Negotiating Modernity
Europeanness in late colonial Indonesia, 1910-1942

Bart Luttikhuis

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization of the European University Institute

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Summary

The ‘European’ was a central figure of colonial history, occupying a pivotal position in the social hierarchy. Colonial rulers tended to (self-)identify as ‘European’, rather than as ‘White’ or by national denominators such as ‘Dutch’ or ‘British’. This thesis examines various groups of colonial actors in the late colonial Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia)—administrators, non-governmental elites, lower class Europeans, as well as diverse Indonesian actors—to analyse what each of them associated with being ‘European’ in the colony.

The historiography dealing with differentiating practices in colonial Indonesia has tended to overstate the importance of racial delineations. As a result, it has become an accepted truism that colonial societies were obsessed with defining a clear dichotomy between ‘ruler and ‘ruled’, or ‘European’ and ‘Native’. But colonial actors actually preferred to think in many shades of grey. The inclusivity of the ‘European’ group was frequently adjusted and re-imagined, stressing either its exclusivity or inclusivity depending on the context. The consequence was what this thesis calls the ‘Indisch dream’: a powerful promise, however elusive in practice, of a shot at social mobility. This is not to say that colonialism was an open system offering opportunity to all alike. Hierarchization was rigid and often highly oppressive. Nevertheless, those on the lower rungs came to see themselves as stakeholders in the very system that kept them in line. The Indisch dream is therefore an important factor in explaining the surprising stability and longevity of the late colonial state in its final decades.

In making the Indisch dream an attractive prospect to colonial ‘subalterns’, the discursive link between ‘Europeanness’ and ‘modernity’ was crucial. In the late colonial period, colonial actors from all walks of life became preoccupied with ‘being modern’. While a small minority of Indonesians advocated an autonomous Indonesian modernity (independent of ‘Europe’ and its colonial representatives), the ‘colonial European’ model held greater promise for the majority. Striving to become a ‘European’ in late colonial Indonesia was ultimately an exercise in living a form of modern life that was at once rigidly hierarchical and oppressive, but also self-consciously ‘multi-cultural’. To present-day eyes, such a model of ‘modernity’ may well seem highly suspect. Nonetheless, it is vital to appreciate the integral role it has played in shaping twentieth-century notions of both ‘modernity’ and ‘Europeanness’.
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Introduction
Europeanness, the Indisch dream, and the late colonial equilibrium

Prologue
On the morning of 18 May 1918, Dr. Abdul Rivai joined the 38 other members of the newly formed Volksraad (People’s Council) of the Dutch East Indies for its inaugural meeting. Rivai strode into the council chamber for the very first time—immaculately dressed in black tie—as the very model of an assimilated Indonesian, cooperating with the colonial government. The meeting was at once a festive and a ceremonial occasion, with the Governor-General of the Indies welcoming the people’s representatives into a novel institution. The Volksraad was a proto-parliament for the Dutch Indies state, created in the wake of popular demands for more participation in colonial governmental affairs. It consisted of nineteen members who were elected indirectly through city councils and other electoral colleges from around the Indies, as well as nineteen members and one president appointed directly by the Governor-General. As yet the Volksraad had no real legislative power, but even in its advisory role it signalled a major transformation in Dutch Indies public affairs.¹

Born in 1871, Abdul Rivai had an unusual background. As the son of a local schoolteacher in the West Sumatran village of Palembayan, he had gradually worked his way up to earn his medical degree at the university in Amsterdam, becoming the first Indonesian to receive a doctoral degree, in 1908. Apart from his native language, he spoke fluent Dutch and Malay—the lingua franca of the Indonesian archipelago—as well as some French, German, and English. He was naturalized as a Dutch citizen in 1910 and moved to Padang (West Sumatra) with his English wife, where he established himself over the next few years as a private doctor, becoming one of

Padang’s wealthiest inhabitants. It was from here that he was dispatched to the Volksraad.

The fact that Rivai was present at all at the opening of the Volksraad had not escaped controversy during the preceding weeks. Of the nineteen elected members in the Volksraad, it was stipulated that nine should be representatives of the European section of the colonial population, whilst the other ten should represent the ‘native’ population. Abdul Rivai was one of the ten ‘Natives’, but shortly after the election results were published various news outlets called his status into question, challenging the legitimacy of his election. Because of his naturalization as a Dutch citizen in 1910, he had become distinct from the other native inhabitants of the Indies, who were merely Dutch ‘subjects’. The newspaper journalists questioning his election were unsure if his Dutch citizenship also implied that he was ‘European’ in the eyes of the law. Moreover, the reporters learned that in the preceding years Rivai had been part of the European caucus in the Padang city council, which made it all the more peculiar that he would now sit in the Volksraad as a native representative. The authorities ultimately chose not to dispute Rivai’s election, preferring to ignore the issue—presumably to sidestep any difficult or awkward discussions. Nevertheless, his status continued to generate confusion. In 1924, he was re-elected to the Volksraad, but now as a ‘European’—this time provoking protests from conservative sections of the Dutch Indies press.

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6 ‘De verkiezing voor den Volksraad’, Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 12 February 1924.
Rivai’s complicated background had assigned him to a hybrid position that confounded many of his contemporaries in the Indies. He was educated and ‘civilized’, but from a humble Indonesian background; he was Dutch, but not ‘authentically’ so; he dressed, spoke and behaved like a ‘European’, but represented his ‘native’ countrymen; and he worked alongside Europeans as a medical doctor while simultaneously being a prominent figure of the emerging Indonesian intelligentsia. In short, he was a disconcerting figure to many because he challenged their fundamental worldview.

It is precisely because of his intermediary position, however, that Rivai can be interpreted as an exemplary figure of the late-colonial Dutch East Indies. His predicament—as a border-crossing individual—was anything but exceptional in the last decades of colonial rule. There were scores of people in various situations of hybridity, subverting the idea of a straightforward hierarchical dichotomy. Rivai was a typical creation of a modernizing colony, where the belief in ‘civilization’ and ‘modernity’ unsettled established notions of naturalized ‘race’ and hierarchy—sometimes strengthening, but sometimes also challenging them. Late-colonial society, rather than building on a fundamental ideology of neat binary segregation between ‘European’ and ‘Native’, relied upon murky, multiple, and complex categorizations. The upshot was an exploration of alternative, more hybrid forms of colonial living.

‘Europeanness’ as a historical category
My research on late-colonial Indonesia challenges an established notion in colonial studies, namely that it was central to the maintenance of colonial societies to categorize their populations into fundamental binary opposites: ruler and ruled, colonizer and colonized, ‘European’ and ‘Native’. While it is true that thinking in terms of difference was of central importance to colonial societies, I argue that this thinking was much less in binary and immutable opposites, than in terms that constructed intricate, fractured, and continuous hierarchies. There were, for example, educated and ‘civilized’ Indonesians like Abdul Rivai who could be incorporated into the ruling ‘European’ group for some purposes, but excluded in other situations. There were also lower-class Europeans, either ‘full-blood’ or of mixed ancestry, who

were legally European but worked alongside their Indonesian compatriots. And there were Indo-Europeans (of mixed heritage) who could reach the highest echelons of the colonial hierarchy despite a darker hue of their skin.

The assumed colonial tendency to think in polar opposites of ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’ is thus not as clear-cut as historians often like to think. Colonial society in its last decades was attempting to ‘do’ colonialism and multi-cultural cohabitation rather differently than suggested by our clichéd notion of colonialism as a regime striving for rigid segregation. Late colonial society, as a self-consciously ‘modern’ society, came to rely on a professed ideology of inclusiveness as its basic principle. Consequently, various groups in this society were involved in ongoing cultural and social negotiations over how far that inclusiveness could go.

To make sense of the fractured hierarchies in late colonial Indonesia, it is important to pay close attention to language. For example, I argue that ‘European’ is not simply a ‘thinly veiled synonym for “white”’, as Elizabeth Kolsky suggested when discussing British India.8 As any student of colonial Indonesia will know, the colonizers in this region usually preferred to designate themselves as ‘European’—it was even the predominant legal category, rather than, for example, ‘Dutch’ or ‘White’. While this preference seems to have been particularly strong in the Dutch colonial empire, it is a tendency that was present throughout many other empires, especially in South and Southeast Asia. Surprisingly, though, the colonial preference for identifying as ‘European’ rather than ‘White’ has never come under particular scrutiny. Most scholars of colonial history use the terms interchangeably, as is demonstrated by the popularity of ‘critical whiteness studies’ in colonial scholarship.9

Yet, the category of ‘Europeanness’ allowed colonial actors and thinkers greater flexibility—and more deliberate ambiguity—in their differentiating practices than could the alternative concepts, such as ‘Whiteness’ or ‘Dutchness’.

A simple answer to the question of why colonial actors in the Dutch Indies chose ‘Europeanness’ over ‘Dutchness’ might be due to the number of non-Dutch nationals among the European group in the Indies. This explanation certainly has some historical merit: about half of the employees for the East India Company (which ruled the colony until 1800) were foreign nationals, and the number of non-Dutch migrants to the colony was still significant in the nineteenth century. However, by the last decades of the colonial era, the foreign presence had dwindled to just over ten per cent of the European population of the Indies (and far less in the colonial heartland of Java). Moreover, it is well known that during the interwar years there was a rise of various forms of Dutch nationalism in the colony. The fact that ‘Europeanness’ persisted as the category of choice thus remains surprising. What is more, the presence of non-Dutch Europeans in the colony cannot explain why colonial actors chose ‘Europeanness’ over ‘Whiteness’.

Over the last two decades, research into changing concepts of ‘Europeanness’ has expanded rapidly. It has been well established that ‘Europeanness’ is a socially embedded concept, which, like all identity categories, is dependent on the context in which it is used. It is also increasingly acknowledged that in constructing ‘Europeanness’, the confrontation with the outside world (with the ‘Other’) is of

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10 Roelof van Gelder reports that roughly half of the East India Company (VOC) employees between 1602 and 1795 were foreigners: Roelof van Gelder, Het Oost-Indisch avontuur: Duitsers in dienst van de VOC (1600-1800) (Nijmegen: SUN, 1997). Martin Bossenbroek writes that in the nineteenth century, recruitment for the colonial army—the largest supplier of new migrants to the colony—entailed ever fewer non-Dutch nationals, dropping from initially over 60 per cent to 15 per cent around the turn of the century. After the First World War foreign recruitment was almost entirely abandoned: Martin Bossenbroek, ‘The living tools of empire: the recruitment of European soldiers for the Dutch colonial army, 1814-1909’, The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, Vol. 23, No. 1, 1995, pp. 26-53. On ‘foreign’ Europeans in the Indies in the nineteenth century, also see Ulbe Bosma, Indiëgangers: verhalen van Nederlanders die naar Indië trokken (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010), pp. 40-80.


central importance. The ‘colonial confrontation’ should therefore interest us above all, but surprisingly the construction of ‘Europeanness’ has only very recently started to be considered in a colonial context.

This thesis revolves around the question of what it meant to be ‘European’ in late colonial Indonesia. It analyses this category as the nexus around which colonial hierarchy was constructed. The late colonial decades saw a society in flux—socially, politically, and economically. As a claim at ‘Europeanness’ in the context of the Dutch East Indies was a claim at power and privilege, many of the developments that defined this late colonial society crystallized in the recurring negotiations about who was to be considered ‘European’, in what context, and to what extent.

**Beyond race: Europeanness and the Indisch dream**

Once we take seriously the category of ‘Europeanness’ and study it in its relation to ‘Whiteness’ and ‘Dutchness’, we have to revisit the fundamental question about the predominance of various differentiating criteria. Virulent and explicit differentiating practices were a central characteristic of the colonial state, privileging some subjects over others, and including some in the political and economic rule over the colony whilst excluding others. But it remains a matter of debate as to upon what (presumed) basis colonial actors primarily discriminated: race, class, or elements of culture and lifestyle? My research shows that, in fact, colonial actors consciously and strategically used a combination of both. Various groups of actors—elite Europeans, ‘Indo-

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Europeans’, Indonesians—frequently struck a different balance, which was also dependent on the concrete situation. The aggregate result that all these actors contributed to was a multi-layered and gradual hierarchy rather than a clear dichotomy of ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’.

It has been well established in the historiography of the Dutch Indies that hierarchical boundaries were highly porous. Ann Laura Stoler’s studies have been pivotal in establishing this point. Racial discrimination was often (if not predominantly) based on cultural and class distinctions, rather than on somatic features. Consequently, boundary-crossings and hybrid groups were omnipresent, and constantly contested the apparent organizing principle of racial distinctions. For all that, writing a genealogy of racial categories has remained at the core of Stoler’s work, because, as she claims, race is never about biology but rather about ‘cultural competencies’ and ‘moral susceptibilities’. Thus she can continue to insist that ‘European’ identity in the Indies was a racial identity, despite her careful study of how race intersected with class, gender, and other categories. Race, in Stoler’s analysis, and that of many others, was the primary category that made the world intelligible to colonial rulers.

The problem with such an approach of ‘cultural racism’ is that race is taken as the a priori starting point for the deconstruction of historical categories, even though ‘race’, as a term, was largely avoided at the time. Consequently, this approach has a tendency to blind itself to the possibility that other categories may sometimes predominate. It subsumes all forms of discrimination—for example on the basis of


language, class, education, way of life, the neighbourhood one lives in, or other cultural markers—under the heading of ‘racism’, and thus stretches the race concept to a degree that impedes its explanatory capability. Race, defined as the social meaning that is attached to ancestry or somatic features, was highly significant, and it would be equally mistaken to claim that class (or any other category) took precedence over race.18 But if we hope to properly understand the intricacies of colonial social interactions, we should endeavour to unearth when and where race trumped class, or vice versa, and where they overlapped and intermingled in defining ‘Europeanness’, rather than dogmatically insisting on the analytical primacy of race over class.19

What I argue is that the hybridities and boundary transgressions that Stoler and others have noticed cannot be interpreted as a sign of a racial ideology running up against its inherent contradictions. It is not only with the benefit of hindsight that we as historians can see these inconsistencies. Taking ‘Europeanness’ seriously as the era’s notion of choice, we learn that colonial actors from various ends of the spectrum were in fact well aware of this category’s fuzzy nature, and that they were strategically attempting to use this for their own interests. Colonizing elites were not zealously fixated on a ‘search for essences’20 that could substantiate a binary divide of ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’; indeed, various colonial ‘subalterns’ were proficiently navigating the transitional levels in between these extremes. Collectively, colonial actors in the late colonial period—sometimes unconsciously but more often intentionally—produced a gradual, multi-layered hierarchy with many fissures and fractures. Speaking in terms of ‘Europeanness’ rather than ‘Whiteness’ allowed for greater flexibility when determining in which situations inclusivity and exclusivity would be emphasized. Discursively, ‘Europeanness’ was wedded less to a racial interpretation, and thus could be filled more easily with fluid meanings, at some

20 Stoler, ‘Sexual affronts’, p. 84.
points focusing on cultural or class aspects, whilst at others playing up the racial component.

Once we cease to see ‘race’ as the only defining category of the colonial hierarchy, it becomes imperative to re-evaluate how colonial rule functioned in the early twentieth century. The multi-layered and variable scale on which inhabitants of the Dutch Indies were thus placed allowed for a certain (albeit small) chance at social mobility, based on merit and effort (or luck), as in the case of Abdul Rivai. The late colonial state ensured that people with a potential grudge actually became invested in the system’s continued existence. Educated Indonesians as well as less-privileged (Indo-)Europeans could cherish a dream of slight social advancement. It is no coincidence that, as Benedict Anderson has calculated, in the last days of colonial rule approximately 90 per cent of the state payroll was composed of Indonesians, mostly in the lower but also increasingly in the middling ranks. Many of the colonial state’s subjects could hope that striving for and participating in the promise of a ‘modern’ Indies state might pay off.

My research offers an answer to the question of why the late colonial system succeeded in creating a prolonged period of relative stability, which in the Dutch Indies lasted at least from the 1910s until the Japanese invasion in 1942 brought the Second World War to the region. The late colonial state—by offering pathways to certain forms of ‘Europeanness’, among other ways—provided enough of its subjects with the hope at slight social and economic improvement to create what, in analogy to the ‘American dream’, we might call the ‘Indisch dream’.

What I am describing here is not to be understood as a happy history of uncomplicated inclusivity and harmonious hybridity. First, we must be clear that the proportion of Indonesians that could even think of dreaming the Indisch dream was minute: less than ten per cent of the 60 million ‘native’ inhabitants of the Indies in 1930 achieved even the most basic level of literacy. But it is precisely those people

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22 It is difficult to quantify literacy figures. The only thing we can calculate with any measure of certainty is the share of the population that had attended any kind of school. See: P.J.A. Idenburg, ‘Beginselen van onderwijsbeleid: Directeur van Onderwijs en Eredienst (P.J.A. Idenburg) aan gouverneur-generaal (Tjarda van Starkenborgh Stachouwer), 27 febr. 1940’, in S.L. van der Wal (ed.), *Het onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1900-1940: een bronnenpublikatie* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1983), pp. 143-149.
that might be the most likely potential opponents of the colonial system—the (partly) educated elites—that were provided with this seductive perspective. Secondly, the mere fact that people were placed on a porous and multi-layered hierarchy rather than segregated along rigid boundaries does not mean that the system as such was not oppressive. The *Indisch* dream ensured that people became stakeholders in the very system that kept them in line. After all, as we know from the American dream, only very limited and thinly spread fulfilment of such dreams is necessary for people to keep putting their hopes in them.

**Colonial ‘modernity’**

For a significant period of time, from just after the turn of the century until the Second World War, the late colonial system of rule was in a remarkably stable equilibrium. One of the central characteristics of this late colonial period is that notions of ‘civilization’, ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’ had become highly evocative, but in some sense they had also become increasingly diffuse. Many different groups had taken to self-identifying as ‘modern’, each giving this notion a related but not always identical meaning. ‘Europeanness’ and ‘modernity’ in the colony were intimately interwoven, but in multitudinous and conflicting ways. For Europeans in the colony, an important part of their justification for ruling a massive colonized population lay in their supposedly more developed and more ‘civilized’ status—in other words, they had a ‘civilizing mission’ to carry out in their overseas dependencies. To some, therefore, ‘Europe’ was the pinnacle and paradigm of ‘modernity’, providing them the prototype that they could offer the Indies. To others, Europe was modernity’s birthplace, but no longer its sole proprietor, as America and other regions had taken Europe’s lessons to heart and shown that they could make ‘modernity’ their own. To others still, Europe was the counterpoint against which to define a radically different ‘modernity’, as an

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23 Throughout this thesis I study notions such as ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’—let alone ‘civilization’ or ‘culture’—as so-called indigenous rather than analytical concepts. That is to say, I am highly sceptical that ‘modernity’ represents a useful category to explain a process of historical development, yet that does not mean that the sources do not abundantly refer to such a concept (though often with highly diverse content). Cf. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: theory, knowledge, history* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 10-11, 113-149; Henk Schulte Nordholt, ‘Modernity and cultural citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: an illustrated hypothesis’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2011, pp. 435-457.
emulation or as a refutation. Defining and performing ‘Europeanness’ in the colony were thus exercises in negotiating ‘modernity’.

From the turn of the twentieth century onwards, late colonial society in the Dutch East Indies was growing and evolving rapidly, becoming obsessed with all things ‘modern’ and ‘advanced’. In this period, the constellation of colonial society changed dramatically. For one, the ‘European’ population of the colony was growing at a fast pace: the number of inhabitants considered European in the legal sense rose from ca. 81,000 in 1895 to 300,000 in 1940, an average annual growth of just under 3 per cent. But also on a cultural level society was visibly in flux. The increased possibilities for communication and travel enabled a transformation of colonial culture. With changing dress styles and food practices, with the spread of technologies like automobiles or the radio, and with a rapidly expanding press culture, the appearances of the colony in 1910 and in 1940 were worlds apart. Many colonists felt themselves to be living at the forefront of modern developments—in some ways even more advanced than their metropolitan counterparts. Their notion of ‘modernity’ was simultaneously inspired by the metropolitan example but also perceived as an autonomous emulation of the original.

This obsession with a colonial ‘modernity’ was at least as vibrant among the less privileged (but upwardly looking) classes—both European and ‘native’—as it was among the colonizing elite. Abdul Rivai’s biographer (writing in 1938), for example, proudly mentioned that Rivai had been the first inhabitant in the city of Padang to own a car in the 1910s, to the envy of many in the city. Equally, in

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24 The ‘European’ group also grew in relative size compared to the entire population of the Dutch Indies, from ca. 0.2 per cent to 0.5 per cent (largely concentrated in the urbanizing areas on Java). The population increase was largely due to natural growth, but a smaller part of this was the outcome of immigration as well as ‘equation’ (the legal assimilation of Indonesians and others into the European legal group, see chapter 2 here). Volksstelling 1930, Vol. 6, p. 18; A. van Marle, ‘De groep der Europeanen in Nederlands-Indië, iets over ontstaan en groei’, Indonesië, Vol. 5, 1951-1952, pp. 97-121, 314-341, 481-507, there pp. 103-106.


26 Cf. in this context the concept of the colonies as ‘laboratories of modernity’: Stoler and Cooper, ‘Between metropole’, p. 5.

27 Harahap, Rivai, p. 13.
advertisements published in the *Spoorbondsblad*, a railway trade union periodical directed primarily towards ‘Europeans’ of mixed heritage and of lower middle class (but also read by some middle class Indonesians), we can see that many small businesses in the Indies promoted their wares by describing them as ‘modern’ or as technologically advanced.\(^{28}\) The construction of group identities—and hence of difference—in the colony was not a monopoly of the colonial rulers. The view from below demonstrates that the groups that were not part of the absolute elite were actively involved in constructing their own representation as ‘modern’ citizens of the colony and therefore (potential) members of the ‘European’ group.

Naturally, not everyone in colonial Indonesia agreed on such a direct equation of ‘modernity’ and ‘Europeanness’. The last decades of colonial rule also saw the emergence of serious anti-colonial (Indonesian nationalist) movements. These developed in the 1910s, simultaneously with the wider colonial interest in emancipation from the metropole fuelled by the isolation of the colony during the First World War,\(^ {29}\) and politically and ideologically came into their own in the 1920s. Many (but not all) of these movements portrayed themselves as ‘modern’ or ‘progressive’, whilst refusing to identify as ‘Europeanized’. Representatives of such movements emphatically maintained that they embodied an authentic ‘Indonesian’ modernity that was not dependent on ‘European’ culture and lifestyles.\(^ {30}\) Thus ‘Europeanness’ was merely one possible incarnation of modernity. Alternative paths were conceivable, and grew in appeal over the last three decades of colonial rule.

Nonetheless there were significant groups, especially among the lower middle class Europeans who had settled permanently in the Indies, but also from large segments of the educated Indonesian population, who were frontrunners in the process of interpreting the Indies as an autonomous actor in a worldwide development towards modernity. People like Abdul Rivai, but also his decidedly ‘Dutch’ counterparts who had spent considerable time in the colony, came to see themselves as actors on a world stage. Rivai not only studied in the Netherlands, but also spent time in Paris and London. Later in life, after his retirement, he once again moved to

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\(^{28}\) See chapters 7 and 8 here.


\(^{30}\) See chapter 5 here.
Europe, where he spent time in Geneva, travelled around Europe and lived in Paris for a while, eventually settling in Switzerland with his fourth wife, a Swiss woman. Likewise, the lower middle class personnel employed in Indies businesses, when visiting ‘Europe’ during their furlough, regularly took a grand tour of the continent rather than staying put in the Netherlands. They felt little at home in their supposed Dutch ‘motherland’ and instead asserted their own worth as worldly and civilized Indisch people. Moreover, the references for what it meant to be ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’ in the Indies itself were wider than merely the Dutch metropole: radios were imported from Britain, Germany, and the United States; for motoring culture the benchmark was the American market; fashion magazines looked towards Paris and London; and the debates about public housing and town planning often followed global trends, with special attention paid to their incarnations in other colonial territories such as India or the Philippines.

This international frame of reference—however tenuous and imaginary—meant that colonial actors in the Indies in the late colonial decades increasingly came to see their society as an autonomously valuable entity, not just a proxy of its metropole. The migration flows and possibilities of communication between the Netherlands and the Indies swelled rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century. Even though this brought metropole and colony closer together, it did not necessarily intensify the identification of the latter with the former. As Ulbe Bosma has recently argued, a large part of the migration remained circular: with people repeatedly moving back and forth between colony and metropole. Moreover, the base to which the circular migration returned, in Bosma’s analysis, was surprisingly often on the colonial rather than the metropolitan side of the divide. We are dealing with individuals who had strong roots in the colony but stayed in contact with the metropole for education, family, or business purposes. Consequently, as I argue

31 Harahap, Rivai, passim. In 1928 a collection of essays, written for the Bintang Hindia journal by Rivai in the period since his retirement in 1926, was collected and published as: Abdul Rivai, Student Indonesia di Europa (Weltevreden: Bintang Hindia, 1928).
32 See respectively: Rudolf Mrázek, “‘Let us become radio mechanics’: technology and national identity in late-colonial Netherlands East Indies’, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1997, pp. 3-33 (a revised version of this article is included in Mrázek’s Engineers of happy land); Locher-Scholten, ‘Summer dresses’; chapter 8 in this thesis.
here, colonizing elites and (lower) middle classes alike often identified with the migratory circuit, or even with a hybrid identity of a ‘modern’ citizen of a ‘European’ country in the tropics—an Oriental European. These were not ‘expats’ who moved to the colony for a few years to make a career whilst continuing to consider the Netherlands as their home country; yes there was a sense of connection with the Netherlands, but there was also an important feeling of social and mental autonomy.

This autonomy of mind among inhabitants of the Indies has often been brushed aside as a passing political trend of the 1910s. The so-called *Indische partij* for example, founded in 1912, propagated the idea of a shared Indies citizenship for all inhabitants of the colony, but it was soon repressed and its successor parties were marginalized to make way for a conservative backlash in the 1920s and 1930s.\(^{35}\) However, even if it did not result in political changes, the pride in an advanced (‘European’) society that was autonomous from the Dutch motherland maintained a strong foothold during the last decades of colonial rule. This pride was present, in some form, through all social layers of *Indisch* European society.

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**Modern times: historicizing the late colonial**

The temporal focus of this thesis is on the final decades of colonial rule in Indonesia: from just after the turn of the twentieth century until the fall of the Dutch colonial state in 1942. The latter is a clear boundary: the advent of the Second World War, with the rapid conquest of the Indies by the Japanese armies in early 1942, meant the removal of Dutch authority, prompting radical social and political changes. Between 1945 and 1949, the Dutch launched a protracted violent effort to regain their colonial possessions; but colonial life would not return to the *status quo ante* and sovereignty was signed over to an independent Indonesia in December 1949. The temporal starting point for this thesis, conversely, cannot be defined with such precision. Nevertheless, it is clear that after the turn of the twentieth century, colonial society in Indonesia changed dramatically, both socially and politically.

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The Indonesian archipelago had experienced a Dutch colonial presence from the late sixteenth century, but the first two centuries saw a form of trade colonialism—under the auspices of the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, United East India Company)—that was very different from its later incarnations. In the early nineteenth century, after a short British interregnum during the Napoleonic wars, the Dutch state formally assumed possession of the entire archipelago. Still it took almost a century of repeated military campaigns for the colonial administration to assert and consolidate its influence throughout the area. This process was essentially completed with the conclusion, in 1904, of the bloody military conquest of Aceh (Sumatra).36

More or less around the same time, colonial ideology was starting to undergo significant changes.37 As my research demonstrates, the following decades should be seen as historically specific, rather than as a continued or even perfected form of a previously developed colonial system. The late colonial period in Indonesia, as in many other colonies, was different from its predecessors because the underlying colonial dogma had shifted decidedly.38 The ‘new’ imperialism rhetorically rejected the checkbook logic of colonial exploitation, seeking its justification instead in a supposed ‘civilizing mission’: the idea that ‘Europeans’ had been sent to the colonies to bring civilization and prosperity to the world. In the Dutch East Indies, this ideology was expressed under the heading of an ethische politiek (‘ethical policy’):


the Dutch colonizer had an ethical obligation towards its subjects. Although the real objectives of an ‘ethical policy’ were often vaguely defined, over the next two decades this ideal did inform a range of drastic reforms in fields as diverse as administrative decentralization, political participation, education, and agricultural policy. The result was a veritable progressive moment in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Most importantly, however, the ‘civilizing mission’ provided the colonial project with a novel justification.

These last decades of colonial rule were also the period in which the colonial state was properly established. Developing from a rudimentary governmental body in the nineteenth century, by the 1920s the Dutch Indies administration had, in most aspects, become a separate and increasingly complex governmental apparatus. Colonial society changed along with the state. Various segments of Dutch Indies society—conservative ‘white’ colonialists, ‘Indisch’ Europeans, Indonesian nationalists—became progressively more autonomous and assertive. As I argue here, they all started to express increasing feeling of connectedness with, respectively, their ‘Dutch Indies’, or ‘Indonesian’ homeland. In the wake of these movements, aspects of race, class, and identity became public matters of political debate, and they were reshaped in the process.

There is a tendency in the historiography to see the ideologically inspired period of the first two decades of the twentieth century as only a temporary phenomenon, because of the conservative backlash in the political realm in the 1920s and 1930s. In this interpretation, the ‘progressive’ reforms reached their zenith in the years shortly after the First World War, to be followed from the 1920s onwards by an increasingly conservative mentality among the ‘European’ community in the Indies. The late 1920s and 1930s were characterized by efforts, especially among the totok (‘expat’) community but also among Indo-Europeans, to close ranks and to enforce principles of racial privilege and exclusivity.

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40 Cribb, ‘The late colonial state’. Also cf. the exhaustive history of the Dutch Indies civil service from 1808 until the end of the colonial period: H.W. van den Doel, De stille macht: het Europese binnenlands bestuur op Java en Madoera, 1808-1942 (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1994).
Such an interpretation fails to adequately appreciate the discrepancy between ‘speaking’ and ‘doing race’. As Elsbeth Locher-Scholten noted in her classic study of the ‘ethical policy’, the increasingly conservative rhetoric and mentality in the late 1920s and 1930s conceals the fact that on a practical everyday level, the political changes initiated in the 1910s towards increasing inclusivity could or would not be reversed. The new foundational ideology of colonialism, asserting a responsibility for the well-being and progress of the colony and its population, had meanwhile become too thoroughly ingrained. At a very basic level, there was no longer an (accepted) alternative justification for colonial rule. In their public statements, even the most conservative ‘white’ colonialists adhered to their pronounced belief in universalist (meritocratic) principles. Consequently, as I argue, they were sometimes—though not always—pushed by the inherent logic of their own arguments to reluctantly concede to (limited) inclusivist demands from lower classes pushing for social mobility.

Late colonial states have sometimes been interpreted primarily in relation to the independent states that they preceded, examining the personal, institutional, and ideological continuities between either. Some have even gone as far as to point to the transitional nature as one of the defining characteristics of the late colonial state. For example, in his thought-provoking essay ‘What was the late colonial state?’, John Darwin wrote:

Perhaps [...] the true ‘late colonial state’ was the one which had already foreseen its own demise. Maybe the real nature of the late colonial state was to be a self-
consciously transitional institution bridging ‘real’ colonialism and the coming age of independent statehood. [...] [T]he ‘late colonial state’ may be a concept of some value in identifying the circumstances in which colonial authority became unsustainable.46

In this interpretation, the late colonial state was an institution in its death throes, reliant on force and violence to maintain its authority, and doomed to end in decolonization.

It is too simplistic, however, to see the late colonial period solely in this light. To be sure, in this new-fangled form of colonial rule the tension became increasingly acute between the promise of a universalist ideology and the basic predicament of colonial rule that the ‘colonizer’ should indefinitely remain part of the elite: the ‘rule of colonial difference’. For a while, the colonizing elites managed to sustain the cognitive dissonance between these two objectives, but with the rise through the ranks of an increasing number of educated Indonesians the contradiction was bound to build into a formidable obstacle. Nevertheless, we need to be careful that our bias of hindsight does not seduce us to assess the late colonial state only from the perspective of decolonization. The assertion that the late colonial state was essentially a transitional moment runs up against the problem of its surprising (relative) longevity. How and why the late colonial state managed to maintain relative stability and prosperity—without major, fundamental resistance—for over thirty years, remains underexplained.

