doen 1: provincialising Europe

Het eerste wat we kunnen doen heeft te maken met bronnen. Net als in andere disciplines wordt in de rechtswetenschappen datgene wat zich afspeelt in Europa en Noord-Amerika als universeel en algemeen beschouwd, terwijl wat in Afrika, Azië en Latijns Amerika gebeurt lokaal en specifiek is. Dat geldt zowel voor juridische ontwikkelingen in wetgeving, jurisprudentie en internationale verdragen, als ook voor academische publicaties. In onderwijs en onderzoek kunnen we daar iets aan doen, door stelselmatig bronnen uit de Derde Wereld²⁸³ te gebruiken in ons onderwijs en onderzoek, en die te behandelen als van vergelijkbare orde als Europese en Noord-Amerikaanse bronnen.

Dat is gemakkelijker gezegd dan gedaan. Het produceren van juridische bronnen kost geld en de mondiale ongelijkheid is ook op dat vlak zichtbaar. Het kost geld om naar de rechter te gaan; een ondergefinancierde rechter schrijft minder uitgewerkte uitspraken; arme landen en regio's

²⁸¹ Er zijn uitzonderingen, o.m. Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, *When humans become migrant* (Oxford 2015); Ann Dummett en Andrew Nicol, *Subjects, citizens, aliens and others* (Londen 1990); Nadine El-Enany, *(B)ordering Britain. Law, race and empire* (Manchester 2020); Adam McKeown, *Melancholy order. Asian migration and the globalization of borders* (New York 2008); Radhika Mongia, *Indian migration and Empire. A colonial genealogy of the modern state* (Durham, NC 2018).

²⁸² Ik kwam deze medicaliserende termen voor het eerst tegen in E. Tendayi Achiume, 'Putting racial equality onto the global human rights agenda', *Sur - International Journal on Human Rights* 28 (2018) 141-150.

²⁸³ Ik ben me er van bewust dat deze terminologie problematisch is, maar gebruik hem toch maar bij gebrek aan een minder problematisch alternatief.

verzamelen hun wetgeving en jurisprudentie niet in online databanken. Collega's van universiteiten worden bedolven onder hun onderwijslast, hebben geen toegang tot goede bibliotheken en hebben slechte toegang tot publicatiemogelijkheden. Je moet dus wat meer werk doen dan je gewend bent om zulke bronnen te vinden.

Maar ook als je mooie bronnen gevonden ben je er nog niet. Twee voorbeelden. In mijn onderwijs dwing ik mezelf ertoe om voor elke bijeenkomst minstens één van de twee à drie bronnen aan de Derde Wereld te ontleen. Studenten vonden dat nieuw en interessant, maar ik kreeg als feedback dat deze bronnen in mijn onderwijs steeds als contrast fungeren: als voorbeeld van hoe het anders kan, hoe een alternatieve analyse mogelijk is. In weerwil van mijn goede bedoelingen bevestigt dat juist dat Europa de norm is. Als Europees opgeleide jurist heb ik altijd in Europa gewerkt en over Europese problemen nagedacht. Het Eurocentrisme van mijn vakgebied is voor mij een Europees probleem.

Een tweede voorbeeld: in mijn huidige onderzoeksproject vergelijken we de jurisprudentie van de Europese, Latijns-Amerikaanse en Afrikaanse mensenrechtenhoven. Dit project wordt deels gedreven door het idee dat de Latijns-Amerikaanse en Afrikaanse hoven juridische leerstukken hebben ontwikkeld die mensenrechten-vriendelijker zijn dan die van hun Europese collega's. Een Latijns-Amerikaanse onderzoeker in dat project merkte laatst op dat het vanuit Europees perspectief inderdaad nuttig is om die vergelijking uit te voeren, omdat dat kan leiden tot verbetering van de Europese jurisprudentie. Maar de Latijns-Amerikaanse jurisprudentie is eigenlijk wel prima, dus waarom zijn juristen in Latijns-Amerika gebaat bij die vergelijking?

Beide voorbeelden laten zien dat het serieus nemen van niet-Europese bronnen moeilijk te onderscheiden is van toe-eigening. In de Barnes Collection in Philadelphia kan je in één oogopslag zien hoe modernisten als Picasso en Modigliani putten uit Afrikaanse beeldtaal om de beeldende kunst in Europa nieuw leven in te blazen. Daarmee deden zij niet aan *provincialising Europe* (Chakrabarty), en al helemaal niet aan het dekoloniseren van Europese kunst. Misschien was het zelfs wel omgekeerd, en koloniseerden Europese kunstenaars Afrikaanse kunst door die niet een



30. Opstelling in The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia.

gelijke status te geven, maar die als inspiratie te gebruiken.