Part of the reason, of course, is that the colonial system was based on the threat of violence. Even though after 1910 the instances in which the colonial administration actually resorted to (large-scale) violence were limited, the memory of the brutal wars around the turn of the century had created what Henk Schulte Nordholt describes as a ‘regime of fear’.47 As I argue, however, another part of the

46 Darwin, ‘What was the late colonial state?’, p. 79. Cribb describes some of the same tensions and contradictions in the late colonial state, but nonetheless rejects the inevitability of its demise: ‘None of this implies that the Netherlands Indies had somehow reached a dead-end.’ Cribb, ‘The late colonial state’, p. 8.

47 Henk Schulte Nordholt, ‘A genealogy of violence’, in Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (eds.), Roots of violence in Indonesia: contemporary violence in historical perspective (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), pp. 36-38. Cf. Darwin’s characterization of the late colonial state as a ‘security state’: Darwin, ‘What was the late colonial state?’, p. 79. Raben has noted that Schulte Nordholt’s interpretation of the colonial state as a ‘state of violence’ is only a partial explanation; after all, ‘the
explanation, which accounts for why the potential threat of violence so rarely had to be actualized, is what I have identified above as the Indisch dream: the late colonial state managed to ensure that many of its potential opponents came to feel somehow invested in its continued existence. Both of these reasons were mutually reinforcing. The more frightening the ‘stick’ of potential repression seemed, the more appealing the ‘carrot’ of participating in the system became, and vice versa. It was only through the combination of both that the late colonial system evaded a similar string of major military conflicts as had characterized the nineteenth century in the Indies.

The logic of the Indisch dream functioned for a considerable time. In the 1900s and increasingly in the 1910s, we can discern energetic efforts at drastic reform in many different areas, whether in colonial law, education, or the social world of the Indies’ working man. The years between 1918 and 1920 have often been flagged as a time of particularly fervent ‘progressivism’. Although the Netherlands and its colonies had not participated in the First World War, the War had nevertheless brought change to the Indies. The colony had been isolated from the metropole because shipping had become increasingly difficult, eventually causing an economic crisis, as well as calls for political reform that focused in particular on increased autonomy for (the Indisch European community in) the Indies. However, although the effects of the war were certainly tangible, the war years in fact functioned mostly as an incubator rather than as an actual cause for developments that had started in the first half of the decade, following from the changes in colonial ideology initiated around the turn of the century.

The first practical consequences of some of the reforms became widely apparent by the 1920s: ‘native’ employees demanding equal pay and equal treatment;
Indonesians arriving in the Netherlands on their ‘European furlough’; Indies-born ‘Europeans’ becoming more assertive in voicing their rights and privileges in their native land. The original grand promises of inclusivity thus started to come up against situations in which colonizing elites were hesitant to fulfil them—increasingly making the promises sound disingenuous. In such situations, the powers-that-be sometimes chose to openly emphasize exclusivity, yet often they found it more expedient to honour and follow the promise of inclusivity that their own professed ideology dictated.

In the 1930s, finally, in the wake of the depression that had hit the Indies hard and brought great hardship for many, we can distinguish a clear conservative backlash at the political level. Again, the depression was less a cause than a catalyst, strengthening developments that had started several years earlier. Crucially, the self-consciously ‘modern’ colonial society at this time had already created many hybrid and/or mixed spaces. In a functional sense, it had come to rely upon a sliding-scale hierarchy. Even though, for example, Indies businesses and the colonial administration announced substantial salary cuts especially for their (lower) middle class ‘native’ staff, the latter could continue to work in their administrative and middle management positions, and often continued to live in the same neighbourhoods and visit the same social establishments as their (Indo-)European colleagues of similar professional rank. In short, for the various lower middle classes, ‘doing’ hybridity had become a reality of many everyday situations, despite occasional resurgences of ‘speaking’ exclusivity.

All in all, the late colonial state can be seen as an experiment in a new way of organizing colonial rule and cohabitation. Once we abandon a race-centred approach that too easily presumes that all forms of colonialism were exclusively obsessed with racial ‘othering’ and segregation, we find that colonial Indonesia in its last decades reached a different equilibrium, at least for some time. The late colonial state provides an insight into how (early) twentieth century notions of modernity and progress were established in what we could provocatively term a (highly unequal) ‘multi-cultural’ society. The state tried (and failed) to reconcile ideologies of universality and of difference, whilst its various inhabitants created their own ways to define a place for themselves in this effort, either appropriating, emulating, or rejecting the templates that the ‘European’ colonial state provided. While late colonial rule in Indonesia was
indeed ‘colonial’, its inhabitants, in their quest to define and appropriate modernities, were also part of a wider global trend in the early twentieth century.

State of the literature

The question about the predominance of race or class as a basis for differentiation in colonial Indonesia has become a matter of extensive historiographical debate in recent decades. As mentioned above, the work by Ann Laura Stoler has been pivotal in this regard, establishing that ‘racial’ discrimination was often more about cultural and class distinctions than morphological features. She has convincingly shown, first, that colonial efforts at categorization were never straightforward, and, second, that practices in the private or domestic sphere were instrumental in shaping social categories. A fore-runner in this same historiographical field was Jean Gelman Taylor’s The Social World of Batavia, which described the capital of the Dutch empire in Asia, focusing on the period from the early VOC settlement up to the middle of the nineteenth century, as a melting pot, with a distinct (mestizo) community with values and customs of its own. Several other historians took up the challenge. In Dutch Culture Overseas (1995) Frances Gouda described Dutch colonial culture as a ‘diaspora’ of Dutch metropolitan culture, and analysed the adaptation of Dutch culture to the supposed colonial prerequisite of racial differentiation. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, in her Women and the Colonial State (2000), drew attention to the role of gender and the position of women in colonial practices of difference. Various other historians over the last two decades have contributed shorter essays or anthologies that pose these same questions.

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50 A good summary and analysis of the present state of this debate is given by Protschky, ‘Race, class, and gender’.
53 Locher-Scholten, Women. This volume is an anthology of articles that Locher-Scholten published over the previous decade.
The last decade in particular has seen rising interest in the position of the Indo-Europeans or so-called *Indische Nederlanders*: in other words, the creole and mestizo classes in the colony. Although there was some previous historiography on these groups, their profile has been heightened by a large-scale research project tracing the fate of the *Indische Nederlanders* from the beginning of the Dutch colonial era to the present day. For the present purposes, the book by Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, translated into English as *Being ‘Dutch’ in the Indies* (2008), as well as later individual works by Bosma, are particularly relevant. Bosma and Raben argue, in implicit opposition to Stoler, that the definitions of terms such as ‘Indo’ or *Indische Nederlanders* were highly context-dependent. The *Indische* world, they explain, was not a racially stratified society, because ‘class, profession, geographic origin, religion, education as well as skin colour contributed to the placing of an individual within the social hierarchy’.

Most of the central works on the issues of cultural racism and identity formation in colonial Indonesia focus empirically on the nineteenth century. The late colonial decades are then either interpreted as some form of epilogue or as a time

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This project was the result of demands from the *Indisch* community in the Netherlands in the 1990s and was funded by the Dutch government. Its main output consisted of four publications: Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, *De oude Indische wereld* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2003); Meijer, *In Indië geworteld*; Wim Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië 1945-1995* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001); Ulbe Bosma, Remco Raben and Wim Willems, *De geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2006).

when the colonial system had reached its fully developed state.\(^{58}\) As argued above, such an interpretation underestimates the extent to which the late colonial period represents an alternative (but therefore no less colonial) constellation. To be sure, Bosma and Raben do cautiously suggest in their epilogue that we might see post-1920 colonialism as profoundly different from its predecessors. But their own empirical work focuses on the earlier period and abruptly halts in 1920, just as the tensions described above between a universalist ideology and differentiating practices had started to chafe. Consequently, the image that they evoke of the ‘new’ colonial world largely reproduces the narrative of a conservative backlash and reinforced attempts at racial demarcation.\(^{59}\)

Whereas the historiography on the ‘Indo’ question and the position of the so-called ‘white paupers’ (poor whites) is highly relevant to the present thesis, this literature tends to overlook the position and agency of ‘Europeanized’ (educated) Indonesians in shaping the discussions about what it meant to be ‘European’ or ‘modern’ in the colony. Some of the wide-ranging literature on the birth of Indonesian nationalism and the ‘making of an Indonesian elite’ in the first half of the twentieth century can help us grasp this issue.\(^{60}\) These works often deal with the relation and interaction that the fledgling Indonesian movement had with the colonial state—as an oppressor, but also as an instigator of change through its education programmes. Nevertheless, their primary interest is usually in Indonesian intellectuals as precursors and trailblazers for independence, at times suggesting that these actors were

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\(^{58}\) A notable exception to the neglect of the late colonial decades is Locher-Scholten’s work on \textit{Women and the colonial state}. Gouda, in her \textit{Dutch culture overseas}, also ventures more explicitly into the twentieth century. Most other authors however, including those working on other colonial empires, focus on the period before and around 1900, depicting the following decades at best as a time in which ideas originating around the turn of the century were further elaborated. Cf. Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Carnal knowledge and imperial power: gender and morality in the making of race’, in Stoler, \textit{Carnal knowledge}, p. 51; Stoler, ‘Genealogies’, pp. 7-8; Bosma, \textit{Indiëgangers}.

\(^{59}\) Bosma and Raben, \textit{Being ‘Dutch’}, p. xix-xx, 339-344. This book has a \textit{longue durée} perspective, which takes the reader from the seventeenth century up to 1920.

singularly (or at least predominantly) focused on an Indonesia independent from Dutch colonialism. An admirable and stimulating exception in this respect is Rudolf Mrázek’s *Engineers of Happy Land* (2002), which studies conceptualizations of technology and modernity in late colonial Indonesia as an interaction between Dutch and Indonesian actors.61

For the same reason, Mrázek’s work is also an important contribution to the literature on conceptions of ‘modernity’ in colonial Indonesia.62 The notion of colonialism as a project that was self-consciously at the forefront of defining and performing ‘modernity’ has a long pedigree in British colonial historiography,63 and it has more recently entered both Dutch and Anglophone literature on (late) colonial Indonesia.64 In this context Robert Elson is primarily interested in the striving for ‘modernity’ as a unifying factor in early Indonesian national thought, whilst Henk Schulte Nordholt looks at performative acts of ‘modernity’ as a tool (mainly) for native Indonesians to stake a place in colonial society. Both agree that conceptions and appropriations of ‘modernity’ were central in defining early ideas of (cultural) citizenship, either in the newly imagined Indonesian nation or in the colonial state. Both also recognize that Indonesian constructions of modernity were always defined, at least partially, in relation to the model provided by the surrounding colonial state.65 Still, neither treats the ‘Indonesian’ model and its ‘colonial’ counterpart as partners in a mutual creation, even though, as I argue here, the colonial construction of modernity was similarly developing in light of changing social realities in late colonial society. The late colonial state found its precarious but suprisingly long-lived equilibrium

precisely because of the mutual dependency of these various constructions of modernity.

Method and sources
The present study is conceived as a conceptual history, tracing the developing meaning of one concept, ‘Europeanness’, through its applications in various social settings in the Dutch Indies. An analysis of words alone, however, cannot suffice. ‘Europeanness’ was as much about performing as it was about speaking. The overlap between ‘speaking race’ and ‘doing race’, or between ‘speaking class’ and ‘doing class’, was frequently imperfect. The term ‘Indo-European’, for instance, a term with clear racial connotations of miscegenation for contemporaries, was in fact often used as a collective term that encompassed, within the same group, the less-privileged ‘full-bloods’, ‘mixed-bloods’, as well as educated Indonesians on a similar level of respectability. Hence, we can only judge the meaning and importance of terminology if we study it in combination and confrontation with the social practices that it purported to represent. ‘Being European’ or ‘being modern’ were at least as much about wearing the right kind of clothes, living in a suitable neighbourhood, listening to the right kind of music, or visiting the right social establishments, as they were about discursive treatises and explicit racial definitions. This performative aspect of ‘Europeanness’, occurring within a colonial context that was at times inviting and at times restrictive, explains why it was a fuzzy and malleable category—‘proper’ European behaviour could be extremely context-dependent. Consequently, the present study is in essence a cultural history, but one of highly politicized phenomena and with a keen eye for economic constellations.

In my analysis, I have integrated voices from various perspectives: both official and non-official colonizing elites, ‘poor’ (Indo-)Europeans from either an Indisch or a metropolitan background, and (educated) Indonesians living and working either within the colonial system or in explicit opposition to it. All too often, colonial history is written primarily on the basis of official sources, as they tend to be the most readily (and abundantly) available. Ann Stoler has argued for the value of a reading of colonial history ‘along the archival grain’, tracing in detail the obsessions,

idiosyncrasies, as well as the blind spots of official colonial discourse. She thus exposes the ‘epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense’ of empire’s practitioners.\textsuperscript{67} Such a use of sources can indeed be highly rewarding, as Stoler demonstrates in her book. But the focus on official sources has also generated certain biases in the historiography as a whole, especially when they are used to describe and analyse social processes and developments.\textsuperscript{68} It has helped to perpetuate, for example, the cliché that all Eurasians were discriminated against as members of a lower class. In reality, Eurasians were found on many different levels of society, but they can often only be recognized as such if and when they were lower class. Otherwise, the (official) sources would simply not refer to them as ‘Indo-Europeans’ or other comparably derogatory terms. Therefore, we need to listen, additionally, to alternative, subaltern, and especially non-Western voices; ‘Europeanness’ and ‘modernity’ were created and invested with performative force in a tension field between various agents.

The material used in this thesis is located in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague; the Indonesian National Archives in Jakarta; the archive and library of the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies) in Leiden; pamphlets and newspapers found at the library of the KIT (Royal Tropical Institute) in Amsterdam as well as various university libraries in the Netherlands;\textsuperscript{69} a private archive of the \textit{Carpentier Alting Stichting} alumni group, archived by Mr. Harold Penn, Breda; Dutch colonial and Indonesian magazines and pamphlets held at the Indonesian National Library in Jakarta; and the archives of the \textit{Javasche Bank}, stored at the archives of the Indonesian National Bank, Jakarta. Especially in the Dutch National Archives, I consulted several collections that were created by private companies and organizations rather than the colonial government. Moreover, both the Dutch and the Indonesian files and publications contain numerous documents produced by outsiders, for example in the form of petitions to the administration, demands of the company management, or letters to the editors of magazines or newspapers.

\textsuperscript{67} Stoler, \textit{Along the archival grain}, pp. 1-6.
\textsuperscript{69} The KIT and KITLV libraries have been dismantled since they were consulted for this thesis. The materials used here have been integrated in the collections of the Leiden University Library.
Like any student of Indonesian (colonial) history, in this thesis I have had to make some choices regarding spellings, especially of personal names and place names. In late colonial times, a Dutch-based orthography of the Indonesian language was used, which has since been reformed (for example -u- for the colonial era -oe-). I have chosen to use the current orthography for geographic indications as well as for all Indonesian terms and phrases, except for proper names of historical individuals and organizations, where I have preserved the original spelling. Similarly, for Dutch terms and phrases, where appropriate, I have used the present-day spelling rather than the early twentieth-century version (for example Europees instead of Europeesch). All translations from either language are mine, unless otherwise noted.

Structure of the thesis
This thesis is divided into three parts, each of which is subdivided into two or three chapters. The first part focuses on legal constructions of Europeanness. Dutch Indies law instituted a plural legal system and defined three legal categories of people: ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’, and ‘Foreign Orientals’ (mostly Chinese). These legal categories are central for understanding the meaning and significance of ‘Europeanness’ for colonial society more broadly. They formed a permanent background for colonial actors when using the concept of ‘the European’. Law, namely, provides such categories with a considerable stability. It helps them ‘transcend the socio-historical context in which they develop’. By fixing identity categories in the law, a point of reference was created.

In the first chapter, I investigate the fundamental ideological underpinnings of the colonial legal system in the Dutch Indies. I show that throughout the last four decades of colonial rule, proponents of two conflicting principles were engaged in a constant negotiation. On the one hand, there was a strong lobby for legal unification, based on a universalist belief in equal natural rights. On the other hand, cultural relativist lawyers and administrators continued to vouch for the merit of a legally stratified system. Even though there was a fundamental (and constantly re-negotiated) tension between these two convictions, both were ultimately central to the functioning of the late colonial legal system. For the maintenance of the late colonial equilibrium,

it was a fundamental prerequisite that a tenuous balance between universalizing promises and practices of exclusivity was preserved.

Chapter two examines in more detail the 1906 (reformed) draft of the legal article that defined ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’ and ‘Foreign Orientals’, and traces this article’s application and meaning throughout the last decades of colonial rule. It demonstrates, first, that ‘Europeanness’ in the legal sense, despite its seeming fixity, was a relatively inclusive and diverse category. Many reasons to include people in this category were given: culture, class, education, religion, or loyalty to the colonial state. ‘Race’, at least in the sense of social meaning attached to ancestry or somatic features, was only one part of the equation. More important was whether someone was considered ‘developed’ and ‘civilized’, in other words, whether he or she was ‘modern’. Consequently, the category of ‘European’ could be (and was) amended regularly to allow for changing ideas of who belonged to that group, including figures as diverse as the Japanese, (descendants of) Ghanese soldiers, or ‘Indo-Europeans’ with only one male European ancestor in a long-gone past.

In the second half of this chapter, I hone in on one specific subgroup of the legal European group: the Indonesians who had acquired European status through what was called ‘equation’ by law. By 1940, more than 15,000 Indonesians had ‘become European’ in this manner, thus constituting roughly five per cent of a ‘European’ community that numbered approximately 300,000.71 A study of the petitions that Indonesians submitted for this ‘equation’ as well as the bureaucratic treatment of these cases reveals that ‘Europeanness’ was a status to which many Indonesians aspired—for reasons of prestige, professional advancement, or simply because they felt ‘part’ of the ‘European community’. Many of these applicants highlighted their European upbringing and behaviour. The treatment of the petitions, moreover, shows once again that racially based arguments generally fell on deaf ears with the colonial officials.

The second part of this thesis is dedicated to three interconnected case studies concerning education. Together, these chapters demonstrate that social hierarchy in colonial Indonesia, at least for education purposes, was indeed much more gradual than binary, and based on a number of differentiating properties that often had a strong class component. Chapter three describes some of the central features of the

colonial education system. Colonial (primary) education in the Dutch Indies was separated into three tiers: European schools, ‘Dutch-Native’ schools (where Indonesians received a so-called ‘Western’ education), and very basic ‘village schools’. Through a study of the purpose of these various schools as well as their student population, I show that behind this three-tiered system lies a continuous rather than a discrete hierarchy. Elite Indonesians, for example, were allowed to attend the ‘European’ schools (25 per cent of the student population was Indonesian) whereas the ‘Dutch-Native’ schools were geared towards an emerging Indonesian middle class. A case study of the Kartini Foundation, an organization that founded schools where Indonesian girls could receive ‘Western’ education, further shows that these students and their parents were actively and enthusiastically participating in their ‘Westernization’, often going further, for example in their choice of clothing, than the Dutch teachers and school leaders found desirable.

In chapter four, I investigate the Carpentier Alting Foundation, an organization running a group of schools in Batavia for the cream of the colonial youth. The study of these schools shows that the elite that could attend these schools was determined by class factors in addition to race. These schools saw only very limited numbers of Indonesian students, but large sections of the ‘European’ population were equally excluded. Moreover, in the 1920s and 1930s this exclusivity was increasingly staked out by an appeal to the ‘Dutchness’ of the student target group. In this way a hierarchy with further refinements was sketched, by implying subsequent concentric circles through the use of subtle discursive distinctions between proper ‘Dutchness’ (applicable to a small elite), ‘Europeanness’ (including many lower class Europeans as well as some Indonesians), and ‘Westernness’ (open to a growing section of the Indonesian population).

Chapter five shifts the focus away from schools organized or supported by the colonial administration in order to study the contribution of Indonesian voices. It focuses especially on an Indonesian-run educational organization, Taman Siswa, which founded numerous unaccredited schools offering what they called a ‘national Indonesian’ curriculum. The Indonesian dissidents who taught in these schools chose to represent themselves equally as ‘modern’ or ‘developed’, whilst rejecting any association with ‘Dutchness’ or ‘Europeanness’. They were willing to acknowledge that they could learn from what they called ‘Western’ (not ‘European’!) science and technology, yet they emphatically maintained that they represented an authentic
‘Indonesian’ modernity that was not dependent on a ‘European’ culture and lifestyle. ‘Europeanness’ was merely one possible manifestation of modernity, and an oppressive one at that. Surprisingly, therefore, the Taman Siswa leaders, from a very different starting point, came to agree with their conservative Dutch counterparts that ‘Westernness’ and ‘Europeanness’ should be differentiated.

In the third and final part of this thesis, I examine the intricacies of employment policy and workplace relations, exploring specifically life on the work floor in a conglomerate of private railway corporations on North Java (the Zustermaatschappen, Sister Companies) as well as in the Javasche Bank (the Dutch Indies national bank). The three chapters that constitute this part of the thesis focus especially on the position and agency of lower middle class Europeans. As I explain in chapter six, historiography often tends to assume that all ‘Indo-Europeans’ were lower middle class—part of a ‘class of petty clerks’—and conversely that the lower middle class comprised primarily ‘Indo-Europeans’. However, a close examination of the constellation of the lower ranks of ‘European’ staff in the firms studied shows that it is inaccurate to describe these as the ‘Indo’ ranks. The lower ranks were made up of a mixture of (relatively) impoverished ‘full-blood’ expats, Indische Europeans of all sorts, as well as some Indonesians. A further analysis of the Spoorbond, the railway trade union under which these ranks were united, shows that they were frequently proud to present this mixed company as their in-group, actively propagating a self-identification as ‘middle class’ rather than ‘Indo’ or ‘Indisch’.

Chapter seven pursues the fate of this group further, examining the institution of the ‘European furlough’, the right granted to the more senior employees for a recurring leave to ‘Europe’ every few years. I explore who was granted this right and on what grounds. Even though the company managers often openly justified the institution of the furlough with racialized motives—such as ‘Europeans’ needing to recover in a temperate climate—the inherent class-logic of their recruiting rhetoric and of their self-established employment structure meant that sometimes, grudgingly, they had to grant the same rights to Europeans of a mixed background or to (some) Indonesians. In a second part of the chapter, I follow the itinerary of a number of railway employees on their European furlough. Frequently these Indische employees, the lower middle class and elite alike, did not feel (or no longer felt) entirely at home in the Netherlands. They identified as a type of hybrid Oriental European, at least
equally ‘modern’ and developed as their European counterparts, but with roots both in ‘Europe’ as well as in ‘the Indies’.

Finally, in chapter eight, I investigate the social and domestic life in the Indies of the lower-ranked ‘European’ staff of the railway firms. My interest is in company housing projects as well as the social and leisure-time activities of the company employees, showing that the different ethnic groups of a similar class, who worked together in the Sister Companies, did also mix habitually outside work (though not entirely without friction). In the Indies, the social environment of work and leisure-time overlapped significantly. Sports and social clubs were provided by the company or founded together with colleagues. Furthermore, I analyse how these men and women, through their cultural and social interests, performed a form of colonial modernity that was purposely designed to be distinct from metropolitan modernity—but no less European. By the 1920s and 1930s, these ‘Europeans’ in the colony came to self-consciously assert themselves as a distinct and autonomous ‘modern’ society that could equal the metropolitan examples.

‘Europeanness’, in their understanding, was no longer dependent on Europe. The implication, of course, was that colonial ‘Europeanness’ could and would only be negotiated within the Indies. The door was thus open for many different actors in the Indies to demand a place at the negotiating table. At first, this satisfied many Indonesians with a hope for social improvement. When it gradually dawned, however, that their place at the negotiating table was often only advisory and led (at best) to marginal changes, their demands increased in volume. Ultimately, when the negotiations over ‘Europeanness’ were interrupted by the Japanese invasion in 1942, they were postponed indefinitely. After the Japanese occupation ended, many Indonesians refused to return to the table, choosing instead to discuss Indonesian modernities without a Dutch presence.
Part I

Beyond race:
legal constructions of Europeanness in late colonial Indonesia
Chapter 1
The same but different: legal pluralism and the tension between universalism and cultural relativism

Prologue: European and native identity in court

On 8 March 1940, two men appeared before judge M. Swaab at the provincial court of law in Bandung, a bustling colonial town on the island of Java. Swaab had to pass judgment on a quarrel between a Javanese by the name of M. Kanta and a European named J. Stekkinger, both of whom lived in the countryside near Lembang, just north of Bandung. Stekkinger was a small-scale dairy farmer, who had hired Kanta, a contractor, to build a cowshed. Kanta was suing Stekkinger because, he claimed, the latter was unwilling to pay, although Kanta had built the cowshed according to Stekkinger’s instructions. Stekkinger, conversely, claimed that Kanta had not fulfilled his obligations.

The difficulty lay not in the facts of this particular case but rather in the Dutch East Indies’ plural legal system. In the Indies, different groups of people were subject to different bodies of law: a different legal status (‘European’ or ‘native’) entailed different rules and privileges, with an implicit hierarchy of legal status, at the top of which were the Europeans. A complicating factor in this case was that the plaintiff was a native Javanese, whilst the defendant was a European. Judge Swaab had to decide whose laws to apply. In its considerations, the court emphasized that the defendant, Stekkinger, lived in the countryside, in the midst of an otherwise native population, and that his business (small-scale agriculture) was of a native character. The contract between the two litigants should be regarded as a contract between Natives. On the basis of Javanese customary law, the court ruled against Stekkinger, ordering him to pay due compensation.¹

This case, common in a colonial court of law, illustrates the importance of legal identity categories in the everyday reality of colonial rule. It also shows that determining one’s legal status was not a straightforward matter. Legal identity categories were socially embedded and frequently contested. In Stekkinger’s case two

considerations clashed. His origin and personal status were European, but the court judged his behaviour and his social circle to be ‘native’. The contract he signed was accordingly judged as non-European. Rather than presuming automatic European privilege, the court passed a judgement on Stekkinger’s behaviour and standing.

**Universality or cultural relativism: a late colonial dilemma**

The Dutch East Indies was no exception among colonial societies in creating a plural legal system. Legal stratification was a common characteristic of most, if not all, modern colonial systems.² In the case of late colonial Indonesia, the three main categories by which the population was classified were ‘European’, ‘Native’, or ‘Foreign Oriental’. These different groups of people were subject to different rules and regulations, thus impacting significantly how they could and would live their lives in colonial society.

Such legal stratification has been interpreted as the most literal embodiment of Partha Chatterjee’s notion of the ‘rule of colonial difference’. Chatterjee highlighted the importance of an ideology of difference for the maintenance of colonial power structures and practices. In his analysis, colonial states could only be justified by claiming an essential difference between ruler (colonizer) and ruled (colonized).³ Legal differentiation of various population groups helped solidify these social boundaries, which upheld the colonial hierarchy. As Elizabeth Kolsky has argued in her discussion of the British Indian legal system, legal constructions turn certain group categories into the logical way of classifying people; they make it almost impossible not to think of people as belonging to one of the legally certified groups. Law, Kolsky explains, ‘was a site that mediated against the porous social boundaries and unstable racial identities found in all European empires’.² Law did not freeze the fluidity of colonial identities, but it did help it to congeal.

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³ Chatterjee, ‘The colonial state’.

The fundamental assumption behind legal pluralism was presumably one of cultural relativism: ‘cultures’ or ‘circles of civilization’ were fundamentally different, each with their own specific and age-old traditions and developments. ‘European law’ and ‘native law’ were therefore ‘two worlds’, grown out of different historical trajectories that had adapted them to their cultures’ specific needs. Cultural relativism and the exclusionary effort of the ‘rule of colonial difference’ were thus enshrined in the colonial practice of legal pluralism.

Colonial law and its postcolonial legacy have also been interpreted in the exact opposite way: as agents for universalist efforts. From the turn of the twentieth century, in tandem with the emerging belief in a colonial civilizing mission, a strong lobby developed among legal and administrative circles in the Dutch Indies to move towards ‘unification’ of the law. This effort was based on a notion of universal, natural rights that applied to everyone equally. The professed ultimate goal was to ‘civilize’ and ‘develop’ the native population to such a degree that the purview of ‘modern’—i.e. ‘Western’—law could be extended to include them. Even though it was usually conceded that, for practical reasons, the goal of complete legal unification remained in the mid- to long-term future, the promise itself was no less potent. It signalled a belief in the fundamental universality of ‘civilization’, which could (and should) be brought to the colonial world by exporting (‘European’ or ‘Western’) ‘modernity’.

Curiously, then, we can find both universalist ideas and cultural relativist convictions as the fundamental underpinnings of the colonial legal system. Both have at times been criticized as a (malevolent) postcolonial legacy. Universalist ideas of civilization presuppose the superiority of ‘European’ or ‘Western’ civilization whilst discarding non-Western societies as ‘traditional’ or ‘backward’. Such notions exert a

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5 ‘Two worlds’ is a phrase coined by the famous colonial legal scholar Cornelis van Vollenhoven, see: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (NL-HaNA), Ministerie van Koloniën en Opvolgers: Dossierarchief (Koloniën / Dossierarchief), 2.10.54, 758, Memorandum by Prof. B. Ter Haar for the Director of the Justice Department, 24 May 1937; Cees Fasseur, ‘Colonial dilemma: Van Vollenhoven and the struggle between Adat law and Western law in Indonesia’, in Mommsen and De Moor, European expansion, pp. 237-256. See further on Van Vollenhoven below.

potent form of epistemic violence as they propose a developmental project on
‘European’ terms as the (only) solution for ‘Oriental’ backwardness. Cultural
relativist notions, conversely, reify the exclusionary practice of the ‘rule of colonial
difference’ by perpetuating the ‘Otherness’—and often implicitly the inferiority—of
the non-European.

As I argue, however, it is precisely in the interplay between the universalizing
promises (‘modernization’) and the requisites of exclusivity (‘two worlds’) that we
find the characteristic form of the late-colonial system. Even though there was a
fundamental (and constantly re-negotiated) tension between them, both were central
to the functioning of the late-colonial state. For a remarkably long time the late
colonial state managed to balance the ideologies of universality and cultural
relativism, and in doing so created a reasonably stable system that lasted for
approximately four decades.

Colonial discussions about legal pluralism and its merits or disadvantages also
reveal much about the meaning of ‘Europeanness’ in the colonial context, as well as
the role of race and class in defining this category. Legal ‘Europeanness’ in the
colony was not equivalent to ‘Europeanness’ per se, but it was an indispensable frame
of reference. Because ‘Europeanness’ was defined by law, it was a concept that—
whether one liked it or not—could not be ignored. Yet close inspection of the Dutch
colonial example reveals that the supposed colonial difference between ‘ruler’ and
‘ruled’ is not clear-cut. In individual cases, such as that of J. Stekkinger, boundaries
were not so sharp. Who was in fact included in, or excluded from, the groups of
‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’, and for what reasons? How was the meaning of legal
categories affected by the specific situations in which they were used?

These latter questions addressing the precise legal definition of
‘Europeanness’ (as well as its intricacies in daily life) will be discussed in more detail
in chapter 2, where I argue that ‘Europeanness’ was as much about class and lifestyle
as it was about race. The current chapter first explores the justifications that colonial

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7 This point is convincingly made in Stoler and Cooper, ‘Between metropole’, pp. 11-18, 33-37. Also
see Frederick Cooper, ‘Writing the history of development’, in Corinna Unger and Stephan
Malinowski (eds.), ‘Modernizing missions: approaches to “developing” the non-western world after
interpretation of European law in the process of European expansion this emphasizes universalizing
tendencies is Jörg Fisch, ‘Law as a means and as an end: some remarks on the function of European
and non-European law in the process of European expansion’, in Mommsen and De Moor, European
expansion and law, pp. 15-38.
lawyers and administrators provided for the practice of legal stratification—or for advocating legal unification. Debates over this question continued with varying degrees of intensity throughout the last four decades of colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies. They reveal the persistent tension between a universalist and a cultural relativist ideology in the colonial mind. I begin with a short description of the origins and historical development of legal pluralism in the Dutch Indies until the beginning of the twentieth century. Subsequently I distinguish, on the basis of both internal administrative papers as well as published treatises, two lines of argument prevalent in the legal and administrative discussion for justifying the Indies’ legal system: a universalist argument based on a belief in continuous ‘levels of development’, and a cultural relativist analysis that invoked the idea that various cultures had different ‘legal needs’. The chapter concludes with some remarks on the relationship between these two lines of argument, as well as what they reveal about concepts of ‘Europeanness’ in late colonial Indonesia.

The genesis of legal pluralism: article 109RR
Like in most colonial societies, the plural legal system in the Dutch East Indies had a long history. As Lauren Benton has pointed out, legal pluralism may have been far from exclusive to colonial regimes, but legal plurality was more pronounced there and did have a particular salience, because it reflected social and cultural struggles within

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colonial societies. The drawing up of legal boundaries, so Benton argues, was central to colonial politics because these boundaries held cultural significance.⁹

In the Indies, the colonial practice of treating various population groups differently went as far back as the earliest trading settlements of the Dutch East-India Company in the seventeenth century. The Company divided the population of the Indonesian Archipelago into Christians and non-Christians and applied its own (Dutch) laws to the Christians. In practice, its jurisdiction was only enforced in the trading posts, while the legal system of the surrounding indigenous societies remained largely unaffected. This system remained in place for some time, even after the Dutch state officially annexed the Indies as a national colony in the early nineteenth century. Only when the Dutch administration tried to intensify its direct control over larger parts of its colony, in the mid-nineteenth century, was a more formal regulation pursued, resulting in the laws laid down in the Government Regulation (Regeringsreglement, RR, the de facto constitution of the Indies) of 1854, which constitutionalized legal, institutional and administrative pluralism.¹⁰

With the Regeringsreglement, legal pluralism became firmly embedded in a whole range of areas. Not only were ‘Europeans’ subject to ‘European’ law and ‘Natives’ to adat (customary) law, but they were also prosecuted in different courts, and subject to different penitentiary conditions, tax laws, voting rights and militia conscription. ‘Europeans’ could not be sentenced to forced labour in chain gangs, a punishment permissible for Natives. They also had considerably better protection from administrative arbitrariness in such forms as preventive imprisonment and unwarranted house-searches. Furthermore, the respective legal status had important consequences for the daily life of the individuals concerned. Europeans were usually subject to different pay scales and had better career opportunities, both in government and in private employment. They earned pension rights that could be transferred to

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Footnotes:

⁹ Benton, Law and colonial cultures, pp. 7-9.
their surviving relatives, which Natives often did not, since they were not registered in the civil-service registers and hence could not legally prove their family relations. Europeans also had a constitutional right to education that Natives were denied, and they were taught in separate schools that were better staffed and funded than the native schools. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, having European legal status made one a viable marriage partner for other legal Europeans, because the (wife’s) risk of losing European status was averted. European legal status, hence, was not a mere formality. For many, it was a privileged position worth pursuing: the precondition, though not a guarantee, for membership of the social group that formed (most of) the upper stratum of Indies society.

The legal group boundaries were not always the same in every legal area. For example, ‘Natives’ and ‘Foreign Orientals’ had the opportunity to voluntarily subject themselves to ‘European’ civil and commercial law, an opportunity that they did not have in the field of criminal law. Additionally, starting from the early 1920s, voting rights, militia conscription and consular protection when travelling abroad were no longer regulated along ‘racial’ lines, but rather on the basis of nationality, differentiating between ‘Dutch nationals’, ‘Dutch-subjects non-Dutch’ and ‘foreign subjects non-Dutch’ (see chapter 2). Various solutions were possible for different areas of law and administration. However, the other possibilities notwithstanding, the most important stratification by far—both because it was the most frequently applied and because it was often used as the basis for other stratifications—was the trichotomy of ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’ and ‘Foreign Orientals’.

The clause at the core of this legal categorization was article 109 of the Regeringsreglement. In its original form (of 1854) article 109RR only distinguished between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’; the ‘Foreign Orientals’ category was added at a later stage. The two categories of ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ were not further defined.

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13 Verslag commissie Visman, Vol. 1, pp. 52-59; Fasseur, ‘Cornerstone’, pp. 84-91. On consular protection see the discussions in NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 826 and 827.
in the original article. Legislators apparently felt they were self-evident. The
categories did, however, leave a large part of the world unqualified. Therefore, the
article divided the rest of the world’s population—i.e. those who did not originate in
the Indies or the Dutch metropole—into those ‘equated’ with Europeans and those
‘equated’ with Natives. The central criterion for this division was that of religion.
Equated with Natives were all ‘Arabs, Moors, Chinese, and all those who are
Mohammedans or heathens’. Equated with Europeans were all Christians, as well as
all other people who had not been equated with Natives. A special position was
created for ‘native Christians’. They were left subject to the majority of regulations
pertaining to other Natives, with the exception of such areas as family and marriage
law, where all other Natives were subject to their own religious or customary laws.\footnote{14}

In 1899, a minor amendment to article 109RR declared that all Japanese
would be equated with the Europeans. This adjustment was spawned out of purely
political reasons. The Netherlands had recently signed a new treaty with the Japanese
government and in the negotiations Japan had requested equal treatment for its
citizens residing in the Netherlands Indies. Understandably, the Dutch government
did not want to admit this political motive, and the explanatory memorandum to the
law instead stated: ‘[W]e are dealing here with a nation, of which—independent of its
predominant religion—one cannot deny, that, as regards its civilization and
development, it stands on a line with European nations’.\footnote{15} The law in itself did not
change very much in the Indies, as the number of Japanese residents was relatively
small, but it did compromise the basic principle of the clear division advocated in
article 109. It became increasingly difficult to explain to the large Chinese community
in the Indies, as well as to educated Indonesians, why the Japanese could be treated as
Europeans, whilst they could not. This discrepancy became one of the main
arguments of those advocating reform of the legal system. Over the following
decades, Indonesians and Chinese alike took inspiration from the recurring successes

\footnote{14} For article 109RR in its original form: Lijnkamp, De ‘Japannerwet’, p. 21. A preliminary form was
already laid down in article 6 and 7 of the Algemeene Bepalingen van Wetgeving voor Nederlandsch-
Indië (General Provisions of Legislations for the Dutch Indies) of 1848, the direct precursor of the
Government Regulation of 1854. Lijnkamp, De ‘Japannerwet’, pp. 14-16. Also see Mastenbroek, De
historische ontwikkeling; pp. 53-81; Prins, ‘De bevolkingsgroepen’, pp. 662-668; NL-HaNA, Koloniën

\footnote{15} The explanatory memorandum is cited in Lijnkamp, De ‘Japannerwet’, pp. 26-27.
of Japan in securing its place in the realm of ‘civilized’ nations, in order to argue for the possibility of their own (future) eligibility to be regarded as ‘civilized’.

More generally as well, various colonial politicians in the Netherlands around the turn of the century started advocating reform of the legal system in the Indies. The ‘modernization’ of the Indies’ society in their eyes made it imperative that Dutch law become more dominant, and for the native customary (adat) law to be gradually phased out. The Ministry of the Colonies in 1904 sent a bill to parliament proposing a new system that would make these changes possible. But heavy opposition by a majority of parliament defeated this reform that would have set the Indies legal system on a path to (formal) unification. In the wake of this debate, in 1906, a new article 109RR was drafted that made two significant changes to the way the Indies’ population was categorized.16 First, the division into two groups, Europeans and Natives, was supplemented with a third, intermediate, group: the ‘Foreign Orientals’. Second, the criterion of religion—which had previously demarcated the boundary between those equated with ‘Europeans’ and the others—was officially abandoned. The newly drafted article only came into force in 1920, as some minor editorial problems (that do not concern us here) meant that the draft had to be postponed until a sequel was finally adopted by parliament in 1919. This version of article 109RR was transferred without changes as article 163 when the Regeringsreglement was replaced by the Indische Staatsregeling in 1925, and remained in force until the very end of the colonial era.17

Article 109RR itself did not actually decree legal pluralism. Rather, the article was conditional. It defined what should be understood under Europeans, Natives, and Foreign Orientals if and when the law differentiated between these groups. But legal

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16 For the full text of article 109RR in the version of 1906: W.A. Engelbrecht (ed.), De Nederlandsch-Indische wetboeken benevens de Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden en de belangrijkste in Nederlandsch-Indië geldende algemene verordeningen en besluiten (Leiden: Sijthoff’s Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1940), pp. 67-68. Article 109RR capitalises both ‘Native’ and ‘Foreign Oriental’, but this usage is not uniform throughout the legal and administrative documentation (whereas for European it is). In this thesis, following the general but not universal tendency of the sources, I have chosen to write ‘Native’ and ‘Foreign Oriental’ where they are used as substantives, and ‘native’ and ‘(foreign) oriental’ as an adjective.

pluralism was deeply engrained in legal and administrative practice in other ways as well. Moreover, because the *Regeringsreglement* recognized the existence of these three particular categories—Europeans, Natives and Foreign Orientals—it was only natural for legislators and judges to take these as the basis of the differentiations they made. Hence, article 109RR became the symbolic core of the practice of legal pluralism.\footnote{\textit{Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken}, p. 67; Mastenbroek, \textit{De historische ontwikkeling}, pp. 84-86; \textit{Verslag commissie Visman}, Vol. 2, pp. 46, 70-71.}

In the body of the article, it was determined first of all who was ‘subject’ (*onderworpen*) to the ‘stipulations for Europeans’ (*Europeaanen*), namely: ‘all Netherlanders’, ‘all persons [...] originating from Europe’, ‘all Japanese’, ‘all those people coming from elsewhere, [...] who in their country would be subject to a family law, essentially founded on the same principles as the Dutch [family law]’, and finally the ‘legitimate or legally recognized children and further descendants’ of these people. Furthermore, the article included a clause giving the Governor-General the right to declare the stipulations for Europeans ‘applicable’ to other people who would not normally be subject to them. This latter practice was informally known as legal ‘equation’ (*gelijkstelling*). Subject to the stipulations for ‘Natives’ (*Inlanders*) were— with partial exceptions for native Christians, to be made by statute—‘all those, who belong to the indigenous [*inheemsche*] population of the Dutch Indies, and have not transferred to a different population group than that of the Natives’, as well as those who were originally part of a different population group, but had since ‘dissolved’ into the indigenous population. All those not covered by the terms for Europeans and Natives were subject to the stipulations for Foreign Orientals (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*). Finally, the article gave everyone the right to have a judge determine to which of the above categories they belonged.\footnote{\textit{Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken}, pp. 67-68. The last provision, that everyone could have his or her status determined, was never put into practice. Various departments in the administration could not come to an agreement on how this would be implemented, and thus the plan was never realized. In practice this made no difference, as one could always challenge one’s status (and therefore the court’s jurisdiction) as soon as one was actually sued, thus forcing the court to pass a judgement on the issue. See various documents in NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 746.}

As can be read from these legal clauses, it was possible for individuals to change legal status, either (as a Native or Foreign Oriental) by having European statute declared ‘applicable’ or (as a European or Foreign Oriental) by ‘dissolving’ into the indigenous populations. The potential to change legal status, in either
direction, seems like a remarkable legal feature. If we perceive the plural legal system as the embodiment of the ‘rule of colonial difference’—the requisite to keep ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’ separate—then the explicitly sanctioned possibility to transgress boundaries begs an explanation. Although this mitigation of legal pluralism can be seen partly as a concession to the proponents of legal unification, it is nevertheless striking that even the most ardent defenders of strict legal pluralism saw it as an unproblematic (or even beneficial) aspect of the system.

To understand the reasoning that led to this conclusion, we need to examine the ideological justification that both schools of colonial lawyers and administrators—universalists and cultural relativists—promoted for the existing legal system in late colonial Indonesia. Both lines of argument kept each other in relative balance, creating a surprising continuity in the legal debate as a whole for most of the last four decades of colonial rule. As I argue, in fact, colonial stability was achieved precisely because a discourse of pluralism was combined with a (small) degree of malleability in the practical application of categories.

‘Stages of development’: Europeanness as civilization
The universalist ideal of legal unification initially gained an influential following in the Dutch East Indies around the turn of the twentieth century, in the wake of the recently inaugurated ‘ethical policy’ (the Dutch version of the ‘civilizing mission’). Many of the central political figures, including the Ministers of Colonial Affairs Alexander W.F. Idenburg (1902-1905, 1908-1909) and Dirk Fock (1905-1908), supported such a policy. Despite this high-level support, however, the objective of full formal unification was not achieved. As noted above, the bill that was proposed to the Dutch parliament in 1904 failed at the hands of a dissenting majority. Nevertheless, the reforms that followed in 1906, as well as further legal developments in the subsequent decades, made (minor) concessions to the ideal of unification. Throughout the last forty years of colonial rule a succession of influential figures in colonial legal circles would continue to advocate further steps along the path of unification. At least as a professed eventual goal of legal developments in colonial Indonesia, however far removed in practice, the notion of legal unification remained prominent.20

Proponents of unification professed their unease with what they habitually termed the ‘race criterion’ (*rascriterium*): the principle of rigid stratification, as symbolized by article 109RR. Even so, many if not most of these legislators and administrators were not in favour of overthrowing the system in one fell swoop. Their efforts were directed towards making boundaries more porous and widening the perimeters of the ‘European’ group. They wanted to specify a new yardstick that could be used to draw boundaries anew and keep them flexible for incremental expansion in the decades to come, because a small but growing part of the native (and Chinese) inhabitants had developed to a stage where they could and should be set on an equal legal footing with the Europeans. These people were no longer to be regarded as ruled masses. Nevertheless, as some commentators were quick to point out, only in a distant future would the original ‘Europeans’ lose their dominance in the newly to be formed group. In any case, the various legislators agreed, any potential new arrangement should be based on criteria that had been uniquely, and were still now predominantly, associated with European civilization. It was after all the Europeans who had educated the Natives and brought them to where they were now.

A central notion in the unification debate was that of ‘development’ (*ontwikkeling*). It was argued that those who had reached a higher stage of development—or in other words, a higher ‘level of civilization’—should be aggregated in one legal group. A state commission appointed to explore the possibilities of legal reform put it as follows in its report published in 1920:

> The significance of the individual for society can no longer be derived from race or religion; wholly different factors now act upon that, and gradually more and more; the economic strength, the intellectual development, the moral

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22 For a very explicit statement of this argument: ‘Indische correspondentie: op den goeden weg?’, article from *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 27 October 1909, found in NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 932.
significance of the individual determine more and more, in these parts as in Western countries, the value of the individual for the community.\textsuperscript{23}

The reform commission therefore advocated drawing boundaries on the basis of a criterion of ‘development’ rather than ‘race’. The report argued, for example, for reformed voting rights along these lines: ‘[T]he Commission would not want participatory rights to be offered to all inhabitants equally. Its proposed system takes into account the level of development when granting these rights.’\textsuperscript{24}

The proposals of the 1920 reform commission were initially received with enthusiasm by the colonial administration,\textsuperscript{25} but they were heavily watered down in the following years. Nevertheless, similar notions continued to be proposed in the subsequent decades by various government commissions or individual administrators (with varying degrees of success).\textsuperscript{26} In fact, aspects of a ‘development criterion’ had already been partially incorporated in the plural legal system as it had come into existence after the 1906 reforms. For example, it was part of the justification for incorporating the Japanese into the European group. The proficient appropriation of ‘civilization’ by the Japanese and their subsequently elevated profile on the geopolitical stage—consider for example the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese war—had qualified them for membership of the ‘European’ group. The increasing number of Natives and Foreign Orientals who were allowed to transfer to the European legal group from the 1910s onwards might also be seen as a consequence of thinking in terms of ‘development’.\textsuperscript{27} In the eyes of colonial lawyers, a political and intellectual ‘awakening of the East’ was taking place, which would still take a long time to complete but had already started to produce growing numbers of developed


\textsuperscript{24} Verslag herzieningscommissie, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{25} See, e.g., NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 745, Advice by the Council of the Netherlands Indies, 22 December 1920.


\textsuperscript{27} Numbers gradually increased from isolated individual cases in the 1890s to several hundreds each year by the 1930s. See chapter 2 of this thesis.
‘Orientals’. As they had received ‘European’ education, they naturally became more eligible for European status.\textsuperscript{28} A belief in ‘development’ thus came to define a boundary between Europeans and ‘Europeanized’ Natives or Foreign Orientals on the one side and all others on the other side.\textsuperscript{29}

The importance of a notion of ‘Europeanization’ stands out more clearly if we draw out in more detail what was actually meant by the notion of ‘development’. The elaboration of this notion usually remained very abstract—a sign that it was often an imprecise catch-all term for common sense conventions. The 1920 reform commission in the above quotation cited the ‘intellectual development’ and the ‘moral significance of the individual’. It did not explain what these actually implied or how they should be measured.\textsuperscript{30} In other reports and treatises on this same topic we can see the ‘developed’ group defined as the ‘thinking part’ of the population.\textsuperscript{31} A later reform commission, established in 1940 with the task of studying the possibilities for constitutional reform and chaired by a member of the Council of the Indies, F.H. Visman, suggested that candidates for government employment could still be differentiated into groups, but that they should be judged on the basis of their individual ‘suitability’ for certain positions. In addition to markers such as (Dutch) language proficiency, one could also evaluate a candidate’s ‘appearance, demeanour, [and] manners’. As the commission was eager to add, the ‘manners’ it required to qualify for important positions would remain ‘of Western nature’ for quite some time in the future.\textsuperscript{32}

In short, even the proponents of legal unification granted that for the foreseeable future the common, undeveloped Native would remain in a separate group

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. Prins, ‘De bevolkingsgroepen’, p. 685; Van Marle, ‘De groep der Europenen’, pp. 107-116. The notion of an ‘awakening of the East’ is present in many sources, e.g.: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 1032, Neijtzel de Wilde, De rechtsbedoeeling, p. 91-99; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 1032, Memorandum from department A1 (Legal Affairs) of the Ministry for Colonial Affairs, early 1939; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 7791, Letter from the Minister for Colonial Affairs to the Governor-General, 22 July 1931.

\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Daniel S. Lev’s concise and poignant remark: ‘In effect, while the Indonesian elite assimilated themselves socially to the fashions, styles, and habits of the Dutch community, the law also assimilated them politically.’ Lev, ‘Colonial law’, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{30} Verslag herzieningscommissie, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{31} NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 929, Letter to the Minister for Colonial Affairs from the State Commission for the Revision of the Indian private and criminal law, 21 December 1908, §2; Verslag commissie Visman, Vol. 2, p. 23; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 746, mail report 165x/’22, Letter from the Director for Legal Affairs (Filet) to the Governor-General, 1 February 1922, pp. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{32} Verslag commissie Visman, Vol. 2, p. 91-94.
from the elites. Europeans needed a complex legal framework, but the native commoner benefited from simpler and less abstract legislation and administration. This argument was sometimes—more so around the turn of the century than in later decades—couched in a family metaphor: most Natives were only children, still developing, and in need of the guardianship, guidance, and education of Europeans. Only those few Natives and Foreign Orientals that had learned and appropriated modern ways of life from their former European superiors should be considered on an equal level.33 ‘Development’ was associated with a process of ‘Europeanization’.

The notion of ‘development’ employed in these legal treatises bears a strong association to ideas on modernity. In the political realm, for example, colonial lawyers noted a heightened political consciousness among Indonesian elites and an increasing urge for political freedom and emancipation—an ‘awakening of the East’. These developments, they claimed, had been brought about by the spread of ‘modern knowledge and development’34 as a result of ‘European’ education. The emergence of Indonesian political movements was thus explained as the result of the efforts of a small elite, educated by Europeans in the ‘European’ or ‘Western’ political values of freedom and participation.35

A very similar argument was advanced for the economic realm. ‘Development’ in economic terms was equated with the accruement of ‘economic power’,36 which in practice meant deploying ‘European’ capitalist economic activities. This explains, for instance, why it was thought appropriate that the exploits of J. Stekkinger, the small-scale dairy farmer in the introduction to this chapter, should be adjudicated under native law. Colonial Indonesian society and economy, the colonial lawyers argued, was modernizing rapidly through the intervention of

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34 Verslag herzieningscommissie, p. 293.
35 This account is a very condensed version of an argument that was normally made both less explicitly and less rigorously, but it is the (sometimes unspoken) underlying point of view. For passages that illustrate this see Verslag herzieningscommissie, pp. 53-57, 291-304; Verslag commissie Visman, Vol. 1: passim, Vol. 2: p. 14; Carpentier Alting, ‘Het rassencriterium’, pp. 183-202; cf. Civis Germanus, ‘Indië’s politieke toekomst’, Koloniale Studiën 5 (1921), pp. 101-108.
36 Verslag herzieningscommissie, p. 40; cf. the dissenting opinion by commission member F. van Lith (p. 400), who saw the European group as characterized by: ‘capital, knowledge and power’.
‘European spirit of enterprise and European civilization’,\(^{37}\) and was thus increasingly adopting features of a European society. Traffic, both of people and of goods, had increased greatly, as had the use of money. These ‘modern’ developments had essentially been brought about by Europeans, who were predominantly occupied in commercial activities and government, while the great mass of Indonesians had continued to work in agriculture. Only a small contingent of ‘non-Europeans’ had recently started to enter these classically ‘European’ professions, and could consequently be classified as ‘developed’ and ‘Europeanized’ or ‘Westernized’.\(^{38}\)

Hence, ‘development’ was interpreted as progression in the direction of a notion of ‘modernity’ that was defined in terms of ‘Western’ political values as well as ‘Western-style’ capitalism.

It is, incidentally, difficult to determine what the difference is between the terms ‘European’ and ‘Western’ in this line of argument. The two concepts are often used interchangeably in the sources. ‘European’ was the term that was explicitly sanctioned by law as defining the privileged group, but the word ‘Western’ was also applied, more informally, in the legal discussions. In many cases the two terms can be considered synonyms.\(^{39}\) When and for what reasons one term was preferred over the other is hard to pinpoint, as the usage is anything but consistent. If one were to formulate a general rule, it seems that ‘Western’ meant ‘a product of European culture or history’, whereas ‘European’ was used more literally for ‘originating from Europe’. For example, ‘modernity’ was seen as a ‘European’ product. But when speaking of ‘modernized’ or ‘developed’ Natives and Foreign Orientals, colonial actors preferred

\(^{37}\) ‘Indische correspondentie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 27 October 1909, found in NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 932.

\(^{38}\) Similarly, this is a very condensed account of an argument rarely stated in such a concise way. See for passages that illustrate this point NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 933, Memorandum from department A1 (Legal Affairs) of the Ministry for Colonial Affairs, 10 December 1909; *Verslag herzieningscommissie*, pp. 39-40, 291-304; *Verslag commissie Visman*, Vol. 2, pp 59-69; Carpentier Alting, ‘Het rassencriterium’, pp. 183-186; Mastenbroek, *De historische ontwikkeling*, pp. 97-105; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by J.J. Schrieke, letter No. 11-7, pp. 14-16.

to speak of ‘Western’ rather than ‘European’ development.\textsuperscript{40} It should be stressed, though, that this general rule is only indicative, as ‘European’ was also widely used to mean a ‘product of European culture’, just as ‘Westerner’ was regularly used as a synonym for ‘European’.\textsuperscript{41}

Apart from economic activity and wealth, language proficiency and literacy were other norms that were frequently employed to measure the level of ‘development’ of Natives and Foreign Orientals. ‘European’ primary schools, for example, were open to non-European children, provided that their ‘usual home- and everyday language’ was Dutch.\textsuperscript{42} Literacy was adopted as one of the norms for the voting system. Active and passive voting rights were distributed on the basis of literacy in the Dutch language, because, as the 1920 reform commission claimed, ‘without knowledge of Dutch, obtaining a satisfactory judgement of political questions is simply impossible’. Some dissenting commission members disagreed, arguing that literacy in a native language would be sufficient. Reforms in the voting system in 1925 followed their lead.\textsuperscript{43} To avoid too great a devaluation of the ‘European’ influence in the elections, a census suffrage was added to the literacy criterion that, while making suffrage formally universal, preserved a considerable majority of ‘European’ voters.\textsuperscript{44}

In the abstract treatises of legal scholars and administrators, the norms of literacy and wealth—both relatively simple attributes to measure—were usually the only concrete definitions provided for the notion of ‘development’. In the everyday reality of the courtroom, however, in cases such as Stekkinger’s, judges had to be more explicit. They were forced to justify their decision on whether to apply

\textsuperscript{40} See references in the previous footnote, as well as: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by J.J. Schrieke, letter No. 11-7, pp. 14-16; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by the Commission Logemann, §113-124. The rising geopolitical (and imperial) importance of the United States may have also contributed to the rising prominence of the term ‘Western’. For more extensive discussion of the relation between ‘Western’ and ‘European’ see chapter 3 in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{41} Such interchangeable use of terms was much less common between ‘Asian’ and ‘Oriental’. ‘Oriental’ (\textit{Oostersch} or \textit{Oosterling}, literally ‘Eastern’ and ‘Easterner’) was the word of choice, ‘Asian’ was hardly ever used.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Verslag commissie Visman}, Vol. 2, pp. 56-57. Also see chapter 3 in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Verslag herzieningscommissie}, pp. 392-393, 449-450, 563-569, citation on p. 565. The voting system in the Dutch East Indies was extremely complicated, as different rules applied at different levels and in different territorial areas. The literacy criteria described were widely spread, though not implemented on all levels. See for an extensive discussion: \textit{Verslag commissie Visman}, Vol. 1, passim; \textit{Verslag commissie Visman} Vol. 2, pp. 76-84.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Verslag commissie Visman}, Vol. 2, pp. 76-84; \textit{Verslag herzieningscommissie}, pp. 418-419, 563-569.
European or native law. The solutions that they sought illustrate how ‘development’ and ‘Europeanness’ (or ‘Europeanization’) were interpreted in practice, as can be shown with a short foray into the field of labour law.

Dutch Indies’ labour law had to accommodate the prospect of labour contracts between an employer and an employee from different population groups (most commonly a European employer and a native employee) in which case it was not automatically clear whose law was to be applied. If both parties had not made this explicit in the contract, the rule was that European law was to be applied to Natives if the kind of work they were performing was *ordinarily* done by Europeans. Thus, officially, courts deciding on this type of labour conflict were supposed to determine whether a certain profession was ‘European’ or not by studying the number of employees from the various population groups undertaking similar work: were customs officials, for example, mostly Europeans or natives? What about photojournalists or newspaper typists? As the statistics for such studies were generally not available, in practice judges often relied on different factors.**45**

In most cases, the judges did not specify the reason for their decisions, which again can be interpreted as a sign that there were common sense notions of what ‘European work’ was that the judges could fall back on. In the cases where judges did explain their reasoning, it was mostly based on either the wages or on the ‘nature of the work itself’. If the work required considerable ‘intellectual achievements’ and was not of a ‘most simple or almost mechanical’ nature, it could be considered European.**46** An important marker used by judges in this regard was the amount of independence and responsibility the employee had, and whether he needed an education of some kind to fulfil his role. Language proficiency was also a regularly cited criterion for certain professions, especially translation work and/or correspondence in Dutch and English.**47**

On the basis of these criteria, various courts decided that the following professions (among others) were ‘European’: code-work in Malay and Dutch, customs officer, newspaper editor, and pastor. Conversely, there was a clear

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consensus over the non-European nature of jobs such as domestic servant, caretaker, or driver. In between these functions, a whole range of professions were adjudicated with less certainty by the courts, especially low-level white-collar occupations such as shop assistant or simple accountant, but also skilled crafts like car mechanics. Such jobs did require a certain amount of education, but were not judged as particularly sophisticated or responsible. Various courts decided differently in these cases.\footnote{Van Tetering, ‘De arbeidsovereenkomst met werknemers, behorende tot de bevolkingsgroep der Inlanders en Vreemde Oosterlingen’, \textit{Indisch Tijdschrift van het Recht}, No. 154, 1941, pp. 439-457.}

Determining the ‘Europeanness’ of a certain profession, in short, was not always easy for colonial judges. The law simply supposed that Europeans and Natives ordinarily had different fields of occupation, but the situation judges were confronted with was more heterogeneous. They tried to make sense of this situation by looking at professions in terms of wages—an easily quantifiable marker—or more typically in terms of the level of intellectual development they thought was needed for a particular occupation. Consequently, cultural factors came into play to define the ‘development’ and the ‘Europeanness’ of certain professions. Courts ended up judging on the basis of such volatile cultural markers as education, independence, responsibility, literacy, and language proficiency.

The fact that notions of ‘development’ and ‘civilization’ were of central importance in defining the intricate workings of the legal system in the Dutch East Indies demonstrates that universalist ideas played a significant role in late colonial ideology. The promise of a civilizing mission and of (eventual) political participation for all was a basic part of the professed justification for late colonial rule. It pervaded the legal discourse throughout the last four decades of colonial rule. ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’, respectively, were not presented as fundamentally and insurmountably different; ‘Europeans’, in general, had merely reached a more advanced level of ‘development’. The legal and administrative system was therefore designed to give expression to the universalist principle: it included various grey zones and possibilities for boundary transgression. Even if in practice these options were only open to a very limited number of people, the rhetoric as well as the myriad policy proposals coming from proponents of (further) legal unification—often with high positions in the colonial administration—shows that it was an integral aspect of late
colonial rule to imagine ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ as part of the same civilizational trajectory.

‘Social and legal needs’: Europeanness as a cultural sphere
Late colonial rule in the Dutch Indies did not rely exclusively on a universalist ideology. Paradoxically, cultural relativist beliefs were equally central in justifying the colonial system. As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, plural legal systems in colonies across the globe have been interpreted as the most literal embodiment of the ‘rule of colonial difference’. After all, only if the ‘rulers’ were constructed as fundamentally different from the ‘ruled’ could the continued existence of foreign rule be morally justified. Such a conclusion is indeed partly vindicated by the fact that, despite various concessions to universalist principles, a plural legal system did persist in the Dutch East Indies until the end of the colonial era. The proponents of legal unification encountered stiff opposition from a cultural relativist legal school, which was more openly attached to the plural legal system and succeeded in averting the abolition of legal pluralism. Together, these two schools generated a surprisingly stable equilibrium in the late colonial legal discourse.

Central to the cultural relativist line of thinking was a notion of ‘social’ or ‘legal needs’.49 This notion was explicitly incorporated in the colonial law books. With the introduction of the Indische Staatsregeling as the replacement of the Regeringsreglement in 1925, namely, ‘social needs’ were cited as the reason to differentiate Natives and Foreign Orientals from Europeans in the realm of private law.50 It was argued that a unified legal system would not be able to do justice to the extreme social and ethnic diversity of Dutch Indies’ society. The magic word in this context was ‘equal’ (gelijkwaardig), as opposed to ‘uniform’ (gelijk or eenvormig). In

49 ‘Social needs’: Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken, pp. 62-63 (Article 131 IS, paragraph 2b); NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 748, Advice by the Council of the Netherlands Indies, 27 July 1928, No. XXIV, §28; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 758, Advice by the Council of the Netherlands Indies, 22 May 1937, §7. ‘Legal needs’: Verslag herzieningscommissie, pp. 50-51; Verslag commissie Visman, Vol. 2, pp. 24, 46, 60-61, 69, 74; Carpentier Alting, ‘Het rassencriterium’, p. 206 (reaction by C. van Vollenhoven to Carpentier Alting’s lecture); NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 745; Message from the Director of the Justice Department to the Governor-General, No. 31/20, 21 January 1920; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by the Commission Logemann, §33-35.
50 Article 131, paragraph 2b: Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken, pp. 62-63. The notion was also part of the official guidelines that the Governor-General handed down to regulate the handling of requests by Natives to be equated to Europeans. See chapter 2 of this thesis.
1930, for example, in a recommendation to the Governor-General, the Council of the Indies stated:

Predominant is the principle of equality [gelijkwaardigheidsbeginsel]. Regularly this principle in its application will lead to legal uniformity, namely then when the interests protected by the legal order are the same. But it will also regularly leave room for legal diversity, namely then when the legal needs of the various population groups deviate.\(^5\)

In a form reminiscent of the ‘separate-but-equal’ doctrine of the American South, colonial lawyers claimed that the system did not necessarily need to be the same for everyone. More importantly, it should provide everyone with a legal system that equally protected his or her particular social and legal needs.\(^5\)

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the great champion of the cause of legal pluralism based on a notion of ‘legal needs’ had been Cornelis van Vollenhoven, a professor of Indies’ Law at Leiden University. Van Vollenhoven had been instrumental in organizing the opposition against the unification bill of 1904. He had a reputation as the grand old man on the subject of adat (or native customary) law, and as such he was responsible for the education of a whole generation of legal scholars and administrators in the Indies, who started to assume office in the 1920s and 1930s. His influence can hardly be overstated. His fundamental assumption—which also inspired the ‘legal needs’ notion—was that different cultures existed side by side and that each had the right to exist. Although Van Vollenhoven, like most commentators, pointed out that this analysis also meant that different ‘Natives’ could have varying ‘legal needs’, the difference between Europeans and non-Europeans (both Native and Foreign Oriental) remained the main focus of the debate. In Van Vollenhoven’s view, European law and native law were ‘two worlds’, grown out of

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\(^5\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 750, Advice by the Council of the Netherlands Indies, 17 October 1930.