Wat kunnen we doen 2: internationale samenwerking

Een tweede ding dat we als academici kunnen doen is onze collega's uit de Derde Wereld betrekken bij ons werk, door gezamenlijk onderzoek en onderwijs. Op die manier kan je financiering naar hen doorsluizen, en krijgen zij toegang tot internationale publicatiemogelijkheden waardoor ze zichtbaarder worden.

Een paar jaar geleden deed ik als lid van een groot consortium een door de Europese Commissie gefinancierd onderzoek naar Europees asielbeleid in Niger, Servië, Tunesië en Turkije. De methodologie was standaard extractivistisch: Europese onderzoekers zouden naar de betreffende landen afreizen, en daar respondenten interviewen die door lokale medewerkers waren gerekruteerd. Met de interviewverslagen zouden we na twee weken naar huis terugkeren en de gegevens analyseren. Dankzij COVID was dit onmogelijk. Van het geld dat we voor ons veldwerk hadden gereserveerd huurden we collega's in de betreffende landen in. Die sputterden tegen over de ongelijke beloning, maar we konden hen met Excelsheets laten zien dat daar niet veel aan viel te doen. En hoewel de vraagstelling (die het perspectief van de financier natuurlijk nauwgezet reflecteerde) Eurocentrisch bleef, overtuigden zij de Europese collega's er wel van dat de methodologie moest worden aangepast omdat de ontwikkelingen

in hun land anders niet goed in beeld konden worden gebracht. Met name de onderzochte periode en de te onderzoeken materialen werden aangepast op grond van de expertise van de collega's uit wat in EU-lingo 'derde landen' heten. Ook gaven de onderzoekers onderling peer review over concept-landenrapporten, in plaats van dat de Europese onderzoekers één op één feedback gaven.

Deze beperkte horizontalisering van de verhoudingen leidde tot onderzoeksresultaten die de inbreng van onze collega's duidelijk weergaven. Met name werd Europa niet als de enige of voornaamste actor voorgesteld; en werd asielbeleid niet los van andere (Nigerijnse, Tunesische etc.) (beleids)ontwikkelingen geanalyseerd. Bovendien kwam scherp naar voren dat de overheid en het maatschappelijk middenveld in de betreffende landen de Europese beleidsdoelen niet legitiem vonden. Maar we merkten ook dat de Europese teamleden, goede bedoelingen of niet, in de onderlinge verhoudingen een sterkere positie hadden, omdat ze rechtstreeks contact hadden met de opdrachtgever, en omdat zij toegang hadden tot publicatiemogelijkheden die de collega's in de derde landen niet of veel minder hadden (als een Europese professor bij een internationaal tijdschrift aanklopt gebeurt er iets anders dan als een professor uit een Afrikaanse provinciestad dat doet). Bovendien was de poging tot gelijkwaardige samenwerking te laat ingezet, zodat de collega's uit derde landen geen invloed hadden gehad op de onderzoeksopzet.²⁸⁴

Een tweede probleem waar we tegen opliepen betreft de zichtbaarheid. Een van de doelen die ik had met samenwerking was om mijn collega's een platform te geven. Mijn goede bedoelingen werden herkend en ook wel gewaardeerd. Maar het spreekt niet vanzelf dat collega's uit de Derde Wereld op Europese platforms willen. Sommigen willen dat wel degelijk, mede met het oog op de mogelijkheid om een baan in Europa te vinden. Anderen willen juist eigen platforms gebruiken, zoals het *African Yearbook of International Law* en de *African Sociological Review*. Dat publicaties daarin niet goed komen bovendien in zoekopdrachten in Europese



31. Marlene Dumas, *Give the People what they want* (1992), olie op doek.

universiteitsbibliotheken vinden ze jammer, maar toch vooral voor Europeanen.

Marlene Dumas' *Give the People What They Want* (1992) is ontleend aan een antropologische foto van een Afrikaans meisje dat haar kledij opendoet zodat haar lichaam zichtbaar is. Het laat het fundamentele ongemak zien van de wens om mensen die op een ge-essentialiseerde manier anders zijn zichtbaar te maken. Wie wil die zichtbaarheid eigenlijk? En wie moet er kunnen kijken?

Dekolonisatie?

Zeker sinds Black Lives Matter klinkt de roep om dekolonisatie van de universiteit. Deze oproep is gebaseerd op kritiek van het Eurocentrische karakter van onderwijs en onderzoek. Ik onderschrijf die

²⁸⁴ Zie nader Bachirou Ayoub Tinni e.a., *Asylum for containment. EU arrangements with Niger, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey* (2023) 8-12.

kritiek en ben in dit stuk veronderstellenderwijs van de juistheid daarvan uitgegaan. Ik wil me tot slot afvragen wat er eigenlijk gebeurt als we de poging om iets te doen aan de amnesie en afasie van ons vakgebied dekolonisatie noemen, of dekoloniaal.