\(^5\) Cf. the references in the previous footnotes, as well as: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 745, Report Commission Sonneveld, pp. 7-8; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 751, De Kat Angelino, Some remarks on the memorandum of the 1st Department concerning equalization of population groups in the Netherlands Indies, 27 June 1931; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 754, Memorandum from the Director of the Justice Department to the Governor-General, 7 October 1933.
different historical trajectories that had adapted them to their cultures’ specific needs.\footnote{On Van Vollenhoven and his ideas, and on the Leiden adat school of law: Fasseur, ‘Colonial dilemma’; Lev, ‘Colonial law’, pp. 63-67; J.S. Davidson and D. Henly, The revival of tradition in Indonesian politics: the deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Hooker, ‘Dutch colonial law’, pp. 250-263. For ‘two worlds’, see: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 758, 2.10.54, 758, Memorandum by Prof. B. Ter Haar for the Director of the Justice Department, 24 May 1937. Ter Haar quotes Van Vollenhoven’s Adatrecht van Nederlandsch-Indië.}

Proponents of legal unification and the followers of Van Vollenhoven’s pluralist approach have often been portrayed in the historiography as rival schools in fierce competition.\footnote{Fasseur, ‘Colonial dilemma’; Fasseur, ‘Cornerstone’; Lev, ‘Colonial law’, pp. 63-67.} Considering the at times heated rhetoric over the issue of unification versus pluralism, such a perspective has some validity. Nonetheless, both lines of argument could and did in fact co-exist, intermingle, and overlap. The influential legal scholar and administrator J.H. Carpentier Alting, for example, was not a particularly dedicated follower of either school, but rather found a middle ground that most colonial administrators could accept. In 1921, he explained to a group of scholars in the Netherlands (with Van Vollenhoven among the audience) that: ‘[A] legislator in a country like the Dutch Indies with its population of millions of souls, of dozens of nations, standing on different levels of development, with between them very different cultural conditions, constantly [has to] take into account the existing difference in interests and needs, when laying down regulations.’\footnote{Carpentier Alting, ‘Het rassencriterium’, p. 183.} In this way, Carpentier Alting justified identifying different ‘needs’ by pointing at ‘different levels of development’.

Moreover, the cultural relativist approach was never taken to its consequent extreme in actual legal practice. The law made a proviso for what were called ‘generally acknowledged principles of fairness and justice’. When the adat proscribed laws that were unpalatable to ‘civilized people’, judges were allowed to ignore these and use their own sense of justice. This rule gave judges a significant amount of leeway in individual cases. In practice, as most contemporary authors themselves were well aware and willing to admit, this meant that European legal principles—ostensibly the more civilized and ethically advanced—entered through the back door. An extreme example in which this rule was invoked was the custom in Bali that wives
were to follow their husbands in death, but it was also used in much less extreme cases, thus functioning to insert European law into the *adat*.

It may therefore be somewhat artificial to treat the universalist belief in ‘development’ and the particularist allegiance to ‘legal needs’ as strictly separate ideologies. Contemporary actors were less analytically stringent in their arguments, regularly slipping between the two forms. Professed advocates of legal unification spoke in universalist terms but simultaneously acted in particularist ways, whilst followers of the *adat* school spoke in cultural relativist terms but were, in practice, open to unifying aspects. Rather than a fierce battle between two rival schools, the daily administration of colonial justice was a constant balancing act.

Nevertheless, both lines of argument, taken at face value, represent profoundly different views on the nature of law. The notion of ‘development’ presumes that there exists only one potential trajectory of progress. Different cultures are at different stages on this path, and the Europeans—obviously—have so far gone the furthest. Advocates of this view were more inclined to think in terms of universal, natural rights that applied to everyone but had to be adjusted to someone’s stage of development. The notion of ‘social and legal needs’, instead, starts from the belief that cultures are fundamentally different. In legal terms, this argument shows clear signs of the influence of the German Historical School, which claimed that law is (or should be) grounded in national traditions. In short, even though arguments based on ideas of ‘development’ and arguments citing ‘legal needs’ often intertwined in colonial legal discourse, they represent fundamentally different perspectives. As such, the awkward but lasting co-existence of these two ideologies is representative of a

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57 The German Historical School was highly influential in Dutch legal scholarship of the nineteenth century, superseding the predominance of ideas of ‘natural’ law. In the early twentieth century it was complemented by ideas deriving from sociology of law, but its principle that law derived (or should derive) from popular traditions remained influential. Govaert C.J.J. van den Bergh, *Geleerd recht: een geschiedenis van de Europese rechtswetenschap in vogelvlucht* (4th rev. edn.; Deventer: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 105-161; cf. Kolff, ‘The Indian and the British law machines’, pp. 220-228. Friedrich Carl von Savigny, founder and leading proponent of the Historical School, was actually explicitly quoted by Dutch colonial lawyers in support of a policy of legal pluralism: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 933, Memorandum from department A1 (Legal Affairs), 10 December 1909.
deeper paradox of the late colonial state, which claimed a civilizing mission but simultaneously had to maintain a deeply unequal system.

The same tension is reflected in the attitude towards concepts of ‘modernity’. As was shown, the development-argument awarded this concept a central role. A pluralist view that claims different cultures have their own trajectory and their own intrinsic worth has more difficulty accommodating the intrinsically hierarchical idea of modernity. Nevertheless, notions of modernity are still occasionally present in the context of the cultural relativist argument, but in a very different way. Its usage is more reminiscent of present-day ideas of multiple modernities.\(^58\) As I.A. Nederburgh writes, with regard to Japan: ‘The matter is not whether this nation is civilized and developed, [...] but which is its civilization.’ Japan may have been able to modernize itself physically and socially, ‘[b]ut can one say that this also involved a revolution of morals and conceptions, of the nature of the people, which made it lose its Eastern character?’\(^59\) Modernity in this interpretation is not a universal concept only associated with Europe, but can rather appear in different societies, with different manifestations.\(^60\)

Despite the strong emphasis on an idea of different cultures inherent in the ‘legal needs’ argument, the notion of culture itself was often only vaguely defined. For example, the Encyclopaedia of the Dutch Indies simply speaks of the ‘difference in forms of life, morals, legal needs, political evolution etc.’, without further elaboration.\(^61\) Similarly, Nederburgh in his *Wet en Adat* speaks of the ‘morals and conceptions, [...] the character of the people’.\(^62\) Other typical phrases used to explain what ‘cultures’ entailed included ‘souls and ways of life’,\(^63\) or ‘cultural heritage, way

\(^58\) The ‘multiple modernities’ concept was proposed by Eisenstadt: Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Multiple modernities* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002); Eisenstadt, *Comparative civilizations and multiple modernities* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).


\(^60\) Another example of this argument is the discussion by Dutch colonial lawyers of Chinese family law, which was described as ‘modern’ but not necessarily ‘western’ (see chapter 2). NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 1032, Neijtzell de Wilde, De rechtsbedeeling der Indische bevolkingsgroepen, pp. 101-105; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 752, Letter from the Minister for Colonial Affairs to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 22 January 1932.


\(^63\) In Dutch: ‘inborst en leefwijze’. *Verslag herzieningscommissie*, p. 413 (dissenting opinion by members Kan, Kindermann and Welter).
of life and economic importance’.

A very important related notion was that of ‘upbringing’. For example, the rule that Indo-European children of a European father and a native mother were legally European was justified by the simple fact that these children had been ‘raised in a European sphere’. In short, legislators and administrators left it to the imagination of the reader—or more importantly: the judge—to envisage what characterized a cultural sphere more concretely.

In the sources I have studied, I found only one concrete example where the ‘European’ and the ‘Native’ or ‘Oriental’ cultural sphere, respectively, were defined with more specific values. It is, however, a very telling example, because it shows very clearly how the principle of legal pluralism could be used in a way that confirmed and vindicated authoritarian colonial rule.

In the early 1930s, the Indies’ government solicited plans to reform legal procedure for both Europeans and Natives. A simplification in European legal procedure was pushed through relatively quickly. The reform of the native legal procedure (which also applied to Foreign Orientals) caused far more discussion within the government and would not be completed before the outbreak of the Second World War frustrated further attempts. The original design, formulated by the so-called Commission for the Revision of Criminal Legal Procedure and presented to the administration in 1931, advocated a professionalization of the prosecution. In the old system, a large role had been reserved for members of the administration, with the Regent (the local native chief employed by the Indies government) as the highest authority ultimately responsible for the prosecution. The commission instead wanted to establish a professionalised, legally schooled public prosecutor, thus separating executive and judicial powers.

As the commission reported in a follow-up report in 1935, its plan had received terse criticism from various advisors of the government, which had made the members of the commission wary of proceeding too rashly with the planned reform.

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66 For the whole discussion of the reform of native legal procedure, see: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 1032; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 505 (Verbaal L33, 1937), 531 (Verbaal S36, 1938), 544 (Verbaal Q13, 1939), 556 (Verbaal D30, 1939), 579 (Verbaal J15, 1940).
The main objection that the commission had encountered was that the principle of separation of powers, and particularly the exclusion of the administration from legal procedure, was presumably unfit for the native society. The 1935 report summarized this objection as follows: ‘[t]he principle of “separation of powers” […] is the product of notions, which have historically and painstakingly grown in the West over the course of centuries, [and] which do not live in the Eastern society, at least not vigorously and generally’. In ‘Eastern’ society, the argument of the opponents went, judicial authority was generally seen as the natural and traditional attribute of the government and the executive administration. The exclusion of the administration from legal procedure would therefore mean ‘a diminishing of the allure and prestige of the Administration, so significant in a society like the Eastern one—the solid foundations of authority in these lands’, and thus also ‘a real and severe weakening of the […] means of power of the Administration’. The outstanding value of respect and deference for authority as presumably typical of the Eastern society was juxtaposed to Western values of separation of powers and judicial independence, and sometimes also connected to the view of Eastern society as communal, as opposed to the Western value of individuality. With these arguments in hand, cultural relativist members of the administration managed to thwart the proposed judicial reforms, thus justifying the continuation of authoritarian power of Dutch local and regional government in the Indies.

This one example of the cultural argument of legal needs being further elaborated was an exception. The notion of culture presented in most legal and administrative treatises remained rather more abstract. Again, it came to the judges—confronted with the everyday reality of the colonial courtroom—to make up their own minds. As it happens, in their verdicts they often conflated the cultural notion with socio-economic factors. The notion of ‘legal needs’ was even more strongly associated with socio-economic position than the concept of ‘development’. As shown above, the latter emphasized attributes such as intellectuality and education, which in turn could lead to economic power. The former took class differences more directly as its basis.

In defining the ‘legal needs’ of an individual, namely, the courts considered factors like occupation or residency either in the countryside or in an urban setting. Different patterns of economic activity—mainly trade, government employment, and large-scale exploitation of agriculture on the one side, and small family-based agricultural activity on the other—were taken to indicate different cultural affiliations. In a 1925 case in Padang (Sumatra), it was judged that the last will and testament of a deceased native man had to be executed according to European law, because the man had been in the trading profession and had lived in an urban environment (the town of Padang). The court stated that it could therefore be assumed that in his lifetime he had changed his cultural and therefore also his legal sphere. Conversely, as we have seen before, the petty farmer Stekkinger was relegated to native law by the court in Bandung because he had an un-European occupation and lived in the countryside. In practice, then, the ‘legal needs’ argument amounted to a pattern of elite versus masses. Europeans were characteristically part of the elite, Natives or Foreign Orientals only exceptionally.

These cases show that anyone performing a legal act or transaction that was in itself inherently ‘European’ was considered to have tacitly but voluntarily subjected himself to European law for the purpose of that particular act. Thus, not only individuals but also certain practices were classified as either ‘European’ or ‘native’. Many actions of a complicated financial nature, especially in the context of commerce or industry, were considered European. One example is a verdict passed on 15 August 1919 by the Council of Justice (the court that normally judged European defendants) in Medan. The dispute involved an order-note signed by the accused, one Mohamad Tamin. As the signing of an order-note was ‘a legal transaction regulated in the law applicable to Europeans, that is not regulated in the law applicable to Natives’, the court judged itself competent in this case, even though both plaintiff and accused were Natives. The signing of an order-note—a practice central to larger-scale

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70 ‘Residentiegerecht te Bandong, vonnis van 8 maart 1940’.
capitalist ways of doing business—was evidently a practice introduced by Europeans, previously unknown and therefore alien to Natives.\textsuperscript{73}

Taking the cultural relativist arguments at face value, it is arguably peculiar that (a small minority of) ‘Natives’ were allowed in the described ways to integrate legally—either entirely or for specific purposes—in the ruling class of ‘Europeans’. This possibility would seem to clash with the emphasis placed by colonial lawyers on a notion of separate cultural spheres with age-old traditions that had presumably shaped the legal traditions. This discrepancy was normally passed over without much consideration. Implicitly, the solution seems to have been that a ‘culture’ in itself was supposed to represent certain traditions, whereas the individuals belonging to that culture were only of secondary importance to the argument. Individuals generally belonged to the cultural sphere into which they had been born, but it was not necessarily their genealogy that determined this. Rather, their upbringing and socialization within the sphere was decisive. Western-educated and -socialized Natives were thus considered as estranged from their own people.\textsuperscript{74}

Even in the cultural relativist line of thinking, then, cultural allegiance was a malleable attribute. The practice of legal stratification was not as strict as its theoretical underpinning would have us believe. Legal segregation was a tool of the colonial state that was central to its functioning, but so was the promise extended to ‘developed’ or ‘civilized’ individuals that strict segregation could be subverted, by operating in a grey area between the groups or by entirely migrating from one group to the other. This possibility ensured that the small Indonesian elite that was assimilating socially and culturally could also be (partly) assimilated politically, in order to incorporate them in the privileged classes rather than to antagonize them.\textsuperscript{75}

Stability in the colonial system of rule was achieved partly because legal categories

\textsuperscript{73} Cf. for similar arguments in other cases: ‘Landraad Soerabaja, vonnis van 7 juli 1939’, \textit{Indisch Tijdschrift van het Recht}, No. 151, 1940, p. 623; Tetering, ‘De arbeidsovereenkomst’; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 930, Memorandum belonging to the drafts for the implementation of articles 75 and 109 of the Government Regulation of the Dutch East Indies; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 930, Explanatory memorandum to the draft for a resolution for the law on bankruptcy and moratorium (1911).

\textsuperscript{74} This argument is largely implicit, but the importance awarded to ‘upbringing’ and/or ‘milieu’ by many authors corroborates it, see e.g.: \textit{Verslag herzieningscommissie}, pp. 400-406; KITLV, Collection Cornelis van Vollenhoven, H1086, 22, Review by an unknown author of the book \textit{Het koloniale vraagstuk van dezeen tijd} by J.C. Kielstra; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 824, Note from department A1 (Legal Affairs) in the margins of the draft for a letter by the Minister for Colonial Affairs to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16 June 1936.

\textsuperscript{75} Cf. Lev, ‘Colonial law’, p. 62.
were not rigidly static. Both cultural relativism and universalism were central tenets of the late colonial legal system. The last four decades of colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies witnessed a constant balancing act to maintain the awkward equilibrium between these two ideologies.

The late colonial equilibrium
The necessity of this balancing act provides an explanation for the significant degree of continuity in the late colonial legal debate. As has become evident throughout this chapter, the central concepts around which legal discussions revolved changed surprisingly little between the beginning of the century and the outbreak of the Second World War. Although divergent views existed, the same old arguments were rehashed time and again.

Most literature on the legal history of late colonial Indonesia emphasizes a diachronic development. The support for unification, presumably, peaked at the beginning of the twentieth century, but after that the unifying effort petered out and the adat school won, with flying colours.\(^76\) Indeed it is true that after the early 1920s, there were few tangible legal changes that pointed towards unifying efforts. But the picture becomes a little more complicated if we take into account some of the proposals that were presented and discussed, and that kept rearing their heads at regular intervals, even in the 1920s and 1930s. Advocates of both arguments were present throughout the debate (and influenced each other’s discourse).

It might be more useful therefore to think of the relation between universalist and cultural relativist approaches as an oscillation rather than a definitive shift. In the years leading up to the law reform of 1906, with initial enthusiasm for the recently inaugurated ‘ethical policy’ running high, the unification effort had a strong following, which then quickly eroded.\(^77\) In the years shortly after the First World War, the drive for unification gathered speed once again, as reflected in the installation of the 1920 reform commission and in that commission’s report, which was highly influential in discussions as well as actual law-making in the early 1920s.\(^78\) After the

\(^{76}\) The most important author in this respect is Cees Fasseur: Fasseur, ‘Cornerstone’, pp. 91-108; Fasseur, ‘Colonial dilemma’; cf. Hooker, ‘Dutch colonial law’; Lev, ‘Colonial law’.

\(^{77}\) Fasseur describes this part of the history in much more detail than I could in this chapter: Fasseur, ‘Cornerstone and stumbling block’.

\(^{78}\) Verslag herzieningscommissie.

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mid-1920s, opposition against unification became even stronger. But with the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, and the Indies being thrown back upon itself, unification suddenly made a final strong come-back in the report of the Visman Commission, which was published in early 1942, just weeks before the Japanese armies occupied Batavia.79

The continued parallel existence of both arguments is a central tenet of the late colonial state. The oscillating movement between them however still begs an explanation. A first factor in the explanation lies in the political context. It seems that in times of crisis or significant social change, the pressure for unification mounted, as a way to anticipate dissent and foster support among rising Indonesian elites and middle classes. All the above-described moments in which unification efforts were popular can be seen as times of social turmoil. Around the turn of the century, with ongoing conflicts—most famously in Aceh but also in other places in the archipelago—and with fears mounting over the possibility of losing colonial territory to other imperial powers, the Dutch administration made a push to expand effective rule over the Indies.80 In the years after the First World War, in which the Indies had suddenly stood alone as communications with the metropole came to a virtual standstill, the wish for political and legal reforms, including unification, became widely spread.81 And at the beginning of the Second World War, when the Dutch motherland had been overrun but the Indies had not yet become involved in the war, something similar happened. In this time of crisis, the Visman Commission recorded ‘the wish heard from all sides to strengthen the sense of solidarity within the commonwealth of the Indies’.82 The urge for unification was strongest in moments of crisis, when efforts to ‘pacify’ and unite society were called for.

Another explanation for the toing and froing between universalist and cultural pluralist lines of argument can be found in the intended audience of the respective arguments. Generally, whenever the colonial administration addressed itself to the

79 Verslag commissie Visman.
81 The quantity of reports, notes and proposals written during this short period, lasting until ca. 1922, is impressive: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 745-746. On the frantic political spirit shortly after the First World War, cf. Locher-Scholten, ‘Een liberaal autocraat’; Dijk, The Netherlands Indies, pp. 613-630.
wider population, it was more likely to stress the end goal of unification and speak about the differences between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ in terms of levels of development. This can be gathered for example from the general trend of official—public—government declarations.  

The reports from both the 1920 reform commission and the Visman Commission could equally be seen in this light, as both commissions included Native and Chinese members and engaged in discussions with external groups. Such public declarations stand in contrast to the internal discussions within the government and the exchanges between government officials and legal professionals, in which the long-term nature of the end goal is stressed and the short-term obstacles for unification affirmed. This explanation of different argumentations for different audiences partly overlaps with a third explanatory factor: the difference between metropole and colony. Generally, metropolitan commentators, who were further removed from the everyday practice of government in the Indies, were more likely (albeit to a limited degree) to point at the ideal of unification as an end goal. Their plans and ideas would subsequently be criticized and ground to a halt by the men on the ground in the Indies, who were used to living in a stratified system and saw practical obstacles at every step along the way. The audience and the position of the speaker had an influence on the message.

Nevertheless, although an image of standstill in the legal discussion would be deceptive, the significant degree of discursive continuity between the turn of the century and the Second World War is striking. This continuity is by no means natural. The twentieth century was a highly vibrant and dynamic time in colonial Indonesia, in which society and culture were changing at a fast pace. Part of the explanation for the discursive stability lies in the specific nature of legal discourse and practice,

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83 See: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54 747, Letter by the Director for Legal Affair to the Governor-General, 12 May 1927; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 754, Letter from the Governor-General to the Minister for Colonial Affairs, 4 December 1933; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 1032, Two short fragments of the proceedings of the Volkraad in the discussion on the 1939 budget; Verslag commissie Visman, Vol. 1, pp. 109-113.

84 In 1909, Nederburgh, who was the Director for Legal Affairs in the Indies Government at the time, criticized both sides for this miscommunication: the metropolitan idealists for their disregard for reality, and the colonial advisors for their resistance to change. NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 939, Memorandum from the Director for Legal Affairs, 18 August 1909, §12.

especially in a codified legal system. Legal provisions provide identity categories such as ‘European’ and ‘Native’ with a certain amount of stability, as they fix definitions and thus set points of reference. Administrators and legal commentators, just like anybody else, were simply dealing with concepts written down in law, that were not easy to change.

Consequently, whenever someone proposed a radical legal reform or a revised legal classification, for example abolishing the categories of ‘European’ and ‘Native’ altogether, after a shorter or longer period of heated discussion between the various camps the proposal was normally laid to rest. Afterwards, later discussions reverted to revolving around the original system and its established categories: ‘European’, ‘Native’, and ‘Foreign Oriental’. Of course, there was some scope for changing the connotations of existing categories, as long as one used the concepts provided by law. There was conceptual space, for example, for the gradual widening of the possibilities for legal ‘equation’ of Natives with Europeans. But the boundaries of this space were set by the articles of law and the discursive restrictions that these imposed. In short, the nature of the legal system was such that it strongly hampered fundamental conceptual changes.

As long as both universalist promises and particularist practices remained central to the colonial project, neither side could muster the impetus for a drastic conceptual reform. The paradoxical requirements of the late colonial system are thus the other half of the explanation for the continuity and discursive stability in the legal debate. The fundamental inequality of colonialism—with one nation asserting the inherent right to rule over another—was ultimately at odds with the only remaining ideology that justified colonial rule both internally and to the outside world: the ‘civilizing mission’. Because both elements were essential to the self-understanding of late colonial rulers, the legal discussion became a constant tug of war—characterized by repetitive arguments and awkward compromises.

Compared to this legislative stalemate, the contrast to the decades before this period is striking. The 1906 change of the law marked a caesura that was reinforced in

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the legal discussions of the following years. The legal discourse as described in this chapter was characteristic of late colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies, rather than colonial rule per se. First of all, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2, religion as a discriminatory factor to differentiate ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ lost a large part of the salience that it had wielded in the nineteenth century. Conversely, several other cultural and economic markers of difference gained in importance in the twentieth century. Linguistic criteria were put to increasing use, the city-countryside dichotomy became more important, socio-economic position was increasingly taken into account, and more stress was put on categories such as demeanour and manners. All in all, these changes made the European group more permeable to people who had been previously excluded.89

Another important difference between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century legal systems is the extent to which they were legalistic. In the nineteenth century, legal boundaries between population groups had formally been more rigid, but they were not necessarily established and defended through administrative acts. For example, it was possible to change status if one had been part of European society, and had been regarded as such, ‘since time immemorial’. The change of status could—once one came in contact with the law—be affirmed in court at a later time. This possibility for informal change of status no longer existed in the twentieth century.90 The Dutch Indies colonial state had become a more interventionist state, keeping the vital issue of differentiating its population in its own hands rather than delegating it to informal social conventions.

The late colonial state in Indonesia thus created its own equilibrium that was characteristic of this particular period in colonial history. Throughout the last four decades of colonial rule, universalist promises and cultural relativist convictions created perpetual and potentially disruptive tensions. Nevertheless, for a surprisingly long time, they remained in a volatile but ultimately enduring equilibrium. The legally sanctioned identity categories of ‘European’, ‘Native’ and ‘Foreign Oriental’ persevered as the central classification around which the colonial legal system

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90 W.F. Prins, ‘Nederlander of Inheemsch onderdaan-niet-Nederlander?’, Indisch Tijdschrift van het Recht, No. 147, 1938, pp. 741-753.
revolved. In their application in real-life situations, however, these legal categories showed considerable flexibility. A multitude of overlapping, partly complementary, but sometimes also conflicting markers could at different times, in different ways, and for different purposes be used to define ‘Europeanness’: race, class (occupation or wealth), education, language proficiency, or culture, way of life, and ‘manners’. The next chapter explores the rag-tag group of individuals that, under these markers, came to be called ‘European’ before the law.
Chapter 2
The European family and its in-laws: constructions of ‘Europeanness’ in late-colonial legal practice

Introduction: Landaard, a deliberately vague concept
Legal identity categories in late colonial Indonesia were a highly complex phenomenon.¹ As should be clear by now, the notions of ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Nativeness’—as established in the law books and in the courts—were multidimensional and highly dependent on perspective and purpose. Not only did different ways of classifying apply in various areas of law, there was also considerable flexibility for administrative and statutory discretion. As the concrete examples from the courtroom have shown, time and context played an important role in the process of constantly (re)defining ‘Europeanness’ for the issue at hand. The supposed colonial difference between ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’ is not straightforward.

The vagueness of colonial differentiating practices is reflected in the terms used to designate what type of groups the law actually defined. The clause at the core of legal categorization in colonial Indonesia was article 109 of the Regeringsreglement, which defined ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’, and ‘Foreign Orientals’ (see chapter 1). Article 109RR was sometimes informally known as the ‘race criterion’, but this was a term that enraged quite a few commentators who claimed that ‘race’ was an inaccurate description.² Rather than ‘races’, many colonial actors preferred to use the pragmatic term ‘population groups’. Moreover, inter-group legal relations were known as ‘intergentile’ rather than ‘interracial’.³ The most frequently used term, however, was landaard.

Landaard is a particularly intriguing term because it embodies the very vagueness and malleability that characterized the legal categories. Its meaning was hardly ever discussed explicitly, and it is near impossible to find an appropriate or

¹ Significant parts of this chapter were published previously as: Bart Luttikhuis, ‘Beyond race: constructions of “Europeanness” in late-colonial legal practice in the Dutch East Indies’, European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2013, pp. 539-558.
³ ‘Intergentile’ law was a kind of private international law within the state. Cf. Hooker, ‘Dutch colonial law’, pp. 257-265.
encompassing translation. Literally, the term means something akin to ‘nature of the land’, but, depending on the context, it could be translated in such divergent ways as national character, ethnicity, nationality, species, origin, kinship, civilization or, indeed, race. Even seasoned colonial lawyers and administrators had trouble defining the term. For example I.A. Nederburgh, one of the most respected colonial legal scholars of the early twentieth century, once described *landaard* in a newspaper article as ‘a differentiation, specific to the Indies, of inhabitants according to sort, race, circle of civilization, or whatever one wants to call the criterion’.

Labelling as different *landaarden* the categories of ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’, and ‘Foreign Orientals’ therefore meant no more than elegantly hiding the lack of a clear definition. As we have seen in chapter 1, colonial legislators liked to claim that ‘Europeanness’ was demarcated on the basis of cultural and class characteristics rather than on explicitly racial grounds. But was this assertion not mere window dressing for what was still essentially a racial classification? To answer these questions we need to investigate more thoroughly who was actually included in (or excluded from) the legal groups of ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’ and ‘Foreign Orientals’, for what reasons, and in which situations. To make proper sense of the legal categories, moreover, it is important to pay close attention to the intricacies of language. Most importantly, it immediately strikes the eye that a notion of ‘Whiteness’ was notably absent from the colonial legal debate. Throughout the sources that I have referenced in the previous chapter, colonial lawyers used the opposition of ‘white and brown’ only in a very small number of instances, as a stylistic means of variation. Instead, ‘European’ and ‘Native’ were both the legally sanctioned and the socially current terms of choice.

The choice of words is significant, as in fact is the preference for the term *landaard* over ‘race’. The concept of ‘Europeanness’ allowed colonial actors more flexibility in their differentiating practices; certainly more than would have been possible with ‘Whiteness’ (or with another alternative concept: ‘Dutchness’). Hence, treating ‘White’ and ‘European’ as interchangeable terms—as many scholars of

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4 For some different contexts in which these possible translations are relevant, see: Faber, ‘De wet op het Nederlanderschap’, pp. 7-8; Prins, ‘De bevolkingsgroepen’, pp. 652-654; Verslag herzieningscommissie, passim; Encyclopaedie, Vol. 2, pp. 338-339.


colonial history do—means to misconstrue how late colonial differentiating practices functioned. Once we recognize this, we are poised to re-evaluate a central matter of debate among students of colonial society: the question of the predominance of various differentiating properties, most importantly race and class.\(^7\)

**Beyond race**

Ann Laura Stoler has occupied a central position in this debate.\(^9\) In her extensive work, she has convincingly argued that the boundaries of colonial hierarchy were much more porous than has often been presumed. The border between the supposed ‘White Europeans’ and the ‘Others’ was frequently crossed, and there were large groups of people living in a grey in-between space. Racial discrimination, moreover, was often based on cultural and class distinctions rather than morphological or genealogical characteristics. For all that, however, Stoler has maintained that what she writes is a history of *racial* categories.

Such an approach interprets the kind of categorization that was established through legal pluralism in the Dutch Indies as a form of ‘cultural racism’.\(^10\) With that notion in mind, Stoler and Cooper have evaluated the Dutch Indies legal system as follows:

\[J\]ust when the ‘criterion of race’ as a means to establish European equivalent status was to be removed from the Indies constitution in 1920, a subtle range of cultural distinctions (proficiency in Dutch by the age of seven, upbringing in a ‘European milieu’) secured the same protections of privilege on which racial discrimination would continue to rest. [...] That race underwrote the distinctions

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\(^7\) For example, Stoler, in *Along the archival grain*, ch. 4-5, discusses at length the so-called ‘European Pauperism Commission’ of 1901, but in her own authorial voice frequently employs the terms ‘white paupers’ or ‘poor whites’. Consider also the growing popularity of investigating ‘Whiteness’ in empire, whilst the contemporary term of preference was ‘European’: Ghosh, ‘Who counts as “Native?”’; Mizutani, ‘Rethinking inclusion’; Mizutani, ‘Historicising Whiteness’; Coté, ‘Education’. For a more cautious approach: Buettner, ‘Problematic spaces’.

\(^8\) Cf. Protschky, ‘Race, class, and gender’.


of rule long after racial equality and development were hailed as tenets of late colonial states is clear [...].

The problem with the concept of ‘cultural racism’ is that race—defined as the social meaning attached to aspects of ancestry or (presumed) morphology—is taken as the a priori starting point for the deconstruction of historical categories, even when ‘race’ is not a term that appears in the historical sources. Only subsequently is the interference of other aspects analysed. Consequently, this approach has a tendency to link all discriminating practices to the concept of race, blinding itself to the possibility that other categories may sometimes predominate. The scholarly focus on race as the central concept should therefore be diffused. In fact, class, education, language proficiency, way of life, or other cultural markers were all important factors that in certain situations contributed to defining ‘Europeanness’ in their own right.

Instead, I propose to start with the contemporary category of choice, ‘Europeanness’, and inquire what content this notion was given, by whom, in what situations, and for what purposes. We should endeavour to unearth when and where race trumped class or the other way around, and where they overlapped and intermingled, rather than prioritize any category before the empirical research has been done. If we take ‘Europeanness’ seriously in this manner we find, first, that not only did the colonial hierarchy built on this notion have porous boundaries, but also that it was a intricately layered rather than a binary hierarchy. Rather than being obsessed with ‘binary oppositions’ and ‘Manichean dichotomies’, contemporaries created a multidimensional hierarchy of manifold overlapping and mutually connecting levels. Second, we find that the contemporary actors themselves were already well aware of this more continuous nature of ‘Europeanness’, and were putting it to good use by choosing which element to stress in which specific situation.

This chapter investigates the legal category of ‘Europeanness’ in closer detail, tracing who fell under this category and for what reason. The chapter starts by briefly

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11 Stoler and Cooper, ‘Between Metropole and Colony’, pp. 10-11. Here, Stoler and Cooper base their arguments on Stoler’s article ‘Sexual affronts and racial frontiers’, which was originally printed in the same volume.
returning to the basic legal wording that was the foundation of legal pluralism in the Dutch East Indies, pointing out some inherent, and consciously designed, complications in these formulations. Subsequently, I examine various subgroups and the reasons why they were considered part of the ‘European’ group, exploring what this reveals about the importance of different markers of Europeanness (race, class, gender, education and so on). Finally, I illustrate how these categories were embedded in the Indies’ daily social practice by exploring specifically the position of one very peculiar sub-group: the so-called ‘equated’ Europeans—Indonesians or other ‘Orientals’ who had been administratively declared ‘Europeans’.

The formal specifications: article 109RR

The original version of article 109RR was introduced in 1854, when the article distinguished only between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ (see chapter 1). Initially these two categories were not further defined, as legislators apparently deemed them self-evident. The article only gave precise specifications about how to categorize foreigners, i.e. those people who did not originate either in the Indies or the Dutch metropole. It equated ‘all Christians’ with Europeans, whilst equating with Natives all ‘Arabs, Moors, Chinese, and all those who are Mohammedans or heathens’. 15

A sweeping legal reform introduced in 1906 saw this article drastically rephrased, to adjust it to the requirements of a new era of more intense colonial administration. Article 109RR in its new version distinguished three landaarden—‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’, and ‘Foreign Orientals’—and it provided definitions for these groups for legal purposes. It is worthwhile recapitulating the provisions regarding Europeans in some detail. Article 109RR stated:

Subject to the stipulations for Europeans are:

1º. all Netherlanders;
2º. all persons, not included under no. 1, originating from Europe;
3º. all Japanese, and further all those people coming from elsewhere, not included under nos. 1 and 2, who in their country would be subject to a family law, essentially founded on the same principles as the Dutch [family law];

4°. the legitimate or legally recognized children and further descendants, born in the Netherlands Indies, of the persons, intended under Nos. 2 and 3. [...] The Governor-General is authorized, in consensus with the Council of the Netherlands Indies, to declare the stipulations for Europeans applicable [toepasselijk] to persons otherwise not subject to them. The declaration of applicability applies also to the subsequently born legitimate or legally recognized children and further descendants of the party involved.16

The article further determined that those subject to the stipulations for Natives (Inlanders)—with partial exceptions for native Christians—were all those who ‘belonged to the indigenous [inheemsche] population of the Netherlands Indies’, as well as anyone, who ‘having belonged to a different population group than that of the Natives, have dissolved [opgelost] into the indigenous population’. Finally, anyone who was not covered by the terms for Europeans and Natives would be subject to the stipulations for ‘Foreign Orientals’ (Vreemde Oosterlingen).17

The legal terminology of these phrases betrays some important tensions. First of all, the article determines who was subject to the laws for Europeans, Natives, or Foreign Orientals; it does not define who is a European, Native, or Foreign Oriental. To be ‘European’ for the law apparently was not synonymous with being ‘European’ per se. Secondly, there is a striking discrepancy between how one could change from one group to the other. For a Native or Foreign Oriental to change to the group of Europeans, he or she needed an explicit act of government declaring European law applicable to him/her; to become native, one simply had to dissolve into their group, i.e. become indiscernible in the great sea of other Natives. ‘Europeanness’ was thus a privileged status that needed protecting whereas ‘Nativeness’ was a default-mode. ‘Foreign Orientalness’ was a special category for a group—mostly consisting of those of Chinese descent—that could not be fit under either of the other terms.18 Finally, the above provisions show that even in the dry and supposedly precise words of law, the

16 Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken, pp. 67-68.
17 Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken, pp. 67-68.
concept of ‘Europeanness’ was highly complex. As the contemporary observer W.F. Prins noted:

The recently emigrated Dutch lawyer, who, sat at the market or in one of the restaurants in Batavia, tries to classify the other visitors into the three groups known to him, Europeans, Natives, and Foreign Orientals, will most certainly be more likely to make false guesses than his colleague in Europe when placing bets on the nationality of the guests in one of the international seaside resorts. [...] The criteria that the current constitution applies are many: nationality, origin, family law applicable in the fatherland, and ancestry.\(^{19}\)

Even in pure legal terms, ‘Europeanness’ was a conceptually vague notion. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the same vagueness that is at issue here was reflected in the preferred term used to designate what type of groups the law actually defined: landaarden rather than ‘races’. As we saw in chapter 1, colonial legislators themselves liked to perceive ‘Europeanness’ as an essentially cultural denomination. The question remains whether their elusive terminology was merely a façade to hide what was still clearly a racial differentiation. To explore this, we need to take a closer look at the subgroups mentioned in article 109RR.

**European subgroups**

When we study the subclauses of article 109RR more closely, the first thing that stands out is its reliance on a notion of ‘origin’. The first two groups (the most obvious ones) to have European status were: all ‘Netherlanders’ as well as all other individuals ‘originating from Europe’. Someone’s ‘origin’ or ‘descent’ (herkomst or afkomst) was hence very important in the Dutch Indies legal system. ‘Origin’ was interpreted quite broadly: as long as fathers recognized their children, a European male ancestry several generations in the past could secure one a ‘European origin’.\(^{20}\)

Between 1930 and 1940, for example, 39,286 children acquired European status by legitimate birth in the Indies, as well as 6,652 children through recognition by a European father (the latter most likely in overwhelming majority of non-European

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\(^{19}\) Prins, ‘De bevolkingsgroepen’, pp. 652-653.

mothers). European origin or descent transferred from fathers to children and was interpreted along lines of genealogical origin.

This criterion shows that an underlying racial definition of ‘Europeanness’ cannot be disregarded, whatever contemporaries might have liked to think. To be sure, they claimed that the rule declaring Indo-European children of a European father and a native mother to be legally European was compatible with a cultural argumentation, as it was based on the presumption that these children were ‘raised in a European sphere’ (Europeesche sfeer). But in reality the administration had no proof for this assumption, nor any means of enforcing it. As long as individuals could prove an unbroken line of recognized descent from a European man, they could lay claim to personal European legal status.

The porousness of boundaries between the European and non-European groups was thus asymmetrical. The administration could allow people to enter permanently the legal European group through ‘equation’ with Europeans (see more on this below), but throwing people out was a lot harder. In several cases that we know of, administrators and judges would have liked to declare ‘Europeans’ (especially Indo-Europeans) as ‘dissolved’ into the native population, based on such circumstances as living in a simple hut in a native village, being known by a ‘native name’, only speaking Malay or another native language (and no Dutch), having converted to Islam, or having a lowly profession such as farmer or fisherman. In some cases the ‘dissolved’ person actually wanted to be regarded as a Native, by his own volition, because it entailed certain rights that he or she could not acquire as a European. One Indo-European man from the Minahasa (North Sulawesi), for example, admitted that he had ‘dissolved’ in the native population because it meant that he could share in the inheritance of his recently deceased native adoptive father. But mostly, it seems, the individuals concerned were reluctant to lose their European status. Ultimately, in such cases, the administration had no right to go against their wishes, as the opinion of the individual was declared to be decisive by the Indies High

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Court in a 1934 case.\textsuperscript{24} At worst, courts could treat them under native statute in an ‘intergentile’ civil dispute with other Natives,\textsuperscript{25} but permanently revoking European status and its privileges was not an available legal option if the person involved was unwilling. The ‘racial dividend’ clearly paid off.\textsuperscript{26} 

The criterion of ‘origin’ as just described betrays a clear gender bias. Only ancestry in the male line was considered. Apparently, it was only considered assured that a child would be raised in a ‘European sphere’ if its father was European. Furthermore, a wife’s legal needs were defined by her husband. This played out in the law passed in 1898 regulating mixed marriages. According to this law, women were to follow their husband in legal status. Native women marrying European men automatically became European; European women marrying native men became native. Both Ann Laura Stoler and Elsbeth Locher-Scholten have studied these mixed-marriage regulations in detail.\textsuperscript{27} They have demonstrated that the legal stratification was not gender-neutral. Male predominance in defining a cultural sphere was taken for granted. The \textit{milieu} and upbringing that presumably determined ‘Europeanness’ were thus seen as dependent on the husband’s position.\textsuperscript{28} 

In any case, it is clear that ‘originating from Europe’ (and in that sense a geographical notion) was an important criterion in defining Europeanness, albeit with the described gender bias. Yet it was also a problematic yardstick, as article 109RR did not provide a clear geographical definition of Europe. The law itself tiptoed around the problem by simply declaring ‘all people [...] originating from Europe’ to be Europeans in the eyes of the law. Also in legal treatises or textbooks ‘Europe’ was rarely mapped out in more detail, and even then mainly by way of a few examples rather than an exhaustive list.\textsuperscript{29} This lack of elaboration can mean one of two things:

\textsuperscript{25} Cf. the Stekkinger case cited in chapter 1: ‘Residentiegerecht te Bandoeng, vonnis van 8 maart 1940’.
\textsuperscript{26} Van Marle, ‘De groep der Europeanen’, pp. 111-112. I have borrowed the term ‘racial dividend’ from Fischer-Tiné, \textit{Low and licentious Europeans}, pp. 233-323.
\textsuperscript{27} Stoler, ‘Sexual affronts’; Locher-Scholten, ‘Marriage’.
\textsuperscript{28} There were important ways in which female cultural expressions could also define ‘Europeanness’, but these are, interestingly, rarely relevant in the legal regulations. Cf. Stoler, \textit{Carnal knowledge}; Locher-Scholten, \textit{Women}; Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (eds.), \textit{Domesticating the empire: race, gender, and family life in French and Dutch colonialism} (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1998).
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Mastenbroek, \textit{De historische ontwikkeling}, pp. 86, 96; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Letter from the Director for Legal Affairs (Rutgers) to the Governor-General, No. A
either the geographical notion referred to a common sense conception of Europe, or it produced few practical problems, because the number of immigrants from areas that might cause controversy was relatively low.

Only two regions created more intense brain racking for colonial legislators and were therefore discussed in some more detail: Russia and Turkey. These countries were seen as spread out over the border between Europe and Asia, which made it hard to decide whether their subjects were to be considered as ‘originating from Europe’. The inherently consistent (but awkward and ultimately unsatisfying) solution was to decide on the basis of the place of origin: Turks and Russians coming from the ‘European’ part of their respective country were ‘Europeans’, those coming from the ‘Asian’ part were ‘Foreign Orientals’.30 For Turkey, the border between the two was drawn at the Bosporus. For Russia, it was not made explicit (at least not in the sources that I have consulted).31

The fact that these two particular countries were also culturally and politically ambiguous in the eyes of colonial observers may have contributed to their geographically liminal status. The Turkish state—or before the First World War: the Ottoman Empire—was predominantly Muslim and for that reason was considered culturally different. The fact that the Ottoman Empire had also been a multinational and multireligious state made the situation even more difficult: what, for example, was to be done with Jews from Baghdad, who had come to the Indies long before the fall of the Ottoman Empire? And finally, should the Western-oriented streak of the Kemalist revolution have an impact on the status of Turks in the Indies?32

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30 Cf. NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 931, Memorandum by the Director for Legal Affairs, 18 August 1909, that appendix C. The Director for Legal Affairs mentions (but does not attempt to solve) the problem of ascertaining whether an ‘Arab’ with a Turkish passport is originally from, for instance, Hadramaut, Mekka, or Constantinople.

31 Mastenbroek, De historische ontwikkeling, pp. 87-88; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Letter by the Secretary of the Colonial Government to the Government Envoy for General Affairs at the People’s Council, 18 April 1924; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by the Commission Logemann, §121, 130; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by J.J. Schrieke, Letter No. 11-7, p. 19; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 754, Letter by the Director for Legal Affairs to the Governor-General, 10 October 1933. The term used in the sources is always ‘Russia’ or ‘Soviet-Russia’, not the Soviet Union.

32 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Letter by the Secretary of the Colonial Government to the Government Envoy for General Affairs at the People’s Council, 18 April 1924; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 931, Memorandum by the Director for Legal Affairs of 18 August 1909, appendix C; A. Büchenbacher, ‘De scheidingslijn tusschen Europeanen en vreemde
Russia after the revolution of 1917 was an equally confusing case. The Bolshevik Revolution had created a Soviet-Russian state that was quite alien to colonial lawyers. Communism as a phenomenon was difficult to place: it was different from what they were used to in ‘normal’ European states, but at the same time it clearly seemed to originate from Western traditions. On several occasions it was therefore hinted that Soviet-Russia may indeed have been ‘modern’, but that this did not necessarily make it ‘Western’ or ‘European’. Its institutions and values differed too much from the European norm. Ideas of ‘modernity’ and ‘Europeanness’ or ‘Westernness’ were diverging.

Despite the fact that colonial lawyers thus seem to have had a fairly clearly defined (though largely implicit) geographical notion of Europe, ‘originating from Europe’ could not exhaustively define to them what ‘Europeanness’ meant. There were several other groups that the administration considered an integral part of the European social group. This is where the rather peculiar criterion of family law comes in. As mentioned above, article 109RR incorporated in the European group ‘all those people coming from elsewhere, […] who in their country would be subject to a family law, essentially founded on the same principles as the Dutch [family law]’. This clause was used to assess all immigrants from countries outside geographical Europe. It was a backhanded way of including a religious criterion in the constitution, which until the re-drafting of article 109RR in 1906 had been explicit. The regulation, namely, was elaborated as referring to such predominantly Christian principles as monogamy and the privileged position of children born in wedlock vis-à-vis illegitimate children, principles that in ‘Western’ countries had carried over into secular law. Apparently, at least in the twentieth century, it was not deemed appropriate to state religion explicitly as an official discriminatory principle, but it was applied nonetheless as an important marker of ‘Europeanness’.


33 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 748, Advice by the Council of the Netherlands Indies of 18 March 1932, §34; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 750, Memorandum by the Director for Legal Affairs, 27 October 1930.

34 Nederlandsch-Indische Wetboeken, p. 62. The original Dutch reads: ‘alle van elders afkomstige personen […], die in hun land onderworpen zouden zijn aan een familierecht, in hoofdzaak berustende op dezelfde beginselen als de Nederlandsche’.

35 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 748, Letter No. 1195/28 from the Advisor for Chinese Affairs, 21 December 1928.
This was not merely a strategic way of including several otherwise excluded groups, although that was partly the case. The family law criterion was inspired by the genuine conviction that it in fact their faith that made these people like ‘Europeans’ from geographical Europe. The same can be gathered from the numerous assertions that, although their social and economic position currently brought their ‘needs’ closer to those of the other ‘natives’, native Christians should be treated with special care.\(^{36}\) Yet the family law criterion was not only testimony to the importance of faith; it was also a means to other ends. First, this clause was used to incorporate Americans, Australians and Afrikaners in the ‘European’ group: in other words, to accommodate the (white) settler colonies.\(^{37}\) Although this was never made explicit, the argument for a racial bias is obviously strong here.

Race, however, was not everything. The family-law criterion also helped include another group that was highly important to colonial legislators: the Armenians. The Armenians constituted a relatively small community, but they occupied an important position in the Indies’ trading business. They were regarded as Europeans on the basis of their Christian faith and their social position. They cannot be seen only as a side effect of the family-law criterion. Rather, they were a central reason for including this clause, on par with the Americans, Australians, and Afrikaners.\(^{38}\) Their special significance to Indies lawyers, which did not extend to other nations from the Caucasian region, cannot be explained through racial prejudices. It points to the independent importance of religion, culture, and class.

The clauses in article 109RR further show the central importance of, on the one hand, a notion of ‘modernity’ and, on the other, of pragmatic (geo)political reasoning. For example, all Japanese subjects were incorporated in the European group through a separate clause in 1899, after significant pressure by the Japanese government and on the basis of Japan’s ‘civilized’ status on the world stage (see chapter 1).\(^ {39}\) Similarly, other ‘modern’ societies were included through the use of the aforementioned family law criterion. In this manner, both Turkish citizens in 1926


\(^{37}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 748, Telegram from the Governor-General to the Minister for Colonial Affairs, 20 February 1929; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 752, Advice by the Director for Legal Affairs, 22 October 1931.


\(^{39}\) Lijnkamp, De ‘Japannerwet’.
(after the Kemalist revolution) and the Siamese in 1938 were tacitly incorporated after having introduced family laws deemed sufficiently ‘modern’ (even without a lobby anywhere near as intense as the Japanese had pursued in the 1890s).40

The commitment to this idea of modernity had its boundaries. In the autumn of 1928 the Chinese government under the Kuomintang declared that it planned to introduce modernized law books in the near future, including a reform of its family law. This act by the Chinese government could suddenly increase the ‘European’ population of the Dutch East Indies by around one million people, flooding and ultimately stalling the work of the European courts—so the Indies government feared. A hectic exchange of letters ensued between the Indies Government, the Ministry for Colonial Affairs in The Hague, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ultimately, the wind blew over, as it turned out the new Chinese family law was sufficiently different from the Dutch family law—especially regarding the rights of children born out of wedlock—for colonial administrators to maintain it was not based on the same principles. It was judged to be ‘modern’, but not ‘western’.41

Here, then, is where we see the potential inclusivity of legal Europeanness reach its boundaries. The Chinese were thought too different, or more importantly there were too many of them in the Indies for the administration to consider them as (legal) Europeans. Nevertheless, the special clause regarding the Japanese, together with the family-law criterion, demonstrates that the claim that an idea of modernity and civilization was at the heart of legal ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies did have a grain of truth in it. ‘Modern’ and increasingly assertive nations like Japan, Turkey and Siam (now Thailand) were seen as having entered the global playing field with the original ‘European’ nations, and hence their citizens had to be given equal status with concomitant privileges. This cannot be explained in terms of racial prejudices alone. Religion, culture, and class, as well as considerations of reasons of state, had an independent salience in constructing Europeanness.

This becomes even clearer if we look at a further sub-group of Europeans. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Dutch colonial army had recruited around

40 Bootsma, ‘Herstel van soevereine rechten’, pp. 34-41; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 747, Report by the Commission Logemann §121.
41 The communications on this crisis can be found in NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 748-754; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 505, Verbaal L33. Cf. Bootsma, ‘Herstel’, pp. 41-43.
3,000 soldiers in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana). In order to attract more recruits, they were granted European status upon recruitment and were contracted as European servicemen. Many of the soldiers remained in the Indies after their term of service ended, marrying or cohabiting with mostly native Indonesian but sometimes also Indo-European women. The twentieth-century descendants of these African soldiers inherited European status from their fathers.42

As the historian Ineke van Kessel concluded, after an elaborate study of this group, most of the children and grandchildren of African soldiers grew up ‘with a sense of identity of being “born Dutch”’, speaking Dutch at home, being registered in the European civil-service registries, going to European schools and attending Christian churches.43 Most of these veterans and their descendants settled in Semarang and Batavia, where they generally cannot be further traced through the archives, because they dispersed and became integrated into the rest of (European) society. A small minority of the African descendants settled in Purworejo, a garrison town in central Java, where they lived in the so-called kampung Afrika (the African neighbourhood). Many of them found a career in the army as well. On the one hand, they strongly identified with their status as part of the European group (and were indeed accepted as such), but on the other, they were still recognized by both their fellow Europeans as well as the surrounding native communities as a distinctive subgroup.44

This group very poignantly demonstrates the intricacies of colonial categories in the Dutch East Indies. They are a clear example that class and culture could overrule racial considerations as a condition for legal Europeanness and its advantages. But at the same time this group shows that race regains some relevance if one takes a different perspective. These descendants of the African soldiers were known by the Indonesians in Purworejo as belanda hitam or black Dutchmen.45

42 Ineke van Kessel, Zwarte Hollanders: Afrikaanse soldaten in Nederlands-Indië (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2005); Ineke van Kessel, ‘The black Dutchmen: African soldiers in the Netherlands East Indies’, in Kessel (ed.), Merchants, missionaries and migrants: 300 years of Dutch-Ghanaian relations (Amsterdam: KIT publishers, 2002), pp. 133-142. The exact number of these African descendants is unknown, as they were not registered separately.
45 The primary translation of the term ‘belanda’ (or ‘blanda’) in colonial-era Malay is ‘Dutch’ or ‘Dutchman’, but it was also generally used for ‘European’ or ‘White person’. The notion ‘blanda
suggesting they were seen as a distinct subgroup, partly on account of their ‘race’. Still, the racial identification was much less significant for the Indo-African descendants living in Batavia or Semarang, where they were integrated much more into the wider (Indo-)European society. It is precisely this dependence on social circumstances that only comes to the surface once we meticulously study discriminatory categories.

‘Pseudo-Europeans’
The various stipulations of article 109RR clearly show, then, that the colonial meaning of ‘Europeanness’ cannot be caught in a neat binary picture. Instead, the colonial imagination shows it as existing on a continuous or at least multi-layered scale, of which the contemporaries were well aware. There was an ideal type of ‘proper’ European that included aspects of race, class, education, nationality, religion and (other) cultural attributes. However, if an individual only displayed one or a few of these aspects, he or she could still be considered European in some situations, but not in others.

In this context it is striking that a commission appointed to reform the Indies civil law books in 1909 informally referred to groups such as the Japanese and the ‘equated’ Natives (but also poor Europeans) as ‘pseudo-European’. This context-dependent nature of legal ‘Europeanness’ becomes even clearer when we consider a rather curious minor legal debate that took place in the early 1910s. Certain positions of local or regional leadership in the Dutch Indies state were reserved for Natives or Foreign Orientals. Nonetheless, the Indies administration decided that such positions should also remain open to those who had been legally ‘equated’ with Europeans. According to a government guideline decreed in 1913, these persons had preserved their ‘landaard or nationality’—with landaard apparently used in an ethnological sense here—and had merely changed their ‘legal status’. Such baffling legal logic reveals that the interpretation of ‘Europeanness’ before the law was subject to subtle variations.

*hitam* does therefore not necessarily focus on the ‘Dutchness’ of the object; it also translates as ‘black European’.

*46* Cited in Mastenbroek, *De historische ontwikkeling*, pp. 94-95. To be sure, not everyone agreed with this interpretation by the government.
Further transitional layers of hierarchy were created in the legal system through increasing use of the requirement of Dutch citizenship rather than European landaard. The legal possibility for this had been opened with the introduction of the Dutch nationality law in 1893, which separated Dutch nationals from non-Dutch nationals. In 1910, the category of ‘Dutch subject’ was added to this, which applied to anyone born in the Dutch colonies without Dutch citizenship. On the basis of these laws a trichotomy parallel to that of article 109 RR came into existence, which separated the ‘Dutch’, the ‘indigenous Dutch subjects non-Dutch’ (non-Dutch natives) and the ‘foreign Dutch subjects non-Dutch’ (e.g. the Chinese born and/or resident in Indonesia). In practice, this differentiation was quite similar to that between ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’, and ‘Foreign Orientals’. The main (but rather important) difference was that all non-Dutch Europeans (Germans, English, Japanese) under this alternative classification shared a group with the ‘Foreign Orientals’ (Chinese, Arabs) as ‘foreign subjects non-Dutch’.

This alternate classification entailed a stronger emphasis on the importance of ‘Dutchness’ in the colony, at the cost of ‘Europeanness’. Part of its appeal was that it made it possible to once again exclude ‘pseudo-Europeans’ from certain areas of law and administration, namely where legislators felt the ‘new’ Europeans might one day threaten to overwhelm the ‘original’ Europeans. They were not stripped of their ‘Europeanness’, but the significance of their ‘Europeanness’ (for legal and administrative purposes) could be contested by focusing instead on their nationality. At the cost of the few English, French, or German nationals in the Indies, who as collateral damage were also relegated to secondary citizenship, the parallel differentiation offered the opportunity to discriminate against all ‘new’ members of the European group. Most importantly this system was implemented in 1925 in the reform of the voting regulations. The privileged position in the representative bodies throughout the Indies was from that point onwards to be reserved for the ‘Dutch’

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48 Indonesians and other non-Dutch inhabitants of the Indies could of course attempt to apply for naturalization as Dutch citizens, as indeed some of them did. In fact, this created another subtle hierarchy among ‘assimilated’ natives: on the one hand those with Dutch citizenship, on the other hand those who remained Dutch subjects and were merely ‘equated’ as Europeans. Cf. C.C.v.H. ‘Artikel 75 en 109’, pp. 293-295; KITLV, Collection Cornelis van Vollenhoven, H1086, 5, Nederburgh, ‘Inlander en toch Nederlander?’.
community rather than the ‘European’ community. Similarly, in 1932 Dutch citizenship rather than European *landaard* became the requirement for conscription in the colonial militia, to the considerable chagrin of many ‘equated’ Natives and Foreign Orientals at being excluded from this important civil duty.

In a few areas of law and administration, ‘Dutchness’ thus came to adopt the duties of ‘Europeanness’ in the 1920s and 1930s. Although legal ‘Europeanness’ remained decisive for most purposes, this development nevertheless indicates that the colonial hierarchical imagination differentiated several consecutive layers. It was both more context-dependent and more flexible than expected on the basis of a classic reading of the ‘rule of colonial difference’.

**Making new Europeans: the ‘equation’ procedure**

We find the multi-layered and fractured nature of the accepted colonial hierarchy further confirmed if we scrutinize in more detail one particular group: the ‘equated Europeans’, or the Natives and Foreign Orientals to whom European law was declared applicable. We have a particularly rewarding set of sources on this ‘equation’ (*gelijkstelling*) procedure in the papers from the *Algemene Secretarie* 1816–1942 (the office of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies), held by the Indonesian National Archives (*Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia*, ANRI). Although the fact that many documents are untraceable impedes the accessibility of the Algemene Secretarie archive, it is still a vital (and as yet highly underused) collection for anyone studying the functioning of the Dutch Indies state or the everyday reality in colonial society. For the purposes of this chapter, the petitions for equation with Europeans (and their subsequent consideration by the administration)

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50 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 748, Memorandum from the Department for Legal Affairs, 12 October 1933; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Dossierarchief, 2.10.54, 752, Letter by the Director for Legal Affairs to the Governor-General, 4 May 1931; *Verslag commissie Visman*, Vol. 2, pp. 58, 101-102.

51 This is due to the volatile manner of cataloguing used by the original archivists; for an explanation see R. Kramer and A.M. Tempelaars, *Handleiding voor historisch onderzoek in het archief van de Algemene Secretarie en voorgangers, 1816–1942* (Jakarta: ANRI, 1990). Unfortunately for the present chapter a rigorous systematic study of the papers relating to individual equations proved impossible due to the bad state of archive accessibility. My conclusions are, however, based on a broad reading of several dozens of these cases that could be retrieved, even where I only cite one or several cases as example(s).
particularly interest us. As petitioners had to argue for their own ‘Europeanness’, and
administrators assessing the petitions had to judge the ‘Europeanness’ of individual
subjects, these papers offer a colourful picture of the practical functioning of Dutch
East Indies legal categories in highly specific contexts.

In the nineteenth century, ‘equation’ occurred only very infrequently, at the
personal discretion of the Governor-General. From the 1910s, however, it
increasingly became a large-scale practice with 3,608 equations between 1920 and
1930 and no fewer than 909 cases in 1939 alone (out of the Indies’ total ‘European’
population of about 245,000 in 1930 and 300,000 by 1940).\(^{52}\) Officially, equation still
required a unilateral ordinance from the Governor-General, but in reality various
levels of the colonial bureaucracy were involved. After a candidate had submitted a
petition to the Governor-General, a junior local official was assigned to interview
him.\(^{53}\) The local official’s assessment was sent to the Assistant-Resident and then on
to the Resident, from where it went to the Department for Legal Affairs, the Council
of the Indies, and finally back to the office of the Governor-General. Each of these
bodies had to advise on the decision, though rarely was the original assessment by the
local official disregarded. If admitted, the candidate would have ‘European’ law
declared applicable to him through an ordinance published in the Dutch Indies law
gazette, typically after one or two years.

The official requirement for a successful bid at equation, laid down in a
circular to the regional heads of administration, was that the candidates display their
‘legal need’ for such a change of status. The most important factor in deciding on this
‘need’ was whether a candidate was ‘suitable’ (geschikt) for European society, and
whether his ‘adaptation’ (aanpassing) to European society was sufficient.\(^{54}\) Assessing
these elements normally involved passing judgement on whether the candidates were
‘civilized and developed’,\(^{55}\) which in practice meant whether they adequately
displayed ‘European’ traits and manners. At the basis of the inquiry process was a
standardized questionnaire drafted in 1913 and remaining essentially unchanged until

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\(^{53}\) For purposes of legibility, I use the male pronoun here whenever the gender of the intended subject
is irrelevant or unknown. The overwhelming majority of applicants were in fact male (see below).
\(^{54}\) *Bijblad op het Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië*, No. 7962, 1914.
\(^{55}\) Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta, Archive Algemeene Secretarie (henceforth ANRI,
AS), Ag. 17 June 1920 No. 24375, Report from the *Controleur* for the Assistant-Resident of Surabaya,
11 February 1919.
the end of the colonial era. From this survey we can see that the administration was primarily interested in matters of upbringing and education, of social and cultural milieu, and of occupation and professional status.

After some formal details regarding the applicant’s official name and his marital status had been recorded, the first set of questions focused on his upbringing: ‘Does he speak and write Dutch or any other European language?’ ‘Which schools has he attended and what grade has he reached in that educational institution?’ ‘Has he passed any exams?’ ‘Has the applicant enjoyed an upbringing [opvoeding] in Europe or has he been raised in these parts in a European environment [omgeving] as a European?’ Particularly important was the matter of proficiency in European languages, especially in Dutch. Lack of considerable Dutch language skills (spoken and written) was an important reason for disqualification, as was a lack of any formal education or an education restricted to ‘native’ schools. Formal degrees were a great help, especially the kleinambtenaarsexamen (the lower-level civil-service examination), but they were by no means a prerequisite.

Equally important was the matter of association with Europeans, preferably from an early age, both in school as well as in the domestic and private sphere. Other questions that were asked of the applicant included: ‘Can he be considered to move [bewegen] easily in European society?’ ‘Does he no longer belong in the society of which he is deemed to be a part and does he no longer feel at home there?’ ‘In which surroundings does he tend to move and with which persons [...] is he chiefly in contact?’ Important indicators could include attending a European school and boarding in a European family’s home for a period of one or more years during one’s youth, or having a family member who had already been equated at an earlier date.

But these were certainly not indispensable requirements. It was possible to acquire the necessary ‘association’ (omgang) with Europeans at a later age, usually through professional activities and surroundings. Occupations that seem to have

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56 Bijblad, No. 7962, 1914.
57 Bijblad, No. 7962, 1914.
58 ANRI, AS, Bt. 20 December 1935 No. 19 (Benjamin Manuputy); ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 15 (Oei Hong Tjioe); ANRI, AS, Bt. 27 November 1935 No. 28 (Abdoerradjab Daties).
59 ANRI, AS, Bt. 18 March 1915 No. 9 (Mas Soengkono); ANRI, AS, Bt. 2 February 1940 No. 7 (David Lumain).
60 Bijblad, No. 7962, 1914.
61 ANRI, AS, Bt. 16 May 1922 No. 49 (W.J. Isaacs for his foster son); ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 May 1930 No. 18 (Simon Soplanit).
qualified one for European legal status were mainly in (semi-)government employment, or in larger-scale trade or private business. Occupations that required at least a minimal amount of education were considered more ‘European’, such as (mostly petty) clerks in all kinds of fields, doctors, or engineers. For traders and other private businessmen—overwhelmingly of Chinese origin—the main question that the officials asked was whether the individual rose above the level of the ‘bulk of small traders’ or whether he belonged to the ‘notable Chinese families’. Regularly this was assessed in a very blunt way: by citing the applicant’s average income or the size of his tax return. A career in the army, finally, also created good opportunities. Although active servicemen were barred from equation during their term of service, non-commissioned personnel as well as ex-servicemen had a decent chance of qualifying for European status.