Eve Tuck en Wayne Yang hebben kritiek geuit op het gebruik van de term dekolonisatie.²⁸⁵ In de context van de VS betogen zij dat dekolonisatie betekent dat de rijkdommen die koloniatoren van de oorspronkelijke bevolking hebben afgepakt worden teruggegeven. Dingen worden dan van de koloniatoren afgepakt en aan de rechthebbenden gegeven. Geen win-winsituatie, maar een herstel van de rechtmatige toestand. Het gebruik van de term dekolonisatie voor andere, minder ingrijpende zaken komt er volgens Tuck en Yang op neer dat de gekoloniseerden met minder genoeg zouden moeten nemen. Ze verzetten zich niet tegen het minder Eurocentrisch maken van onderwijs en onderzoek, maar tegen het gebruik van de term dekolonisatie, die ze voor fundamenteelere zaken willen gebruiken:

Decolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonization doesn't have a synonym. (...) Decolonization as metaphor allows people to equivocate these contradictory decolonial desires because it turns decolonization into an empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation.

In reality, the tracks walk all over land/people in settler contexts.²⁸⁶

Over het stevig getoonzette artikel van Tuck en Yang valt van alles te zeggen, en dat is dan ook gebeurd.²⁸⁷ Want kennisproductie is natuurlijk wel een wezenlijk onderdeel van (neo) kolonialisme. Zoals een andere onderzoeker uit dat vergelijkende project, die zich op het Afrikaanse Mensenrechtenhof richt, laatst stelde:

The material intervention of my project lies in the realm of knowledge production. By treating African

regional human rights courts as sites of original and generative legal knowledge the project aims to contribute concretely to an epistemic reorientation. In this sense, the deployment of decolonial theory is not metaphorical but has substantive implications for how international legal knowledge on migration is produced, circulated, and valued.²⁸⁸

Wat desondanks blijft hangen van het stuk van Tuck en Yang is dat het gebruik van een radicale, omvattende term voor iets wat op zijn hoogst een kleine stap is kan neerkomen op wat Gloria Wekker witte onschuld heeft genoemd – Tuck en Yang gebruiken de term *moves to innocence*. Vertaald naar onze context kan dekolonisatie van de universiteit neerkomen op een Europese fantasie dat er gemakkelijke wegen naar dekolonisatie zijn, alsof (op zich heel wenselijke en noodzakelijke) veranderingen binnen Europese universiteiten iets fundamenteels zouden veranderen in de ongelijke wereldwijde mobiliteit. Als we alles wat we goed en nodig vinden als dekolonisatie aanmerken, komt Europeanen er gewoon te gemakkelijk van af.

Onderwijs en onderzoek over migratierecht gaan over geracialiseerde postkoloniale verhoudingen – ook als onderwijs en onderzoek aan de hierboven gesignaleerde amnesie en afasie lijden, door dat hun zwijgen die bestendigen. Maar ook academici en studenten die er wel mee aan de slag willen, worden er mee geconfronteerd dat hun werk niet alleen over die verhoudingen gaat, maar ook binnen die verhoudingen plaatsvindt. Die verhoudingen zijn groot en het ligt niet binnen onze macht om die te veranderen; ik kan er gewoon niks aan doen dat de Université Djibo Hamani in Tahoua, Niger oneindig minder middelen heeft dan ook de allerarmste Europese universiteit. Wat we wel kunnen doen is ons afvragen hoe we daar mee om gaan, en zo concreet mogelijk bedenken wat dat betekent voor ons onderwijs en onderzoek. Het lijkt me dat Tuck en Yang wel gelijk hebben dat het woord dekolonisatie daarvoor wat ruim bemeten is.

²⁸⁵ Eve Tuck en K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Decolonization. Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1:1 (2012) 1-40.

²⁸⁶ Ibidem 3, 7.

²⁸⁷ Onder veel meer Tapji Garba en Sara-Maria Sorentino, 'Slavery is a metaphor. A critical commentary on Eve Tuck and K.

Wayne Yang's 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Antipode* 52:3 (2020) 764-782; Lorenzo Veracini, 'Colonialist and decolonial metaphors', *Law Text Culture* 26 (2022) 21-35.

²⁸⁸ Salahadin Ali, persoonlijke schriftelijke communicatie (25 juni 2025) ongepubliceerd.

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Today it might seem commonplace that colonialism was cultural as much as political, affected European countries as much as (former) colonies, and shapes the present as much as the past. Yet for these insights to develop, in recent decades, required treading new historiographical paths with a critical attitude and ground-breaking research. The twenty essays and research articles in *Colonial Refractions* investigate, explore, and honour the work of Susan Legêne as a pioneer and crucial voice in that development, in the Netherlands and internationally. The book offers reflective analyses, original new case studies, and promising new lines of research across a thought-provoking range of subjects, from museum objects and colonial photography to heritage sites and current political and scholarly attitudes. It demonstrates how Susan Legêne's scholarly thinking will continue to shape future research and practice.



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