Besides occupation, the place of residence or of birth could also play a role. There were clear geographical hubs in which ‘equated Europeans’ were concentrated. Equated Europeans were over five per cent of the European population in Mr. Cornelis, a municipality just southeast of Batavia where many railway clerks worked, as well as in Magelang, a garrison town in central Java. Exceptionally high numbers were reached in Manado (Sulawesi) and Ambon (Moluccas) with equated Europeans representing, respectively, thirteen and forty-three per cent of all resident Europeans. The military connection as well as religious background are explanatory factors in these latter two cases. Ambonese and Manadonese servicemen were famously well represented in the army. They had a long-standing reputation as good soldiers and loyal subjects, and they were predominantly (protestant) Christian. It is difficult to pinpoint, however, how the causal relation between occupation and residency worked: were so many Ambonese and Manadonese equated because they

63 ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1920 No. 48 (Raden Mas Gondhosomoemo).
65 ANRI, AS, Bt. 27 April 1940 No. 35 (Oey Keng Hin).
66 ANRI, AS, Bt. 5 January 1940 No. 24 (Pouw Biauw Hok).
67 ANRI, AS, Bt. 15 July 1920 No. 90 (Oei Kheng Tjhoen); ANRI, AS, Bt. 9 December 1930 No. 38 (Osin bin Amiran).
68 ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1917 No. 25 (Jacob Tahalele); ANRI, AS, Bt. 2 February 1940 No. 7 (David Lumain).
came from a military family? Or were they generally regarded as loyal and culturally adapted subjects, hence more likely to be equated, and thus causing the high representation of (ex-)military among equated Europeans?

Applicants in their petition frequently cited (former) colleagues as references, identifying them by their professional and social status. Sometimes these individuals were even asked to sign their name, as proof that the applicant was on good terms with them. At times, such lists almost read like nominations for membership, as if joining the ‘European club’ was only possible on the recommendation of a current member. An applicant’s friends, family, and contacts were highly important. And, as the applications show, a good number of ‘Natives’ could indeed boast a circle of European friends and acquaintances.

Naturally, to be able to make these friends and to ‘move’ in European society in the first place, the right cultural competencies were vital. We have already seen that proficiency in Dutch was tested separately, but other competencies counted equally. The applicant was, first of all, examined to see whether he was ‘of good reputation and had never been sentenced for a criminal offence’. Moreover, the advising officials regularly took the opportunity, even though this was not explicitly expected of them, to give their own psychological appraisal of the candidate and add a judgement on his suitability for European society. An evaluation of a candidate by the official as ‘calm and modest’ or as ‘well-raised and groomed’ could be highly beneficial; a judgement of ‘inflated ego’ could prompt the dismissal of the request.

A further important element of a candidate’s background was his religion. Though Christianity in itself was not an indispensable attribute of Europeanness, it did function as an indicator of cultural competence, as one more marker of ‘moving’ in a European society. The large majority of native Christians did not have European status, and requests for equation by Christians could certainly be dismissed, whilst

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70 ANRI, AS, Bt. 8 February 1930 No. 27 (Yap Boon Han); ANRI, AS, Bt. 2 February 1940 No. 7 (David Lumain); ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 May 1930 No. 18 (Simon Soplanit).
71 Bijblad, No. 7962, 1914. Cf. ANRI, AS, Bt. 8 April 1940 No. 23 (Anthon Tahalele). A sentence was not even necessary, a mere reputation of wrongdoing sufficed: ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 14 (Ong Boen Hai).
72 ANRI, AS, Bt. 14 May 1940 No. 4 (Soedjono).
73 ANRI, AS, Tzg.ag. 1940 No. 5164 (D.N. François for his foster children).
74 ANRI, AS, Bt. 5 November 1935 No. 24, Letter by the Resident of Batavia to the Director for Legal Affairs regarding Toh Sim Tjoe.
75 By the mid-1910s, there were an estimated 750,000 native Christians. Only several thousand were equated over the following years: Encyclopaedie, Vol. 1, pp. 488-490.
non-Christians were frequently accepted. Nevertheless, being a Christian did make it easier to argue that one was no longer part of normal ‘native’ society, and it made it more credible to the reviewing officials that one could socialize easily with Europeans. Unsurprisingly, many applicants were only too happy to give their Christian faith high priority in their petition. One Anthonius Tong, a retired infantry sergeant living in Magelang, even went so far as to convert only a month before submitting his petition, but unfortunately for him the officials caught on to him. Overall, it remains significant that approximately three quarters of the equated individuals were in fact Christians.

The importance of cultural competencies has been previously noted by Ann Laura Stoler. Still, she insists that these are to be understood in terms of racism: ‘Distinctions made on the basis of opvoeding (upbringing) merely recoded race in the quotidian circumstances that enabled acquisition of certain cultural competencies and not others.’ Indeed it can be argued that the focus on upbringing betrays ‘racial’ undercurrents, as acquiring the desired upbringing was obviously much easier if one stemmed from the appropriate circles to begin with. Yet that is not the whole story. The equation procedure and its criteria prove that it was also possible to acquire competencies and move into European society at a later point in life, without stemming from the ‘right’ background.

Take for example Willem Larinoe, a Manadonese soldier stationed in Koetaradja (present-day Banda Aceh). As a first-class infantryman, he occupied a rank that generally indicates a military career based on merit rather than birth or previous education, which in any case placed him far below the officer class in social status. In 1935, Larinoe requested to be equated together with his wife Elisabet Wauran and their seven children. The reasons he gave for wanting to be equated was his concern for the ‘future legal status of his children’, the fact that they were Protestant Christians, and that his children were attending the Ambonese School in

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76 ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 17 (Andrias Andaria).
77 ANRI, AS, Bt. 14 May 1940 No. 4 (Soedjono); ANRI, AS, Bt. 20 December 1935 No. 19 (Raden Oetit).
78 ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 12.
79 The numbers are not entirely conclusive, but they do indicate a high share of Christians: Van Marle, ‘De groep der Europeanen’, pp. 113-114.
80 Stoler, ‘Sexual affronts’, p. 99 (emphasis on ‘opvoeding’ in the original, emphasis on ‘recoded’ mine).
81 E.g.: ANRI, AS, Tzg.ag. 1925 No. 19933 (Filip Kuhuwaet); ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1917 No. 25 (Jacob Tahalele).
Koetaradja where they were learning Dutch. The adspirant controleur (junior inspector) of Koetaradja in his report on Larinoe noted that the applicant had not attended any schools or passed any exams, had not been raised by Europeans, and that he did not speak Dutch or any other European language (although his children were learning Dutch). Nonetheless, the adspirant controleur judged that Larinoe could ‘move’ well in European society, mainly because he frequently rubbed shoulders with European colleagues. ‘Because of his children’ and ‘for the purpose of the applicant’s improvement in his military occupation’, the controleur gave a positive recommendation. At all other levels, colonial bureaucracy concurred. Equation was merely postponed until further notice because Larinoe was in active military service. Once he retired from duty in 1939, there were no further obstacles to his family’s equation. For unclear reasons, Larinoe at this point no longer sought equation and retracted his request, but this leaves unchanged the fact that as far as the administration was concerned, he would have been equated without objection.82

In Larinoe’s case, to say that ‘race’ was merely ‘recoded’ into ‘quotidian circumstances’ seems to be stretching the race concept to a degree that impedes its explanatory capability. Larinoe’s case shows that someone from an evidently non-‘European’ background, without ‘European’ family or guardians, even without a particularly ‘European’ upbringing or education, could develop into an individual that the administration judged suitable for European legal status, in this particular case to reward him for his service, as well as to aid him in providing an (even) better upbringing to his children.

What Larinoe’s case also illustrates is that the focus on occupation and professional status (as indicative of social position) shows a clear gender bias. It was almost exclusively directed towards the position of the man. As we have encountered before, male predominance was taken for granted in determining whether a family lived in a ‘European sphere’. Rarely was the wife’s situation and education taken into account when deciding an entire family’s request for equation. She was regularly said to have ‘no social position’ (referring to the fact that she had no occupation) and the social contacts she cited were often exclusively the families among her husband’s

82 ANRI, AS, Tzg.ag. 1940 No. 16057.
contacts. Even if a woman herself had been completely unsuitable for equation, provided that her husband was deemed suitable her application would be routinely granted along with his. European culture and society in this sense were seen as male products, because of the male role of provider; women were only European by proxy.

Naturally, the various criteria described do not suggest a clear black-and-white boundary. Some requests were accepted without hesitation, others were dismissed outright, but in between these exemplary cases were various shades of grey. A range of attributes and characteristics (upbringing/education, surroundings, occupation, language, religion) was associated with Europeanness. With only some of these elements present, one could be somewhat eligible for European status, but not without hesitation; in a sense one was ‘half-European’. On these kinds of applications we can see the officials struggling to make a decision. They would sometimes make statements to the effect that the applicant may be at an above-average level of civilization, but that in fact he could only move in ‘very modest European circles’, or in ‘circles of the well-situated native Christians, that also incorporate Europeans (equated)’. Because the law did not allow for an in-between category, officials were forced to make a decision in such cases. The deliberations in themselves, however, demonstrate that the social imaginary was more continuous than the law would suggest.

The petitioners sometimes diverged even further from the views of lawyers and administrators in their conceptions of ‘Europeanness’. The considerable number of rejected applications for European status suggests that many had different purposes with their petition than the administration was willing to allow, such as a recognition of their ‘contacts with civilized people’, or an acknowledgment of their elevated

83 ANRI, AS, Bt. 18 March 1915 No. 9 (Saerah); ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 May 1930 No. 18 (Adriana Soplanit).
84 ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1917 No. 25 (Ngadinem Tahalele).
85 ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1920 No. 48 (Raden Mas Gondhosoemeno); ANRI, AS, Bt. 14 May 1940 No. 4 (Soedjono).
87 ANRI, AS, Bt. 2 January 1925 No. 14 (Eldat Mokoagow Lumowa). Cf. ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 16 (Romelus Pattinaja).
88 ANRI, AS, Bt. 20 December 1935 No. 19 (Benjamin Manuputy). Cf. ANRI, AS, Ag. 17 June 1920 No. 24735 (Arif Kaluku).
89 ANRI, AS, Tzg.ag. 25606/1940 (Rumulus Lawalata).
‘social position’—in other words, a status boost. Hence, the requests show that some of the applicants had a different conception of what ‘European’ legal status entailed, compared to that of the officials they were trying to convince. In this context, it is worthwhile to consider again at the significance of racial attributes.

According to the official guidelines, race was of negligible importance. Nevertheless, some applicants cited racial characteristics as a corroborating reason for their petition. The most conspicuous of these cases are the petitions submitted by European foster fathers requesting equation for their native foster children. Although this is impossible to determine with any certainty, it is highly likely that in the majority of these cases we are dealing with children who were the illegitimate offspring of European fathers. E.E. de Roij van Zuijdewijn for example, a European train driver at the salt mines on Madura, requested equation for his foster children, mentioning that ‘the children, of whom the father is unknown before the law, have an appearance and a skin colour that characterize their European origin and status’. The Resident of Madura when assessing this case mentioned that the children concerned were actually De Roij van Zuijdewijn’s, fathered out of wedlock with a native woman. He was merely trying to have them recognized as European to ensure them a better future.91

The officials, however, routinely disregarded any arguments that used an explicit racial concept of Europeanness. De Roij van Zuijdewijn’s request was dismissed. So was the application submitted by one Thio Piet, calling himself Piet Reep. He claimed to be the son of a Chinese woman and a European man, Piet Reep, Sr. In his request, Thio mentioned having two full sisters, both of whom had been recognized by their father and hence had European status. As his father had died before Thio had been born, he himself was unfortunately not recognized as a European child and therefore had ‘foreign oriental’ status. Nevertheless, he was adamant in claiming European ancestry through the male line. Although these claims would have been easy to confirm by contacting the alleged sisters, the administration disregarded them completely. They were deemed irrelevant and hence not taken into further account. Thio Piet was ultimately not equated because he could not read or write (he was a blind man), had no schooling (and hence spoke Malay rather than

91 ANRI, AS, Bt. 5 March 1920 No. 38.
Dutch), and ‘did not occupy a position exceeding that of the bulk of Chinese craftsmen and small traders’. Had his father lived a few months longer and been able to recognize him as a child, none of these factors would have mattered; Thio was simply born unlucky.

**Conclusion: the European family and its in-laws**

We have seen then that whether and how ‘race’ mattered was irreducibly context-dependent. Moreover, different actors could hold differing views on what made one a European. ‘Europeanness’ by law excluded racial characteristics from consideration—‘Europeanness’ was not synonymous with ‘Whiteness’—but that does not mean they were not relevant in society. The legal concept of ‘Europeanness’ used to decide on equations was not necessarily representative of all constructions circulating and being debated in Dutch Indies society. Nonetheless, it is significant that in a space so central to the construction of ‘Europeanness’ more broadly, ‘race’ in the sense of (the social meaning attached to) ancestry or somatic features cannot be said to take precedence over class and cultural aspects. To be able to answer our question as to the primacy of race over class, or vice versa, it is vital to realize that both standpoint and situation played important roles. Broad generalizations do not do justice to the complexity of the colonial system of rule. The hierarchy of colonial imagination, rather than being obsessed with binary oppositions, was designed from the very start to be highly layered, with vague and slippery transitions between those layers.

Legal classifications—with their intricacies and loopholes—were one way in which colonial actors tried to make sense of the world in which they lived. The legal debate, in that sense, can be interpreted as a reflection of social controversies. But we should also be mindful that law was not a passive entity in the colonial process of creating, contesting, and affirming categories of difference. When native Indonesians desired to be ‘equated’ with Europeans, for instance, they did so because such a change of status had very real consequences. It allowed them to be hired as Europeans in their chosen field of work, or to send their children to a European school to receive a good education. The legal discussions about what constituted ‘Europeanness’ may

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92 ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 13. Cf. ANRI, AS, Bt. 20 August 1926 No. 10 (Johan de Sonnaville).
sometimes sound rather convoluted and byzantine, but to the contemporaries they were nothing of the sort. We should bear this in mind, in the following chapters, when exploring constructions of ‘Europeanness’ in their wider social context. Legal ‘Europeanness’ may not have been a sufficient condition for entry into privileged colonial social circles, but it was certainly an important aspect that moulded the way people understood the world.
Part II

Of Europeans, Westerners, and Dutchmen: late colonial education and the *Indisch* dream
Chapter 3

The *Indisch* dream: ‘Western’ education for the Indonesian middle classes

**Introduction: ‘European’ or ‘Western’?**

In colonial scholarship, it is common practice to treat terms like ‘European’, ‘Western’, and ‘Dutch’ (or in other colonies: ‘British’, ‘French’, and so on) as approximate synonyms.¹ While this interchangeable use is largely unproblematic for many analytical purposes, it does gloss over the fact that colonial contemporaries did infuse these alternative concepts with slightly different meanings. We have already seen similar nuances in the colonial preference for ‘European’ over ‘White’. As I argue in the current and the following two chapters, ‘Europeanness’, ‘Westernness’, and ‘Dutchness’ were likewise differentiated in subtle ways. These differences amplified over the first decades of the twentieth century and came to acquire considerable significance for the socially imagined hierarchy in the Indies. If we hope to grasp accurately the social and political structure in colonial society, we need to attend to the fine-grained distinctions between these terms.

In the following three chapters, I examine the rival constructions of Europeanness, Westernness and Dutchness in the education system of the Dutch East Indies. Special reference will be made to the education of girls. It is through education that various actors tried and hoped to imprint their own ideas onto the next generation, which makes this a central arena in which to observe how the construction of identity categories functioned in practice. Education is also a well-known instrument for establishing and perpetuating group cohesion, both through the content of education and through the simple fact of bringing together groups of children from a similar *milieu*. Finally, education was one of the central concerns—but also a prime area of contention—for colonial politics in the first half of the twentieth century.² As P.J.A.


² On the history of colonial education in the twentieth century, see: Francien van Anrooi, ‘Groeiend wantrouwen: onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië onder gouverneur-generaal D. Fock (1921-1926)’
Idenburg, the last Director of Education in the Dutch East Indies, explained in a report for the Governor-General in 1940, education was ‘one of the domains, in which the inherent objectives of our colonial policy manifest themselves most clearly’. Education was regarded as a vital tool for advancing the colonial ideology of the civilizing mission. In particular, the question of education for native Indonesians—both whether they should be educated in any extensive way at all, and what the content of that education should be—was a hotly debated issue starting from the 1910s and lasting throughout the rest of the colonial era.

From the analysis of the education policy debate and of three specific types of schools—schools where ‘European’ children were taught, schools where ‘Europeans’ taught native Indonesians in a ‘Western’ curriculum, and schools organized by Indonesian nationalists to teach Indonesian children in a ‘national Indonesian’ way—it will emerge in the following chapters that significant changes occurred over the first four decades of the twentieth century, which had a huge impact on the importance and meaning of the concept of Europeanness in the Indies. This change was instigated and influenced by the interaction of, on the one hand, an increasingly conservative ‘European’ group and, on the other hand, the growing and increasingly vocal Indonesian middle classes. Chapter four will investigate schools that were tailored for a small section of the elite ‘European’ population, whilst chapter five deals with Indonesian views on education, especially as represented by a nationalist Indonesian educational institute known as Taman Siswa. But first, the current chapter studies the development of ‘Western’ education for Indonesians in government-organized or sanctioned schools, and traces the value that European teachers as well as Indonesian students and parents awarded to this type education.

My contention is that colonial educators, through the education system that they designed, imagined a multi-layered hierarchy, rather than a binary differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘Native’ as it has often been presented in literature on social

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and cultural hierarchy in the Indies. In this continuous hierarchy, which developed in the 1910s and came into full shape in the 1920s and 1930s, a notion of ‘Westernness’ took pride of place. In 1900, the differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ (mostly native) had still been relatively clear in the social imaginary, although even then the boundaries in practice had been highly porous. But with the advent of education to ‘Natives’, ever more Indonesians were acquiring a ‘Western’ or ‘European’ upbringing, thus creating a significant ‘middle-class’ of Indonesians with Dutch language skills and an understanding of ‘European’ ways and knowledge. In reaction, ‘Europeanness’ became an ever more exclusive category; a European education no longer qualified someone for European social status, as had been the case before 1900. Instead, in-between groups were constructed, consisting largely of ‘Western’ or ‘Westernized’ Indonesians.

The field of education, then, created a difference between the terms ‘European’ and ‘Western’. In 1900, only a small number of elite Indonesians received a ‘European’ education. By the 1920s and 1930s, a much larger number of Indonesians was receiving a ‘Western’ education. ‘Western’, in this context, replaced ‘European’ as the term of choice to denote concepts such as civilization, modern science, and technology. The meaning of ‘European’, meanwhile, became more restricted, and was used only to refer to a certain group of people, their milieu, and their culture. By this logic, all Europeans were still automatically versed in ‘Western’ knowledge, or so people imagined, but something that was ‘Western’ was no longer necessarily ‘European’. ‘Western’ had become an independent and increasingly important term to denote a realm of imagined notions that collectively could be (vaguely) described as ‘modernity’ or ‘progress’.

What is more, further subtle differentiations were made within the group of Indonesian students who were receiving ‘Western’ education. There were those who (in terms of class and cultural markers) were regarded as practically indiscernible from the ‘European sphere’; those who had become thoroughly ‘Westernized’ but not culturally ‘European’; and those who were still undergoing a process of ‘Westernization’. Various types of schools catered to these different layers, also ensuring various degrees of social and cultural intercourse with other ‘Europeans’. The education system in colonial Indonesia thus allowed both the administration as well as its Indonesian subjects to think of students and graduates as placed on a continuous scale, rather than as inseparably divided. Even more importantly, it
allowed for a certain degree of social mobility. In short, any Indonesian could dream what I call the ‘Indisch dream’: that his or her children would ascend one or two steps on the social ladder (even if they could not realistically expect to rise to the top of the social and political hierarchy). If in reality such social mobility was only very limited, it still happened just often enough to keep the dream alive for many.

Such hopes for social mobility also greatly facilitated the efforts of the colonial government to, in the words of Benedict Anderson, ‘absorb and encapsulate’ the growing class of educated Indonesians that might otherwise have turned against the colonial system. Less-privileged groups were invested in the very system that kept them in line, because it kept their hope of social improvement alive. The layered colonial hierarchy thus ensured—as we shall see further in chapters five and six—that the recruiting pool for active fundamental resistance against the colonial system remained small.

This chapter opens with a short description, based on sources from the administration as well as secondary literature, of the basic structure of colonial education, followed by a discussion of the colonial debate about the use and necessity of education for ‘Natives’. This is followed by a case study of the so-called Kartini schools, founded to provide Indonesian girls with ‘Western’ education, on the basis of the school archives as well as some private papers from its founders. The debate is given further texture with a discussion of conservative (European) voices, which frequently opposed the extensive education of Indonesians, but were ultimately unable to prevent its rise. The chapter concludes by examining the student admission criteria (and their development) for the various school tiers, emphasizing the gradual rather than discrete nature of group boundaries.

**The education system in the Indies**

Before diving into the discourse that was used in the Dutch East Indies’ schools and the meaning that the concepts ‘European’ and ‘Western’ acquired in this discourse, a short introduction to the colonial education system is necessary. This system was highly complex. Like most legal and administrative regulations in the Dutch East Indies (see chapters one and two), the education system was based on a plural principle. There were different schools and different curricula for different population

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groups. Separate education was required for the three groups legally defined as ‘Europeans’, ‘Natives’, and ‘Foreign Orientals’ (although the latter group mostly fell between two stools, receiving little attention from the government). The *Regeringsreglement* of 1854 poignantly illustrates the institutionalized inequality.

Under article 127 of the RR, the government had a duty to provide sufficient primary education for all European children in the Indies. Article 128 only expressed a duty to provide schools for Natives. The word ‘sufficient’ was not included in this latter article. Providing education for Europeans was a constitutional obligation of the Dutch Indies state, whilst providing education for natives was merely an option in case the circumstances (and particularly the financial situation) permitted.

As we can gather from the administrative practice in the last decades of the nineteenth century, this differentiation was more than just an intricacy of legal wording. The Indies administration in this period was concerned mainly with the expansion and improvement of education for Europeans. By contrast public education for native Indonesians remained small-scale, only reaching a very thin elite layer of the population. Although throughout the colonial era education to Natives would never become anywhere near universal, attitudes did start to change in the 1890s. This change picked up speed with the introduction of the ‘ethical policy’, the Dutch Indies’ version of the civilizing mission, in the first decade of the twentieth century. In the 1910s, a massive rise in expenditures on education specifically benefited education for Natives. Significant changes were made in the institutional framework of native education, creating the foundations of an education structure that would last until the end of the colonial era.

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7 Practically all authors emphasize the significance of the ‘ethical policy’ for the changes in the education system. For this reason, most authors working on education in the Indies (especially on education for Natives) start their analysis around the turn of the century. See e.g.: Van Niel, *The emergence*; Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’; Geschiere, ‘De meningsvorming’. On the ethical policy in general, see Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*.
8 See e.g.: Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 22-26, 52-56, 61-63, 111, 162; Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*, pp. 133-143. Budget data can be found in Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 111, 162; cf. the annual reports from the Department of Education: *Algemeen Verslag van het Onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië*. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to quantify the relative importance of the different tiers of the system, because the costs for education to Europeans and for ‘Western’ education to Natives are not separated in the budget of the Department of Education. The rise of the Dutch-Native
Although the intricacies of this structure need not concern us here, it is necessary to draw the main lines for a better understanding of the arguments to follow. On the European side, primary education was provided in the Europese Lagere Scholen (ELS, European Primary Schools). The ELS followed the curriculum of primary schools in the Netherlands, taught in the Dutch language, and included some limited teaching in the history and geography of the Dutch Indies. All (legally) ‘European’ inhabitants of the Indies were entitled to attend an ELS. Some ‘Natives’ were also allowed to go these schools—in some cases constituting up to fifty per cent of the student population—but they had no enforceable right.

The ELS was subdivided into so-called ‘first ELS’ and ‘non-first ELS’. The former were only open to students whose parents could afford higher tuition fees, the latter accepted all European students. Consequently, the latter became the school for the poorer strata of European society. The only difference in curriculum between the two types of schools was that the non-first ELS did not teach French. Still, given that French was a prerequisite to be accepted into secondary schools, this difference was significant. To alleviate this grievance, a small number of particularly talented students could transfer to the higher classes of the first ELS without paying the higher tuition fees.

No special provisions were made to accommodate non-Dutch Europeans, although many schools included a pre-school intended to raise the level of Dutch-language skills among non-Dutch native speakers before they entered school. These pre-schools were mainly geared towards (Indo-)Europeans who spoke Malay at home, not towards the children of the sizeable German, British, and other-nationality populations in the Indies. The latter might of course have founded private schools, although the only evidence I have found of this was one ‘Deutsches Schulheim’ Schools (see below) was therefore reflected in an increase in the budget for ‘education in the Dutch language’, which also included schools for Europeans.

(essentially a one-family boarding house) and one ‘English Highland School’, an institution with just under one hundred students (English and American as well as some Scandinavian, Swiss and also Dutch children). Both of these schools were founded in the 1930s and located in Kaban Jahe, in the Sumatran hills outside Medan where the plantations employed a relatively high number of non-Dutch Europeans among their technical and managerial staff. Overall, though, it seems that most non-Dutch parents chose to send their children either to the local Dutch-language European schools or to dispatch them to their own home country for schooling. A problem for these ‘foreigners’ was also that most of them were too dispersed across the Indies to establish feasible independent schools, because the ‘foreign’ presence—especially of recently immigrated expats—was particularly strong in the so-called ‘Outer Regions’, the sparsely populated islands outside of Java and Madura.

On the native side of the education system, a division into ‘first class’ and ‘second class’ schools was inherited from the nineteenth century. The former were intended for the sons (rarely the daughters) of native leaders and Natives in the service of the government. It prepared them to succeed their fathers. The latter, from the mid-1910s onwards also known as ‘standard schools’, provided fairly basic education and were devised as the general school for the majority of the population. Due to under-financing and lack of initiative, the number of these schools remained relatively small (approximately 1,200 schools for a total of 180,000 students in 1915). In 1907, efforts were instigated by Governor-General Van Heutsz to expand basic education to the mass of the native population. He introduced the so-called ‘desa-schools’ (desa = village). These schools offered an even more basic three-year curriculum in either the vernacular or the lingua franca Malay, which was mainly geared towards reducing illiteracy. They were very cheap to run, making it possible to significantly increase their number over the following decades. Attendance in these schools soared from ca. 70,000 students in 1910, to 396,000 in 1920, and more than 1.4 million in 1930 (including ca. 327,000 girls). Many students, however, left the

10 Kaban Djahé’s ideaal klimaat: de “Highland School” is eenig in Indië’, Het Nieuws van den Dag, 4 July 1939. Also cf. the plans in 1935 to start a German boarding school in Sukabumi (Java), which seem to have come to naught: ‘Deutscher Schulunterricht’, Deutsche Wacht, Niederländisch-Indische Monatsschrift für Handels- und Kolonialpolitik, Volkswirtschaft und Völkerrecht, Vol. 21, 11 June 1935, p. 33. I thank Maaike van den Berg for alerting me to these schools. Van den Berg is writing an M.A. thesis on the German community in late colonial Indonesia.

schools before completing even the three-year curriculum. It is, therefore, impossible to quantify how many of the former students were actually functionally literate upon finishing their school career.

The most important reform in the primary education system occurred in 1914 when the first-class native schools were transformed into the so-called *Hollands-Inlandse Scholen* (HIS, Dutch-Native Schools). In these schools, Dutch was introduced as the language of instruction. The curriculum was designed to coincide with that of the non-first ELS. The target population of the HIS were the native elites. Although compared to the nineteenth century many more Indonesian students were receiving this kind of education, the HIS were still only open to a very small fraction of the population. Attendance rose from only 20,000 students in 1915, to 57,000 in 1925 and ultimately 62,000 in 1935—in a country with a population of approximately 60 million souls.

Secondary education in the Indies, finally, was essentially organised in parallel to the Dutch situation. It was accessible only to those who had received a Western education in the ELS or HIS, although there were possibilities for graduates of other native schools to make the switch. Both non-first ELS and HIS qualified students for the *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO, More Extensive Primary Education—technically part of the primary education system), a three-year course which prepared them for the entrance exams to the *Hogere Burgerscholen* (HBS, Higher Citizens’ Schools) and for a range of vocational training schools. It also qualified students directly for various professions, among which were many lower- to mid-level positions in the administration. Graduates of the first ELS could sit the entrance exams to the HBS directly, and in fact formed the lion’s share of the limited HBS population. The HBS was the highest form of secondary education available in the Indies, and offered its graduates qualifications for entering a range of academic studies (including law and various technical subjects), or alternatively the chance to enter directly into many high-end professions.

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14 The term *‘burger’* in Dutch has the double meaning of ‘citizen’ and ‘bourgeois’ (also recognizable for example in the VOC-era term ‘burgher’ for colonial inhabitants with ‘citizenship’ status). Both these meanings blend into the designation of secondary schools as *Hogere Burgerscholen*. 
In summary, the system of (primary) education shows two main lines of differentiation. On the one hand, there is the distinction on the basis of target population: the ELS were primarily intended for Europeans (even though a significant number of Natives were allowed to attend); the HIS, standard schools and desa-schools targeted various layers of the native population. On the other hand, a differentiation was made on the basis of curriculum: both ELS and HIS offered what was generally termed ‘Western’ education, whilst standard schools and desa-schools provided what was known as ‘native’ or ‘national’ education. The HIS therefore occupied an interesting bridging position. Even in the very basic structure of the Dutch East Indies’ education system, we can see that the interpretation of Indies society as structured by a binary hierarchy is too restrictive. Rather than dualistic, as it is often portrayed, the education system consisted of a threefold differentiation consisting of ‘European’ schools, ‘Western’ schools for Indonesians, and basic ‘native’ schools. Moreover, we already catch a glimpse of the difference in meaning between the terms ‘European’ and ‘Western’. The term ‘European’ (Europees), as in ‘European Primary School’, indicated the primary target group, and was therefore a notion connected to (individual) persons and their social surroundings. ‘Western’ (Westers), by contrast, as the catch-all term for ELS and HIS, was determined by the curriculum, and was thus connected to the content of education.

This divergence of meaning between ‘European’ and ‘Western’—all Europeans were still regarded as Western, but Western-educated people were no longer necessarily European—was a new phenomenon that came into being in the first two decades of the twentieth century, with the introduction and expansion of Western education to Indonesians. Around the turn of the century, the term ‘Western’ had still hardly been in use; ‘European’ at this point in time had still covered both

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<th>School type</th>
<th>Target student population</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Teaching language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Primary School</td>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>Western, 6 years</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch-Native School</td>
<td>Natives (elite)</td>
<td>Western, 6 years</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard- or desa-school</td>
<td>Natives (majority)</td>
<td>Native, 3 years</td>
<td>Vernacular or Malay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1: Schematic typology of the primary education system in colonial Indonesia after 1914.

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15 E.g. Anrooij, ‘Groeiend wantrouwen’, p. 32; Van der Veur, ‘Progress and procrastination’.
meanings.\textsuperscript{16} The introduction of the concept of ‘Western’ education encroached on the meaning of ‘European’.

‘Western’ versus ‘Oriental’ education

To explore further the relationship between the concepts of ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Westernness’, we must delve deeper into a specific debate that continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century: the hotly debated issue of the preferred nature of education for Natives. As I have indicated above, certain choices were made in the 1900s and 1910s when the main structure of the Indies education system was designed. However, discussions about the goals, means, and organization of education did not wither away after that time. Curricula were constantly (re)considered, ideology reassessed, budget cuts implemented, and money flows redirected. The main question in all these changes and debates was whether the government should do its utmost to expand ‘Western’ education to Natives, or whether it should focus its efforts on what was variously termed ‘Oriental’ (\textit{Oosters}), ‘native’ or ‘national’ education—education in the vernacular, based on the indigenous traditions and interests.\textsuperscript{17} This question was connected to a range of other problems, particularly a financial one: in the HIS, Indonesian students were mostly taught by Dutch teachers who were paid far more than their Indonesian colleagues in the desa- and standard schools. The possibility of employing Indonesian teachers to teach in Western schools—let alone in the ELS—was only gradually introduced. The financial argument weighed particularly heavy during the economic crisis of the early 1930s, which hit the Indies hard. Nonetheless, an ideological question, connected to a more general vision of the desired relationship between colonial power and colonized population, lay at the heart of the matter.

A first possible answer to the question of ‘Western’ or ‘Oriental’ education was based on a belief in the possibility of the assimilation of Natives into Western

\textsuperscript{16} See e.g. NL-HaNA, Ministerie van Koloniën: Openbaar Verbaal, 1901-1952 (henceforth: Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal), 2.10.36.04, 105, Verbaal 23 January 1902 No. 27, Letter from the \textit{Algemene Secretarie} to the Director of Education, 19 December 1901. In this report, which deals with the possibility of opening a public primary school offering ‘European’ education to native girls, the term of choice is still ‘European’, not ‘Western’, even though the proposed school would only accept Natives, not European girls.

\textsuperscript{17} P.L. Geschieere frames this question as ‘Western’ versus ‘national’ education: P.Geschieere, ‘De meningsvorming’. Although ‘Western’ was a very common and largely uncontested denominator, ‘national’ was far less so. This term is not used by all actors, but is rather only one of several options in use—‘Oriental’, ‘national’, ‘native’, ‘Javanese’.
This approach most directly expressed the ideology of the ethical policy. It had a significant influence on government policy in the first two decades of the twentieth century, which saw the initial construction of the native education system. The ideal of assimilation entailed the propagation of Western civilization among the Natives via education. As will become abundantly clear below, ‘Western civilization’ in this context was a vaguely defined and conflicted notion, but its draw for colonial educators (as well as Indonesian students) was no less powerful.

The assimilation ideal was most forcefully formulated in the words of the famous scholar of Islam C. Snouck Hurgronje, who (from 1891 to 1906) was the advisor on ‘Native Affairs’ to the Indies government and left a clear mark on the education policy of these and the following years. In 1915 Snouck Hurgronje pleaded for the ‘spiritual annexation’ of the native population of the Indies, or in other words the ‘beautiful political and national idea […] of the making of a Dutch state, existing of two parts that are geographically far apart but spiritually intimately connected, one in Northwest-Europe, the other in Southeast-Asia’. Snouck continued:

This is not a utopian ideal, but a goal that, if they pass up the currently arising opportunity to pursue it, the government and the people of the Netherlands would lastingly regret not having tackled it soon enough. […] If the unity is to be able to resist the tempests of time, then the material annexation should now be followed by the spiritual [annexation].

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18 I follow Geschiere in the use of the term ‘assimilation’. Geschiere has identified three different answers current among Europeans in the Indies on the afore-mentioned controversy of ‘Western’ versus ‘Oriental’ education for Natives, which he has termed ‘assimilation’, ‘progressive adaptation’, and ‘conservative adaptation’. In my opinion, the first two of these three approaches cannot be as neatly separated as Geschiere presents them, but rather they are two different sides of an internally conflicted ideology. Cf. Geschiere, ‘De meningsvorming’.

19 The periodization of the ethical policy has given rise to much debate. Even if some authors do not agree with identifying 1920/21 as the end of the ethical policy (see e.g. Locher-Scholten), at least all agree that the 1920s saw a significant change in the content and appeal of the ethical policy. Locher-Scholten, ‘De ethische politiek’; Geschiere, ‘De meningsvorming’, pp. 51-61, 76-77; Van Niel, The emergence, pp. 36-40, 244-251; Anrooij, ‘Groeiend wantrouwen’.


Snouck Hurgronje and his kindred spirits understood that an immediate expansion of Western education to the entire population was financially impossible. For the short term, they therefore advocated a dedicated effort to offer fully-fledged Western schooling at least to the native elites, which through a trickle down effect would benefit the entire population.22

This ideology and its understanding of what a ‘European’ or ‘Western’ education entailed can be illustrated through the example of one particular organization: the Kartinifonds (Kartini Foundation). This organization had been founded in the Netherlands in 1913 on the private initiative of a number of high ranking (former) officials who were renowned as ardent Ethici, most importantly J.H. Abendanon and C.Th. van Deventer. They were inspired by the ideas of Raden Adjeng Kartini, a young Javanese noblewoman who had corresponded with several Dutch women, among them Rosa Abendanon, the wife of J.H. Abendanon. In her letters, Kartini had pleaded fervently for more education to native Javanese women. After her premature death in 1904, Abendanon and his wife decided to publish Kartini’s correspondence. The resulting volume Door Duisternis tot Licht (Through Darkness to Light) came out in 1911 and was an instant success. The proceeds of the book were channelled into the foundation of the Kartinifonds, securing for this new organization a starting capital and a steady stream of income in its first few years.23

The main objective of the Kartinifonds was to establish and support primary schools for native girls in the Indies, the so-called Kartini schools. In 1915, after the

23 Much has been written about Kartini, her life, and her ideas, both in her own time and by present-day historians: Joost Coté, Writing between the lines: R.A. Kartini and Indonesian nationalism in two decades of correspondence, 1904-1924, Working paper series 94 (Deaking University, Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, 1994); Joost Coté: ‘Raden Ajeng Kartini: the experience and politics of colonial education’, in Joyce Goodman and Jane Martin (eds.), Gender, colonialism and education: the politics of experience (London: Woburn Press, 2002), pp. 199-224; Jean Gelman Taylor, ‘Kartini in her historical context’, Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Vol. 145, No. 2/3, 1989, pp. 295-307; Taylor, ‘Once more, Kartini’, in Laurie J. Sears (ed.), Autonomous histories, particular truths: essays in honor of John R.W. Smail (Madison, Wisconsin: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 155-171. Several different volumes and re-edited volumes of Kartini’s letters have been published: Raden Adjeng Kartini, Door duisternis tot licht: gedachten over en voor het Javaanse volk van Raden Adjeng Kartini, ed. Elisabeth Allard (Amsterdam: Gé Nabrink, 1976); Kartini, Brieven aan mevrouw R.M. Abendanon-Mandri en haar echtgenoot, met andere documenten, ed. F.G.P. Jaquet (Dordrecht: Foris publications, 1987). Much less has been written on the Kartinifonds, which, even though its founders were inspired by Kartini, should be seen as a separate matter. Most literature on education in the Indies does at some point reference the Kartini schools, but the only recent publication that has included extensive source-based study on this organization is Gouda, Dutch culture overseas, pp. 75-118.
death of co-founder C.Th. van Deventer, a sister-organization was founded under the name Van Deventer-stichting (Van Deventer Foundation), which took it upon itself to establish and support analogous secondary schools for native girls, the so-called Van Deventer schools. The self-professed goal that both these organizations hoped to accomplish was the following:

When the school [the first Kartini school in Semarang] was founded, it was our intention, in the interest of an even-handed development of Native society, to open up European education, which had already been provided to Native boys for some considerable time, also to Native girls, who as a consequence of Native attitudes are only hesitantly being sent to mixed schools by their parents.24

The goal, in other words, was the ‘upbringing [opvoeding] of the cream of the Native youth in Western spirit’,25 so as to achieve ‘the uplifting of the native family by securing for the Woman the place that she fully deserves on the basis of her talents, her innate civilization, her many good traits of heart and mind’.26 The education of this ‘cream’ of the native youth would ultimately benefit the entire native population, as the elite women would be able to set the right example and to teach their less fortunate sisters.

The path to achieving these goals was to start private schools that were the single-sex equivalent of the public HIS schools. The language of instruction was Dutch, and the curriculum largely followed the Dutch curriculum, supplemented with subjects such as home economics, handicrafts, and some teaching in the Javanese language.27 Teachers were almost exclusively ‘European’ women, although the school boards did their best to find at least a few Indonesian women qualified to teach the

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24 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Second annual report Kartinifonds, August 1915, p. 15. Emphasis in the original.
25 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 1, Draft report on the history of the Kartinifonds during 1916.
26 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 1, Circular letter by the Temporary Committee for the establishment of a Kartini Foundation, 26 February 1913. Emphasis in the original.
27 See for the curriculum the successive annual reports: Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds. Also cf. for the Van Deventer schools: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Prospectus for the Semarang Van Deventer school, 1924.
European curriculum. In the secondary schools, the girls would preferably live in a boarding house connected to the school, run by a ‘European’ woman ‘of good reputation and standing’, so they could learn to bring their newly acquired skills in the field of home economics into practice and ‘get used to a life, in which a tight hand is held on cleanliness of body, dress and house; on neatness, order and regularity; on punctuality in the hours of bedtimes, meals, work, recreation, etc.’ These boarding schools were considered particularly helpful in transferring notions of hygiene and orderliness: ‘The goal of this school [the Van Deventer school in Malang] is the education of the Javanese girl to make her a cultivated [ontwikkeld] woman, so that she will be ready for the great task that she has to fulfil in the native family life, which is adjusting more and more to Western notions of hygiene and domestic intercourse, especially in the better situated circles of native society’. Their constant interactions with a European environment imbued with notions of Western civility would ultimately turn the students into the civilized, Westernized Javanese women that their society sorely needed.

The ideology of ‘spiritual annexation’ of the native Indonesian population had an inherent gender-bias. The founders and teachers of the Kartini schools—as well as such influential commentators as Snouck Hurgronje and the government officials responsible—saw a specific and important role for women in the process of Westernization of the native population. In their view, although a number of men had started to receive education, the positive influence of this education could and would not last unless women were also educated. Women were primarily educated because

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28 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 1, Draft report on the history of the Kartinfonds during 1916; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Second annual report Kartinfonds, August 1915.
29 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 165, 42nd school report on the Semarang Van Deventer school, reporting on July-August-September 1932.
30 NL-HaNA, Ministerie van Koloniën: Mailrapporten (henceforth: Koloniën / Mailrapporten), 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 810, 1929, Letter from the Malang Kartini Foundation to the Director of Education, 12 October 1928.
31 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 810, 1929, Observations and advice from the Director of Education, 28 February 1929. Cf. NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 810, 1929, Letter from the Malang Kartini Foundation to the Director of Education, 12 October 1928; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 1179, 1926, Summary of the contribution by the Inspector for Native Education (3rd department) to the General Report on Education 1925.
32 Snouck Hurgronje, Nederland en de Islam, pp. 93-94; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 518, 1926, Letter from the Director of Education to the Governor-General, 22 February 1926; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929 No. 24, Recommendations from the Inspector for Native Education (11th department) to the Director of Education.
of their pivotal task ‘as housewife and mother’.\footnote{The trope of the role in society of women ‘as housewives and mothers’ is ubiquitous, see e.g.: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 1, Draft report on the history of the Kartinifonds during 1916; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3381, Verbaal 2 February 1933 No. 7, Letter from the Kartinifonds to the Minister for Colonial Affairs, 25 January 1933; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 810, 1929, Observations and advice from the Director of Education, 28 February 1929.} Westernized native men needed ‘sturdy [\textit{degelijke}], sensible wives’,\footnote{NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Notes by Ms. De Groot Enzerink concerning courses to be provided at the homes of Javanese parents.} ‘life partner[s] [...] of equal general development’.\footnote{Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds, Vol. 5, 1917, p. 28.} But not only did the men need educated wives, the upbringing of future generations in a modern Western spirit required educated women even more pressingly. Through the upbringing of her children, namely, ‘[t]he woman makes into a tradition those new values that are introduced within the borders of her world’.\footnote{NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929 No. 24, Recommendation by the Education Council to the Director of Education concerning the raising of the social and character-building values of the Native primary education (in particular girls’ education), August 1927. Cf. on this argumentation: A.Th. Boone, ‘Onderwijs en opvoeding in de Nederlandse koloniën 1595-1975’, in A.Th. Boone and Marc Depaepe (eds.), ‘Onderwijzen en opvoeden in koloniale en missionaire contexten’, Pedagogisch Tijdschrift, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1996, p. 96; Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, p. 157.} In other words: it was through women that a healthy, Westernized domestic environment could be created that would make the Western development offered to native men sustainable. Women were the creators and bearers of a (suitable) domestic social \textit{milieu}. Implicitly though, the primary goal remained the education of the publicly active men, including those of future generations.

The emphasis on female education as important for the development of native society as a whole was used by ‘Europeans’ also in a way that helped them to define differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Colonial education administrators considered the ideal of gender-equality in education a value typical of a developed, progressive society, and therefore as something Western. Almost without further inquiry, they presumed that in native Indonesian society, education for girls was ‘traditionally’ considered unnecessary and that co-education of boys and girls was frowned upon. Europeans on the other hand had understood the importance of educating the future mothers and housewives, and were more modern in their views on mixed-gender education.\footnote{NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929 No. 24, Ministerial memorandum with a summary and chronology of the deliberations concerning the expansion and intensification of native popular education: promotion of girls’ education; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929 No. 24, Recommendations from} Meanwhile, it was conveniently ignored that gender-equality in education
for Europeans in the Indies had only been implemented in very recent times, and that there was actually an Indonesian women’s movement pressing for more education of girls. Views on gender-equality were thus used as a subtle way to define a difference in (level of) civilization between Westerners and non-Westerners. At the same time, though, it presented an opportunity to non-Westerners to acquire a modern viewpoint, namely by simply realizing the importance of sending their daughters to school. It offered to ‘Natives’ the possibility of using education to ‘Westernize’ themselves in more ways then one.

The assimilationist streak present in the ideology of the Kartinifonds, as described in the last few pages, is only one side of the coin: within the same organization, even within the utterances of the same actors at different points in time, it regularly conflicted with another ideal, namely the ‘Orientalist’ dream of preserving an authentic and valuable ‘Oriental’ culture. This discrepancy highlights the conflicts and paradoxes that surrounded the idea of ‘modernization’, especially when applied by colonial thinkers to the native Javanese. Often, ‘Europeans’ propagated the assimilation of Natives to Western civilization and culture. But at other times, the same people pleaded for an adaptation of Western civilization and institutions to the indigenous customs and traditions, resulting in an imagined authentically ‘Oriental’ (Oosters) form of education. This latter ideal was often inspired by the cultural relativist ideas originating from Van Vollenhoven’s analysis of the European and the Native as incompatible, but equally valuable cultural spheres (see chapter 1).

The staunchest defenders of this argument even supported abandoning Dutch in favour of the vernacular, or possibly Malay, as the language of instruction for

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38 Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen, p. 134; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 3621, 1929, Decree from the Governor-General, 28 November 1929; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 533, Verbaal M13, Report by the advisor for Native Affairs on the third quadrennial congress of Taman Siswa, held from 16 until 22 November 1938 in Yogyakarta.


40 Hence the use of the epithet ‘progressive adaptation’ that P.L. Geschiere has given this form of reasoning. Geschiere, ‘De meningsvorming’, pp. 51-61.
education to native elites. Such an opinion was, for instance, advocated by various social-democratic colonial experts in both metropole and colony, as well as in the pages of De School, the progressive publication of the Dutch Indies Teachers Association. But many other educators in the Indies, including the government officials and the teachers of the Kartini schools, were not prepared to go this far. Nevertheless, most were susceptible (to some degree) to the argument that wholly unchanged Western education to Natives should be avoided, on the basis that it would necessarily uproot the students and sever them from their origins.

The admiration for an idea of authentic Oriental culture is particularly strong in relation to girls’ education. As historian Frances Gouda has noted, many of the men and (especially) women involved in the Kartinifonds were caught in a paradoxical split. On the one hand, they wished to ‘elevate’ Javanese girls through Western education, helping them enter the modern age. But on the other hand, they themselves were ‘hopelessly in love’ with an idealized notion of the traditional culture of the Javanese priyayi (aristocracy). Especially in relation to educating girls, much emphasis was placed on the dangers of a full-fledged Western education. They would not become ‘true’ Westerners, but rather enter into an in-between stage, neither here nor there, robbed of any clear orientation. In the words of C.Th. van Deventer, the girls could only become ‘counterfeit [nagemaakte] European ladies’, never the real thing. Instead, education should focus on making them ‘sound Javanese women’. Only those elements of Western knowledge and civilization crucial for the economic advancement and cultural revival of the native population should be offered, whilst their culture and language should be left intact. Consequently, many influential figures within the Kartinifonds supported the inclusion of substantial teaching of the Javanese language in the curriculum, although they lamented that ‘for the time being’, unfortunately, it was impossible to replace Dutch as the main language of instruction,

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42 Gouda, Dutch culture overseas, citation p. 76, also see pp. 76-78, 97-100.
43 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03. 2, Report by Mr. Van Deventer on what has been accomplished with regard to the Kartini schools since his previous letter, 21 January 1913. Note the opposition created in this quotation between European ladies and Javanese women.
as this was still the only language in which an understanding of the wider modern world could be conveyed.\textsuperscript{44}

The balance between the two objectives—should ‘Natives’ be assimilated to ‘European’ culture or should Western education be adapted to ‘Oriental’ needs—shifted somewhat over time. In the 1910s, at the height of the enthusiasm for the ‘ethical policy’, assimilationist ideals generally received most support. From the 1920s onwards, professions of fear over an excessively Western curriculum materialized increasingly often in the internal correspondence and published materials of the Kartini schools.\textsuperscript{45} But this chronological development should not be exaggerated; some hesitation concerning overly Western education already existed in the 1910s, and in the 1930s the Kartini schools were still principally teaching in Dutch. The change was slight and gradual rather than outright. The theoretical reflections on a harmonious fusion of ‘East’ and ‘West’ had little practical consequence for the curriculum—at least for the theoretical subjects—that continued in essence to follow the Dutch model.

The same emphasis that was placed on the role of women as agents for turning Western values into tradition was also deployed in the expression of (progressive) adaptationist ideals. Irrespective of one’s preferred final objective—the assimilation of Natives into European society, or the adaptation of Western civilized knowledge to Eastern culture—women were seen as the agents for the creation, transfer and maintenance of tradition.\textsuperscript{46} Whichever way one looked at it, at least there was agreement that women’s education should have a different focus than men’s education. Boys had to learn practical knowledge that was useful in society and especially in their future work environment. Western knowledge and Dutch language skills were supposedly essential for this purpose. Girls, by contrast, benefitted especially from an education that focused on the development of their personality:

\textsuperscript{44} E.g.: \textit{Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds}, Vol. 5, 1917, pp. 28-29. Cf. NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Report by Mr. Van Deventer on what has been accomplished with regard to the Kartini schools since his previous letter, 21 January 1913; \textit{Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds}, Vol. 2, 1914, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{45} E.g.: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Letter from the Board of the Buitenzorg Kartini school to the board of the Madiun Kartini school, 17 December 1936; \textit{Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds}, Vol. 17, 1924, pp. 44-47; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 165, Transcription from a letter from Ms. Volkers to Mrs. Van Deventer, 29 November 1932.

\textsuperscript{46} Cf. Gouda, \textit{Dutch culture overseas}, pp. 97-100; Coté, \textit{Writing between the lines}, p. 29.
In particular we should remember that knowledge of the Dutch language, which in [an educated native] family the woman should also have, has a different purpose for her than for her husband. A man needs Dutch as the official language of advanced western education and in the future as a means of oral and written exchange of thought in the performing of his function or occupation. The woman likewise needs knowledge of Dutch in order to give her children the desired upbringing, but it suffices if she can use this language in a simple conversation. To her, the harmonic development of spirit and heart is of more value than dry knowledge of western language.\textsuperscript{47}

The main role of men was in a public function, and of women in a domestic sphere. Proficiency in ‘European’ or ‘Western’ ways and values was therefore differently judged and valued.

Significantly, the ‘native’ children studying in the Kartini schools, as well as their parents, were almost never heard themselves, even though they were the object of all these discussions.\textsuperscript{48} It was almost exclusively ‘Europeans’ (and in fact mostly those who were part of a social and financial elite of ‘Europeans’ in the Indies) who discussed these matters. It was these men and especially women who dreamt of a harmonious synthesis of West and East, regularly taking that synthesis to trifling extremes, as the following description (written by a female member of the school board in Semarang) of the opening ceremony of the first Kartini school in 1913 illustrates:

Yesterday the first Kartini school was opened here. [...] The building in question [was] decorated most festively. In the decoration one had attempted also to charm Javanese eyes, which had succeeded most endearingly. Garlands and festoons of waringin leaves, with red flowers pricked into them, beautiful palm trees everywhere and everything decorated with green arches and hundreds of large and small flags. In front of the house on the lawn the \textit{gamelan} [Javanese

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds}, Vol. 5, 1917, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{48} In other contexts (some) Indonesians did raise their voice, especially those in the fledgling Indonesian nationalist (education) movement. See chapter 5.
orchestra] was playing most festively. In an ingenious way, both nationalities had been symbolically mixed in the decoration.⁴⁹

It seems, however, from the few sources that reveal the intentions of the students’ parents, that at least some of them were much more focused on procuring a ‘European’ education for their children, and less interested in the ideology of synthesis. It is telling, for example, that several of the girls attending the Kartini schools went by very traditional Dutch names, like Betsy, Marie and Anna.⁵⁰ Similarly, the parents of several of the girls at the described opening ceremony had attempted to give their daughters a ‘European cachet’, as the board member from Semarang reported:

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⁵⁰ NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 4, Proceedings of the board meeting of 6 June 1915.
Most [girls] were entirely in Javanese attire, *kain* and *kebaya* and the hairs in that funny bun on top of their head. There had been some parents, however, who had wanted to give them a European cachet for this occasion. I saw some, for instance, with their hair cut short, others with their hair tied up with a bow, some as a proper school child with a decent straight braid.\(^{51}\)

We find the same thing during the cornerstone ceremony for the Madiun Kartini school, a year and a half later. As a photograph taken at this occasion demonstrates, approximately half of the girls wore white frocks with matching shoes and socks, rather than their supposedly ‘traditional’ attire (figure 3.2). Not only for such celebrations, but also for normal school days many parents chose to dress their children in European style.\(^{52}\) It was, in fact, our ‘European’ reporter that disliked this, witness her remark that ‘[t]he proper little Javanese looked the sweetest’.\(^{53}\) In later years, therefore, the Kartini schools increasingly encouraged their students to wear *kain kebaya* instead of European dresses.\(^{54}\)

The plan to open a guesthouse for students of the Semarang Kartini school in 1915 similarly shows that parents were less concerned than the teachers about safeguarding their presumed ‘traditions’ against ‘European’ encroachments. An Indonesian lady had been employed by the school board to act as housekeeper in the guesthouse, but several parents indicated to the board that they would appreciate it if the house could be placed under the leadership of a ‘European’ lady, in order to give their daughters more sophisticated guidance in their domestic environment. The (European) members of the board objected to this idea, because they feared that the girls in the house would lose ‘the connection to native society, in which they are destined to spend their lives’.\(^{55}\) The evidence suggests, then, that parents were not particularly concerned with the overly ‘Europeanizing’ effect of the Kartini schools, or that in some cases they actually desired such ‘Europeanization’ for their children. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the Kartini Foundation’s founders and school boards,

\(^{54}\) Many more pictures illustrating the dress code in the schools can be found in the annual reports as well as in the photo books stored in the archive of the Kartini Foundation: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03: 74, 75, 79, 90, 91, 99, 100, 101, 102, 115-121, 123-125, 160-163, 173-179, 186-189.
\(^{55}\) NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Second annual report *Kartinfonds*, August 1915, p. 16.
finding the balance between the dual objective of providing ‘modern’ or ‘civilized’
education to the students without destroying their connection to authentic ‘Oriental’
culture remained a pressing conundrum. Part of the solution that they found is
reflected in the way they subtly differentiated between ‘Europeanness’ and
‘Westernness’.

In the early days of the expansion of education to native Indonesians, this
education was still regularly referred to as ‘European’. As the number of pupils
receiving a ‘European’ education was as yet very limited, there seemed to be no
inhibition about comparing their education to that of ‘real’ Europeans in the ELS.
However, in the wake of quickly rising numbers of Natives visiting public HIS as
well as Kartini schools over the course of the 1910s, ‘Western’ became the notion of
choice to describe this kind of education. By the 1920s, the term ‘Western education’
(westers onderwijs) was in almost universal use as an overarching term for all
education in the Dutch language, be it to Europeans or to natives. The term
‘European education’ came to be reserved for the education offered in ELS, implying
that this meant ‘Western’ education offered to Europeans, not to non-Europeans.

The separation of meaning between ‘European’ and ‘Western’ had an
important consequence. It meant that ‘European’ culture, behaviour, and personality
could be (and were) separated discursively from ‘Western’ education, knowledge, and
even modernity. The women teaching in the Kartini schools or sitting on the school
boards were seen as ‘European ladies’, as were their cultural expressions such as
dresses and hairstyles. The society they came from was equally known as ‘European
society’—irrespective of whether they were recent immigrants from the Netherlands
or had lived in the Indies all their life. These ‘European’ ladies, however, were

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56 An example is the quotation cited above from the Kartini Foundation’s official objectives: ‘it was
our intention [...] to open up European education [...] also to Native girls’. NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds,
2.20.38.03, 2, Second annual report Kartinifonds, August 1915, p. 15. Another example: NL-HaNA,
Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 1, Draft report on the history of the Kartinifonds during 1916.
57 Some examples: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Letter from the Board of the Buitenzorg
Kartini school to the board of the Madiun Kartini school, 17 December 1936; NL-HaNA, Kolonien / Openbaar Verbaal, 3286, Verbaal 19 January 1932 No. 1; Albert de la Court, ‘De Oosterling en de
(eds.), Indisch vrouwenjaarboek 1936 (Jogjakarta: Kolff-Buning, 1936), pp. 200-205. Naturally, this
separation in the two terms was not one hundred per cent consistent, slipovers occurred regularly.
Overall though, the chronological shift in discourse is clearly observable in the sources.
58 Some examples: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Observations by Ms. Jellema (Director of
the Malang Van Deventer school) regarding requisites for native Teachers at the Van Deventer schools,
28 October 1932; NL-HaNA, Kolonien / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929
No. 24, Recommendations from the Inspector for Native Education (3rd department) to the Director of
providing ‘Western education’, teaching their native pupils in a ‘Western spirit’, transferring ‘Western knowledge’ as well as modern ‘Western’ notions of civility. Notions like modernity and progress were detached from ‘Europeanness’ and were instead seen as something ‘Western’, which meant they could be transferred to non-Europeans without (necessarily) making these Natives ‘European’.

This logic explains how the Kartini schools believed they had solved the apparent paradox of providing Western education to Javanese girls without making them ‘counterfeit European ladies’. The discrepancy described above between the ideal of assimilation of native Indonesians and the veneration for authentic Oriental culture was smoothed over in annual reports and school prospectuses by discursively separating the spread of modernity through ‘Western’ education from the cultural annexation through ‘Europeanization’. Transfer of knowledge (most importantly knowledge of language) was considered possible without simultaneous transfer of culture. In the conflict between these two seemingly opposing ideologies we see the conciliating power of a subtle differentiation between ‘Western’ and ‘European’ emerge.

Girls in the Kartini schools were thus receiving ‘Western’ education according to a ‘Western’ curriculum, taught in Dutch and mostly on the basis of Dutch schoolbooks and educational material. They were even taught Dutch geography and history, often before or at least on a par with the history of the Indies. At the same time, the teachers and school boards claimed to be leaving them in their own ‘sphere’ culturally. They tried to achieve this feat by, as the school board claimed, enforcing in their schools the ‘codes of courtesy required by the adat’. Moreover, the Kartini schools introduced ‘Oriental’ handicrafts such as batik, offered lessons in serimpi-dances rather than ‘European’ ballroom dancing, organized wayang (Javanese puppet theatre) performances, taught their students Javanese rather than European dishes in

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Education, 19 May 1926; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929 No. 24, Recommendations from the Inspector for Native Education (8th department) to the Director of Education; Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinfonds, Vol. 1, 1913, pp. 35-38; Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinfonds, Vol. 2, 1914; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Notes by Ms. De Groot Enzerink concerning courses to be provided at the homes of Javanese parents.

59 Some examples: NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Letter from the Board of the Buitenzorg Kartini school to the board of the Madiun Kartini school, 17 December 1936; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 1, Draft report on the history of the Kartinfonds during 1916; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 810, 1929, Observations and advice from the Director of Education, 28 February 1929; Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinfonds, Vol. 6, 1918.

60 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 159, Annual report Van Deventer Foundation West-Java, 1932-1933, p. 10.
cooking class, and, as we saw, encouraged the girls to wear *kain kebaya* instead of European dresses. The contrast, in this respect, is palpable between figure 3.2 and figure 3.3. The latter records a festive meal with staff and students in the Bandung Van Deventer school. Gone are the ‘European’ frocks, stockings, shoes, and hairstyles that the girls and/or their parents had donned for the Kartini school opening ceremonies. The girls are seated on the floor in a ‘traditional’ manner, whilst their ‘European’ teachers (in the background) eat at a table, dressed in impeccable colonial whites.

Conceptions of ‘knowledge’ (and in its wake ‘civilization’), as taught in the theoretical curriculum, were thus separated from those of ‘culture’, as expressed in cultural practices. The former were dubbed ‘Western’ and the latter ‘European’. ‘Europeans’ had created and therefore automatically took part in ‘Western’ civilization, while ‘non-Europeans’ could acquire it, and indeed should—at least to a certain extent. In the minds of these educators, ‘modernity’, ‘development’ and ‘progress’ were opened to non-Europeans whilst reserving the possibility to create a more exclusive in-group of ‘Europeans’, defined by their culture rather than their civilization.

This discursive separation of development and civilization versus individuals and culture leaves unanswered the question of where exactly the boundary between the two was drawn. Which notions and practices should the pupils of the Kartini and Van Deventer schools learn simply because they constituted ‘civilized’ behaviour, and which notions and practices should be held back because they constituted an encroachment on their authentic Oriental culture? This question provoked constant

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61 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Prospectus for the Semarang Van Deventer school, 1924; *Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinfonds*, Vol. 13, 1925; NL-HaNA, 2.20.38.03, 128, draft exam questions. More pictures showing both the dress code in the schools as well as dance- and theatre-performances (always of *Serimpi*-dancing or *Wayang*-plays) can be found in the photo-books stored in the archive of the Kartini Foundation: NL-HaNA, 2.20.38.03: 74, 75, 79, 90, 91, 99, 100, 101, 102, 115-121, 123-125, 160-163, 173-179, 186-189. On the curriculum also see the consecutive annual reports of the Kartini Foundation, the separate Kartini schools in the Indies, and the Van Deventer foundations: *Jaarverslagen der Vereeniging Kartinfonds*.


63 NL-HaNA, Kolonien / Mailrapporten, 2.10.36.02, mail report No. 1179, 1926, Letter from the Director of Education, 26 May 1926; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Remarks by M.W.M. Avelingh (director of the Buitenzorg Kartini school) in regard to the Observation concerning the Malang Kartini school, 20 October 1933; *Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinfonds*, Vol. 5, 1917; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Report by Mr. Van Deventer on what has been accomplished with regard to the Kartini schools since his previous letter, 21 January 1913.
debate amongst the teaching staff and the school boards of the Kartini and Van Deventer schools. Strikingly, it was often the actors residing in the Netherlands who accused the teachers on the ground in the Indies of being too European and not considerate enough of their pupils’ Oriental culture and sensitivities. In particular E.M. (Betsy) van Deventer-Maas, widow of founder C.Th. van Deventer and long-time matriarch of the Kartini Foundation, seems to have taken pleasure in criticizing teachers from afar (The Hague). The archive of the Kartini Foundation includes several letters addressed to Mrs. Van Deventer from teachers defending themselves against allegations of undervaluing their students’ Oriental culture.\textsuperscript{64}

These letters offer us a rare insight into the daily guidance in ‘civilized’ behaviour that the girls in the Kartini and Van Deventer schools received. They also show that under the banner of eradicating only those practices in Oriental behaviour that could unequivocally be rejected from a sound (universal) basis of Western civilization, teachers were actually critical of many traits of ‘native’ society, and

\textsuperscript{64} NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 165, Transcription from a letter from Ms. Volkers to Mrs. Van Deventer, 29 November 1932; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 9, Letter from F.A. Volkers-Schippers (director of the Semarang Van Deventer school) to the Board of Directors of the Kartini Foundation in The Hague, 1 June 1924. Cf. Coté, \textit{Writing between the lines}, p. 26; Gouda, \textit{Dutch culture overseas}, p. 98.
intervened significantly in their pupils’ ways of life. For example, Miss Volkers, a teacher of home economics at the Semarang Van Deventer school who came under criticism from Betsy van Deventer-Maas in the mid-1930s, replied:

I have learned to appreciate many things in the Indies that left me indifferent in the past or that I even used to despise. But our encouragement to the girls: to be brave, to use your brains and your time, not to spend your money on trifles or the wrong kind of sweets and snacks, are things that we most certainly should be able to teach the modern girl from the Indies.\(^{65}\)

Similarly, Mrs. Volkers-Schippers (not the same person as the above), the director of the Semarang Van Deventer school until 1928, in a letter to Betsy van Deventer-Maas rejected allegations that she was too Western in her teaching, citing a list of practices that she claimed were (still) wide-spread in native society and deserved suppressing: ‘child marriages, teeth filing, giving big parties, wearing jewellery often bought with borrowed money, eating with one’s hands all sorts of food prepared and sold on the street, not to speak of other evils such as opium, alcohol, and gambling’.\(^{66}\) Opposing these practices, she professed, did not mean an undue encroachment on genuine Javanese culture, but rather followed logically from common notions of civility. She did not explain, though, how her notion of common civility squared with the fact that the girls, for instance, had to study Dutch geography in detail, were taught to read using Dutch rather than Indisch literature,\(^{67}\) or—as the above citation by Ms. Volkers suggests—were discouraged from eating with their hands. Clearly, professions of cultural relativism, genuinely sincere as they may have been, did not go very far in practice in the hands of the teachers in the Kartini and Van Deventer schools.

**Conservative objections**

A unifying feature of both the assimilationist and the progressive adaptationist ideals, both of which we find represented in the *Kartinifonds*, is that the central motivation

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\(^{65}\) NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 165, Transcription from a letter from Ms. Volkers to Mrs. Van Deventer, 29 November 1932.

\(^{66}\) NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 9, Letter from F.A. Volkers-Schippers (director of the Semarang Van Deventer school) to the Board of Directors of the Kartini Foundation in The Hague, 1 June 1924. I used the translation here as in Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas*, p. 98.

\(^{67}\) NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, Report by the School Inspection, 1928.
behind the efforts at education is one of politically and culturally elevating (the elite of) the native population, in order to bring them into the modern world of civilization. The differences between the two stem from a different judgement on the possibility and the value of achieving this elevation within an authentic ‘Oriental’ sphere, or alternatively by uprooting them and bringing them into a ‘European’ sphere. But elevating the native population has never been the goal of all commentators in the Indies. A conservative approach was a third possible answer to the question: ‘Western’ or ‘Oriental’ education for Indonesians?

Conservatives perceived the current unequal relationship between the European and native population in the Indies as correct and just. The division of tasks between the population groups was natural and historically rooted. Elevating the native population in large measure was unnecessary, and most definitely not up to the standards of a Western programme. The overwhelming majority of the Natives could do with an education adapted to ‘the needs of the still so uncomplicated native society’. This argument, if expressed in the words of subtle conservative politicians (like Hendrikus Colijn in the previous quotation), is sometimes reminiscent of Van Vollenhoven’s ‘separate spheres’, but on the pages of the newspaper press it could become a lot less nuanced. The European press in the Indies from the 1920s onwards increasingly became a bulwark of conservative attitudes, occasionally resorting to outright racist sentiments. In a 1934 article from the (in)famous grand old man of Indies journalism Henri Zentgraaff, for instance, we read the contention that the Javanese are incapable of higher education, except maybe for some native aristocrats: ‘It is because of the Hindus that the best families here have a remainder of Caucasian blood, which has been of great influence. It is this class of the Javanese society, from which the best students originate.’ In Zentgraaff’s eyes, the majority of Natives were simply not made of the right stuff to receive and comprehend advanced (read: Western) education.

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68 The quotation is from the conservative colonial expert, Member of Parliament and later Minister for Colonial Affairs and Prime Minister, Hendrikus Colijn. Cited in Geschiere, ‘De meningsvorming’ p. 59.

A significant, and gradually increasing section of European public opinion in the Indies as well as of government representatives from the 1920s onwards started to profess similarly conservative attitudes. ‘European’ society in the Indies in this period became both culturally and socially more self-centred than before. Because of rising numbers of immigrants—‘European’ society in the Indies grew from approximately 80,000 people in 1905 to 300,000 in 1940, both through immigration and natural growth—and as a consequence of increasingly intensive contact with the Netherlands, identification with the Dutch metropole intensified at the cost of a decreasing solidarity with Indies’ society as a whole. Moreover, the rise of an Indonesian nationalist movement and its efforts in the field of education (see chapter 5) stirred up fear that Western schools were a breeding ground for rebellious Natives. Calls for ‘peace and order’ gradually drowned out high-minded pleas for uplifting the native population.

A striking aspect of the conservative view on native education was its dependence on an economic argument. Western education for a small number of Natives was acceptable and even necessary, because the administration and Western businesses needed employees for their lower ranks. In a way, these lower ranks—for which a basic knowledge of Dutch was required—were also seen as part of the ‘native sphere’. But the supply of Western education should not supersede the demand for trained professionals. The extent of Western education to Natives was to be determined by economic demands, not the demands for education professed by the Natives themselves, or an ‘overproduction’ of educated Natives could result. This, the conservatives argued, could be dangerous for the colonial state, as these people, uprooted from their own society but not required in Western society, would become susceptible to nationalist and communist propaganda.

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Conservatives like the afore-mentioned H. Colijn or also J.W. Meyer Ranneft (president of the People’s Council and later Vice-President of the Council of the Indies) thus rhetorically approached educational matters from the perspective of the state control and of economic demands, whereas progressives took the (supposed) cultural and political interests of the Natives as their starting point. A clear example of this clash between the conservative and progressive discourses unfolded in 1932 and 1933 during a discussion between the boards of the Van Deventer schools and the conservative Director of the Department of Education, Mr. B. Schrieke. In this period of economic crisis, the government was planning to implement radical cuts in the education budget, which for the Van Deventer schools would mean losing almost all their subsidies. The school board defended its relatively expensive style of education, emphasizing the importance of ‘general education’ [algemene vorming] for ‘daughters from developed families’ to prepare them for the ‘task of housewife and mother’. The Director of Education, conversely, questioned whether subsidizing ‘the relatively luxurious upbringing’ had been a ‘sound’ [verantwoord] decision. In his opinion, the Van Deventer schools wanted ‘too much’, and did not realize the ‘social necessity of austerity’. The school board and the Director of Education fundamentally disagreed on what ‘general education’ for girls in the Van Deventer schools should entail. Whereas the board claimed education in theoretical school subjects (history, language, geography, etc.) was an absolute necessity, Schrieke saw a basic training in home economics as more than sufficient to complete a ‘general education’.

This brings us to an important characteristic associated with the term ‘European’ (and sometimes also ‘Western’) in the phrase ‘European education’, namely that of intellectuality. One of the defining features of ‘European’ or ‘Western’ education was considered to be the highly intellectualistic nature of its curriculum, whilst native schools had a much more practical streak, firmly ‘rooted in rural life’. (Most) Natives were not equipped to understand and benefit from the ‘intellectually overburdened schools for Western-oriented education’. This contention was

74 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3381, Verbaal 2 February 1933 No. 7, Letter from the Kartinfonds to the Minister for Colonial Affairs, 25 January 1933.
75 NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 3498, Verbaal 9 July 1934 No. 23, Letter from the Director of Education to the Governor-General, 3 April 1934. Emphasis mine.
76 Quotations from: NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 3068, Verbaal 5 April 1929 No. 24, Recommendation by the Education Council to the Director of Education concerning the raising of the social and character-building values of the Native primary education (in particular girls’
connected to the aforementioned fear of ‘overproduction’ of Western-educated natives, who could not be accommodated by Western business or in government employment. An excess of Dutch-language education to Natives would, so the conservatives feared, create a semi-intellectual white-collar proletariat, susceptible to communist and nationalist agitation due to their mental and spiritual dislocation.77

In regard to ‘Europeans’, no similar fear was ever expressed for an ‘overproduction’ of educated individuals. The economistic argument of ‘overproduction’ for cutting back on (Western) education to Natives was never extended to include the even more expensive education to Europeans. The implicit argument was that Europeans were naturally able to understand and apply intellectual education, to become full intellectuals, whereas the ‘still so simple’ natives were inherently incapable of this. They could merely turn into semi-intellectuals’. Through this differentiation, a possibility was created for a subtle distinction between ‘Western-educated’ Indonesians on the one hand and ‘real Europeans’ on the other. In a way akin to that of the proponents of a more progressive view that we have seen in the ranks of the Kartinifonds, conservatives used the distinction between ‘Western(ized)’ and ‘European’ to reconstitute a boundary that the spread of education had slowly started to erode. Intellectuality, in their minds, was something that originated from and belonged naturally in the ‘European’ sphere. Through ‘Western’ education it could be transferred to a certain extent to non-Europeans, helping them to move closer to the European sphere, but never turning them into ‘full’ Europeans. Progressives and conservatives merely differed in their judgement on the extent to which they believed non-Europeans could acquire intellectuality.

Whilst the ethical policy had left a clear mark on the construction of the education system in the first two decades of the twentieth century, by the 1930s the proponents of a more conservative education policy had extended their grip on

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governmental policy. As early as 1929 the Hollands-Inlands Onderwijs-Commissie (HIOC, Dutch-Native Education Commission), a commission installed to advise on ‘the social need for primary education with Dutch as the language of instruction for the native population’, recommended that the number of HIS should not be further increased, as two thirds of the existing graduates were already unable to find positions in the government or in Western businesses. The crisis of the early 1930s and the need for drastic budget cuts then offered an excellent opportunity to bring these ideas into reality. The justifications given at the time stressed the financial aspect, but it cannot be denied that the Western education for Natives (the HIS) bore the brunt of the cuts, and that this conveniently coincided with the beliefs of the leading politicians of the time.  

The late 1930s show some cautious signs that leading figures in the administration were returning to a more progressive stance, most conspicuously the Director of the Department of Education P.J.A. Idenburg in a memorandum on the ‘education policy towards the native population in the last ten years’. In the face of growing pressure from Indonesians requesting Western education and a quickly expanding number of unsubsidized private schools for Natives, the government seems to have feared losing the initiative. The intervention of the Second World War makes it impossible to judge whether these proposals would have stood a chance at success.

European, Western, and Westernizing

In previous sections of this chapter, it may at times have seemed like I resorted to a rather essentializing use of categories, following identity categories that contemporaries took for granted. As I described, the ELS were intended for ‘Europeans’, while the HIS, as well as the standard- and desa-schools, were intended for different classes of ‘Natives’. But who were the ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ referred to in these directives, and how closely did the various local school boards follow them? Who was admitted into the ELS, the ‘school for Europeans’, and who into the HIS? On the basis of what criteria were these decisions made, and what do

they teach us about the meaning of the terms ‘European’ and ‘Western’ in the Dutch East Indies? An analysis of the student admissions policy at the HIS and the ELS can show us criteria of ‘Westernness’ and ‘Europeanness’ in action.

My analysis clearly indicates that the social position of the parents was often the decisive factor, but only in addition to cultural and racial aspects, and inflected by gendered notions of social position. The position in society was mostly defined in terms of professional position of the father, of the social milieu that the parents moved in, and of language skills. Official entrance requirements were hence mostly of a social or cultural nature. Nevertheless, as we shall see, racial logics also played into the mix, although in an asymmetrical way: ‘Europeans’ had an enforceable right to enter the ELS—making it impossible for them to drop out of this social sphere—whilst Natives could be allowed in on the basis of socio-cultural considerations. The boundary of the ‘European’ social group was permeable in only one direction. Furthermore, the major difference between the ELS and the HIS in terms of entrance requirements was that the former only accepted those individuals that were seen as (almost) fully living in a European sphere, with a fluent command of Dutch and mainly mixing with other ‘Europeans’, whilst the students of the latter were only perceived as in the process of Westernizing, which was mainly defined in economic terms. A hierarchy consisting of multiple consecutive layers was thus imagined with the unequivocal, ‘real’ Europeans at the top, followed closely by the ‘Westernized’ elite Natives, then an in-between layer of middle class Natives who were ‘Westernizing’, and finally the mass of simple, ‘actual’ Easterners.

When considering the admissions policy of ELS and HIS, it should first be realized that the reform of the system of education for Natives in the 1900s and 1910s had actually originated from the rapidly rising number of Indonesians requesting admission to European schools. This had not been a significant problem in the nineteenth century, as only a very small number of Natives attended the European schools. By the early twentieth century, however, the desire for a ‘European’ education among native elites and a relative easing of restrictions meant that the numbers of native students in the ELS began to rise to proportions that seriously concerned the administration. In 1905, the percentage reached a temporary high of 22
per cent after which restrictions were tightened once again, albeit to little effect. The non-first ELS in particular were affected by the influx of students.\footnote{131}

The administration was troubled by these developments, not only on financial grounds (European education was much more expensive than native education) but also because the native students’ lack of competence in Dutch would damage the quality of education—an argument that seems hypocritical, considering that at the turn of the century over sixty per cent of the (Indo-)European students equally did not speak Dutch at home. At the same time, however, the consecutive Governor-Generals and Directors of Education, true to the ‘ethical’ spirit of the time, professed a genuine wish to expand Western education to native elites. The solution was the establishment of the HIS, a school with a Western curriculum but intended solely for Natives.\footnote{81} Consequently, the ‘European’ schools were no longer the only place where one could acquire an intellectual education. In the discussions surrounding the introduction of the HIS, the notions of ‘Europeanness’ and ‘development’ were slowly but steadily detached. Native Indonesians could thus be acknowledged as ‘developed’ and ‘educated’, challenging the ‘European’ monopoly on those categories. As we will see in a moment, this discursive disconnection between ‘Europeanness’ and ‘development’ was later instrumentalized to imagine a gradual hierarchy rather than a binary differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘Native’.

The HIS was originally intended to become a ‘standenschool’, meaning a school for one particular class, i.e. the native elites.\footnote{82} The intended audience was, in the contemporary phrasing: the children of the native chiefs and of ‘other distinguished and well-to-do Natives’.\footnote{83} As this was a rather vague criterion on which to base concrete decisions, the Director of Education in 1912 decided to provide more concrete guidelines in a circular sent to the school authorities. Although he admitted the inherently arbitrary nature of such definitions, for the purposes of admission

\footnote{80} On the statistics of native and Chinese students at the ELS, see Groeneboer, \textit{Weg tot het Westen}, pp. 288, 304, 484-485.


\footnote{82} NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 533, Verbaal M13, 12 April 1939, Survey by the Director of Education Dr. Idenburg regarding the education policy towards the Indigenous population, pp. 40-41. Cf. Groeneboer, \textit{Weg tot het Westen}, pp. 342-343.

requirements he defined ‘distinguished’ in terms of occupying a rank in government service, or a position in another branch with a salary of at least 100 guilders a month. ‘Well-to-do’ could depend on the local context, but should likewise be determined on the basis of a minimum monthly income.84

The supposed need for Western education in the HIS, then, was determined on the basis of an economic criterion (‘well-to-do’) and a social criterion (‘distinguished’). The social criterion in turn was also given a strong economic leaning, as the measure of esteem was the size of one’s income. This habit of expressing social position in terms of wages (as a supposed indicator of merit) rather than origin, incidentally, is a well-established cliché on Indies social life in European circles. Income levels of the men were meticulously scrutinized—the wives of the European gentlemen usually kept the scores—in order to make subtle hierarchical distinctions.85 This habit was transferred to Europeans’ views on their native compatriots.

From the outset, the intention to restrict the HIS to a small native elite would not be realized. The number of students expanded rapidly and far beyond the intended groups. In 1929, the afore-mentioned Dutch-Native Education Commission, which was very critical of the rapid expansion of the HIS, reported that no more than 4 per cent of the parents of HIS students had themselves received Western education, and that 74 per cent of the parents worked in government positions for which no knowledge of Dutch was needed. The HIS, against the intention of the government, had turned into the school for children of merchants, traders, and lower civil servants.86 An emerging Indonesian middle class was using the HIS to further their children beyond their own position in society.

The government seemed unable to stop this process, despite recurring efforts to preserve the nature of a standenschool for the HIS. The urge for education in a growing circle of the population turned out to be too strong. General declarations of

86 Publicaties HIOC, No. 11, pp. 42-43. Also see: Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen, p. 343; Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 79-80. Cf. for more information on the social origins of students (e.g., in 1915, ca. 40 percent of the families had an income under 100 guilders per month): Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 133-134, 187-189.
intent by the central government were often not implemented in practice, indeed, in thousands of individual cases. The insistence on exclusivity was too lax at the local level. The relatively high tuition fees,\textsuperscript{87} intended to discourage financially less fortunate parents from sending their children to the HIS, failed to scare off many parents who were willing to make great sacrifices. For example, a list of students in the Semarang Kartini school published in the school’s annual report in 1915 shows that only a small minority of the fathers had a high position in administration or business. The large majority were employed as low-level clerks (\textit{mantri}, \textit{assistent-mantri}, \textit{mandoer}, or \textit{djoeroetoelis}). Some of them were even domestic servants (\textit{huisbediende} or \textit{huisjongen}).\textsuperscript{88} Similarly, the board of the Buitenzorg (present-day Bogor) Kartini school reported in 1933:

[I]n Buitenzorg, the children of civil servants make up the largest contingent [of students]. Apart from them, a large number of children from simpler surroundings, such as children of \textit{tani}’s [peasants] and house-servants, has been accepted, which we do not see as problematic, as long as the parents faithfully pay the tuition fees that are very high to them.\textsuperscript{89}

For some of the people mentioned here, the tuition fees would have swallowed up a large part of their monthly wages, but they were nonetheless willing to pay them. Consequently, the number of students in Dutch-Native Schools kept rising throughout the 1920s and 1930s, with the exception of a few years at the height of the 1930s depression.\textsuperscript{90} It is true that the number of students compared to the total Indonesian population remained limited, with only ca. 61,000 children visiting the HIS in 1930—

\textsuperscript{87} The tuition fees changed frequently and were income-dependent, but the difference between the HIS and the standard school (the regular school for Natives) was significant. For example in 1922, the minimum tuition fee (for the first child of a family) was 1,50 guilders/month for the HIS, and 0,10 guilders/month for the standard school. See: Anrooij, ‘Groeiend wantrouwen’, pp. 46-47.
\textsuperscript{88} NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Second Annual report of the Kartini Foundation in the Netherlands Indies, 1 July 1914—30 June 1915, pp. 27-30.
\textsuperscript{89} NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Letter from the board of the Buitenzorg Kartini school to the Board of Directors of the Kartini Foundation, 7 April 1933. Also cf. Van der Veur, ‘Progress and procrastination’, p. 16.
41,500 boys and 19,500 girls—from a population of about 60 million.91 Even so, it would be misguided to see the HIS as the school for the highest layers of Indonesian society. The real elites kept trying and succeeding in sending their children to the ELS.

Despite the establishment of the HIS, the number of native registrations for the ELS remained consistently high. This continuing popularity of the ELS among the elites stemmed from the not unfounded opinion that this school still offered the best available education in the Indies (certainly better than the HIS). More importantly, the ELS offered a shorter path to further education and better socio-economic prospects. It offered children the opportunity to mingle with (Dutch-speaking) European children.92 Parents of native children recognized that even if the curriculum in the HIS and the ELS was nearly identical, only sending their children to the ELS would ensure that they mingled with and became a part of ‘European’ society. The ELS was the school for ‘Europeans’, and therefore for the elites. If one wanted to be part of this elite, one had to move in the same circles. The HIS could merely educate—and probably not even to an equal level—but not offer the desired peer group.

The hope to be admitted to an ELS was kept alive, seeing as it remained indeed possible for a limited number of native students to enrol. However, the barriers for native students to enter the ELS were much higher than for European students. European students had a right to attend an ELS at all times. If their parents could not afford the tuition they could attend a non-first ELS free of charge. European, for these purposes, meant those people who were European before the law, and consequently included all Indo-Europeans of a European father as well as all those people who, though born as non-Europeans, had been equated by ordinance of the Governor-General. Surprisingly though, and for unclear reasons, for this purpose of admission into the ELS the administration stretched the legal concept of Europeanness to include children born from a mixed marriage of a European woman and a native man.93 Native students, conversely, had to pay the tuition fees regardless—approximately

91 Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, p. 188. For the population numbers see the 1930 census: Volksstelling 1930, Vol. 8.


twice as high as the tuition for the HIS\textsuperscript{94}—and even then the right was reserved to refuse them access to the ELS if the number of available places for Natives had been exceeded. The ultimate discretion on admission or rejection of native candidates was generally left to the local school board.\textsuperscript{95} In any case, the administration created a hierarchy in education in which the boundary of the ‘European’ group was only porous in one direction: new entries were possible, but one-time ‘Europeans’ could not fall out of the group. In that sense, the ‘racial dividend’ clearly paid off for the poorer strata of ‘(Indo-)European’ society.

Education officials and administrators continued to worry about too great an influx of native students into European schools. The main fear was that the schools might lose their ‘European’ character, that the Dutch skills of the newly entering students would be insufficient, and that this would damage the quality of education to the European children. Consequently, the administration repeatedly dispatched circulars to the local authorities with ever-tighter criteria—at least on paper—for the acceptance of native students into the ELS. Although the conditions used were often very reminiscent of the admission criteria for the HIS, the major difference was the extent to which socio-cultural criteria were applied and enforced. The HIS was supposedly restricted to the ‘distinguished and well-to-do’, but in practice the main norm was one of financial capability. For the ELS, by contrast, the social position of a family was much more rigidly scrutinized in socio-cultural terms. Students were not only assessed in terms of their parents’ financial means, but also on the basis of their (lack of) Dutch-skills and of the social network of their parents.\textsuperscript{96} The need for Dutch-

\textsuperscript{94} Anrooij, ‘Groeiend wantrouwen’, pp. 46-47. Again, tuition was income-dependent. For the richest parents, tuition was the same in ELS and HIS, but on the lower rungs the HIS was significantly cheaper.

\textsuperscript{95} See for example: ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1915 No. 13, concerning the request by Ch. Basani for admission of her son and nephew into the ELS. Cf. Groeneboer, \textit{Weg tot het Westen}, pp. 307-311.

\textsuperscript{96} As the student applications were handled at the local level, they are not recorded in the central archives in the Netherlands and Indonesia. The ratio of granted applications versus rejections can therefore not be quantified. A number of parents, however, took the step of appealing to the central administration after their request had been denied. In these files we can find documentation about the reasons for their rejection: ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1915 No. 13, concerning the request by Ch. Basani for admission of her son and nephew into the ELS; ANRI, AS, Tzg.Ag. 1920 No. 52209, Decision by the Resident of Manado to deny the request by R. Alkassa for admission of his son into the ELS, 26 November 1920; ANRI, AS, Tzg.Ag. 1930 No. 37600, Letter from the Resident of the Moluccas to the Director of Justice with regard to the request for equation by Benjamin Manuputty, 8 May 1935; ANRI, AS, Tzg.ag. 1930 No. 37600, Recommendations by the Director of Education to the Governor-General, 4 December 1930; ANRI, AS, Bt. 27 September 1915 No. 53, Recommendations by the Director of Education with regard to the petition by Mangoen di Karia and Mas Soeriaradja containing the request to admit their daughters to the ELS, 21 July 1915; ANRI, AS, Bt. 9 September
language education alone could be satisfied at the HIS, the ELS was reserved for only those that were deserving of an elite education.

The original criteria to regulate admission to the ELS, circulated in 1911, had considered the parents’ position and development: had the father received a Dutch education, or if not, did he occupy a prominent function? After the number of native students had risen to nearly 25 per cent of the ELS population (with significantly higher averages for non-first ELS), a government circular in 1920 insisted on the stricter application of the criteria and additionally demanded an explicit declaration by the parents that the father’s position made it desirable that his children learn Dutch. In 1931—the period in which the government had started taking more general measures to restrict access of Natives to European education—another circular was sent out stating that in addition to the already existing demands on the parents’ position, both parents had to speak Dutch, and that they had to be ‘part of European social life’. Finally, in 1937, this demand was expanded to include that the prospective students themselves should be invited into school for a trial period of a few days, to ensure that they had (at the age of eight!) a level of Dutch at least equal to that of their European classmates. Furthermore, it was recommended that both parents should have had a Western education, and that Dutch should be the everyday language spoken at home. To verify these latter two circumstances, the Department of Education advised the school directors to invite the mother into the school for an audience.

In sum, in all these decisions and circulars, the social position of the parents in society was the decisive factor for admission into the ELS, weighing the profession of the father, but also—and this was an important difference compared to the HIS—the development of the mother, the social milieu in which both parents moved, and their child’s proficiency in Dutch. Far more than for the HIS, where economic requirements played a larger role, the emphasis was placed on moving in European circles and being exposed to Dutch-speaking (domestic) surroundings from an early age.

1915 No. 50, Recommendations by the Director of Education with regard to the request by Mas Prawiro-Soemardja for admission of his son Admiraal into the ELS, 28 August 1915.


age, in other words: on social *milieu*. Reviewing the policy towards admission of native students at the European Primary Schools and the Dutch-Native Schools, one could say that in the 1920s and 1930s a particular division of labour was achieved between these two types of schools. The Director of Education in 1939, Idenburg, accurately grasped this division in his extensive memorandum on the education policy towards the native population:

During the consideration of the 1937 budget in 1936, my predecessor has clearly indicated the present social function of the H.I.S.; he characterized the European primary school as the normal school for all those children, who either belong to the European or Western sphere in this land through their origin, or are in very close contact with it as a consequence of the fact that they speak Dutch at home. Next to this expanding Western sphere stands the actual Eastern sphere, but in-between both of these there is a moving group, which comes from the Eastern sphere but is slowly moving in the direction of the Western sphere. It is for this group [...] that the H.I.S. [...] is the appropriate school.\(^\text{100}\)

Idenburg distinguishes between fully ‘Westernized’ natives, and those who are still in the process of Westernization. As described above, the markers of this process (and of the level one had reached in it) were of a social and economic nature, with an important role assigned to Dutch language proficiency.

Idenburg’s statement also illustrates the role that the juxtaposition of the terms ‘European’ and ‘Western’ plays in the differentiation. He speaks of the ‘European’ sphere when he refers to those people that he considers ‘real’ Europeans, the natural and original target group of the ELS—which, it should not be forgotten, already included the legally ‘equated’ Indonesians, who had presumably already proven their belonging these circles. When referring to this group complemented with those Natives that are ‘in very close contact’ with Europeans, he speaks of the ‘Western’ sphere. And finally, when referring to the middle class of Natives who were receiving

\(^{\text{100}}\) NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 533, Verbaal M13, 12 April 1939, Survey by the Director of Education Dr. Idenburg regarding the education policy towards the Indigenous population, pp. 42-43.
‘Western’ education in the HIS, but were still further removed, he uses the phrase ‘moving in the direction of the Western sphere’.

The distinction between ‘Western’ or ‘almost European’, and ‘in the process of Westernization’ (or: half-Westernized) is a distinction that was not so common in the early twentieth century. If one compares the entrance requirements for ELS and HIS in the 1910s, for example, the difference is much less clear, aside perhaps from the required tuition fees. By the time Idenburg wrote his memorandum, this distinction was a well-developed and familiar trope. Amongst the directors of various Kartini schools, a discussion ensued in 1932 and 1933 over the target population of the Kartini schools actually. At their foundation, the intention had been to educate the ‘cream of the native youth’. But was this still the case, after almost 20 years? According to most of the directors, it was not. The highest classes were no longer interested in visiting the Kartini schools, as it meant mingling in a native environment rather than a European environment. The school board of the Kartini school in Buitenzorg (the residence of the Governor-General and hence a town of civil servants) explained:

Parents from the highest native circles, who wish for their children to receive an education at the HBS after the primary school, no longer use the Kartini school, but neither do they use the HIS. These children as a rule visit the European Primary School. However, this category can no longer be seen as specifically native. As a consequence of their upbringing and their associations, the parents are already so close to Europeans, that even for their daughters an education such as the one that is offered at the Kartini school, in other words an education, which is designed to transfer as much knowledge as possible, and also practical knowledge, is no longer suitable.¹⁰¹

The director of the same school, Mrs. M.W.M. Avelingh, added: ‘It seems to me that the Kartini schools have to resign themselves to the idea that they are no longer meant for the highest classes. But the middle class also needs to be educated.’¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Letter from the board of the Buitenzorg Kartini school to the Board of Directors of the Kartini Foundation, 7 April 1933.
¹⁰² NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Remarks by M.W.M. Avelingh (director of the Buitenzorg Kartini school) in regard to the observation concerning the Malang Kartini school, 20
Conclusion: the gradual hierarchy and the *Indisch* dream

It was in this way that through the education system, a gradual hierarchy was envisioned, rather than a binary differentiation. Over the course of the first two decades of the twentieth century, the ‘civilized Native’ had become an important figure in the colonial imagination. Remaining at the top of the imagined hierarchy were the ‘real’ Europeans (who had an inalienable right to attend the ELS), followed by the ‘Western’ elite Natives (who were allowed to attend the ELS but only by the grace of the government because they were ‘so close to Europeans’), then a middle class of Natives who were merely on the path to Westernization (who could attend the HIS), and finally the mass of simple, ‘actual’ Easterners. The multi-tiered education system consciously and purposely awarded entrance to consecutive levels of a gradual hierarchy. We see, moreover, that the notions of ‘European’ and ‘Western’ played an important role in the differentiations at the basis of this complex hierarchy.

For many among the elite and middle class of Indonesians, the multi-layered hierarchy provided a structure in which they could invest their aspirations. Despite the simultaneous emergence of a privately founded group of anti-colonial ‘Indonesian national’ schools, which we shall encounter in chapter five, the colonial education system remained the option of choice for many. Through education and effort, they could hope to advance just one step up the ladder, or at least dream of offering that opportunity to their children. While the colonial administration certainly did not create a utopia of social mobility, it did offer some Indonesians a vista of the ‘*Indisch* dream’. The hope for social mobility—which was sustained on just enough real examples to make it feasible—greatly facilitated the efforts of the colonial government to co-opt a gradually growing middle class of Indonesians, who might otherwise have turned to opposition against the colonial system.

October 1933. Cf. NL-HaNA, 2.20.38.03, 42, Reaction by the board of the Cirebon Kartini school to the remarks by Ms. Jellem; *Jaarverslag der Vereeniging Kartinifonds*, Vol. 16, 1928; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Openbaar Verbaal, 3498, Verbaal 9 July 1934 No. 23, Letter from the Director of Education to the Governor-General, 3 April 1934.
Chapter 4
The fresh princes of Batavia: ‘Dutch’ elite formation in exclusive European schools

Prologue: kale hash at the Krakatoa
It was just before dawn on Saturday 15 October 1932, and four hundred students of the Carpentier Alting Stichting schools were reeling with anticipation on the platform of the Tanah Abang train station in Batavia. They were waiting for the privately chartered train that would transport them to Merak on the Western tip of Java, where they would board the ship Van Outhoorn for an eight hour round trip around the famous Krakatoa volcano. The four hours on the train were passed with cheerful singing, playing bridge, joking with the teachers, and (for the older students) flirting. At about half past nine, under the quickly rising tropical sun, the Van Outhoorn set sail, pounding on the waves of the notoriously turbulent Sunda Strait. Some of the students became sea sick soon after embarking, but others kept up the entertainment. Three of the senior students formed an impromptu jazz band and another boy abused the on-board piano, whilst their colleagues were dancing on the deck (see figure 4.1). Some students played bridge in groups scattered around the ship, and two boys were bold enough to challenge their maths teacher to a game of

Figure 4.1: CAS students dancing on the boat to the Krakatoa.

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chess. Everybody went wild when the *djongos*—Indonesian servant—came out to serve ice cream.

Around noon, shortly before arriving at the Krakatoa, the students were called to the tables for lunch: kale hash (*boerenkoolstamppot*) was piled high on the plates—a traditional Dutch dish for cold winter nights consisting of mashed potatoes mixed with kale and served with greasy smoked sausage. For some, the *boerenkool* was a bit too much and they were soon emptying their stomachs over the railing. But others took it as a challenge, as one of the students reported:

Almighty, what servings! Most girls took a modest bite, only to put down their forks and stare in reverential awe at the boys, who didn’t want to lose face, of course. But surpassing us all in his eating was our giant teacher—everybody knows who I mean—who devoured two of those titanic portions with gusto. Truly, he must have a stomach the size of my aunt’s attic in Amsterdam!²

The ‘exquisite kale’³ was easily the most memorable aspect of the school trip. In the various reports in school newspapers, the student authors awarded it pride of place, taking pains to thank the shipping company for spoiling them with this welcome surprise.⁴ The Krakatoa itself, the destination of the trip, only appeared in one of the photos published in the newspapers, while the mountains of kale hash were the subject of two illustrations.

The *Carpentier Alting Stichting* (CAS) was a private organization for the foundation of schools in Batavia, uniting under its wings four primary schools as well as various institutions for secondary education. The CAS catered to the children of Batavia’s European elite. The excursion to the Krakatoa was one of the perks of studying at such an elite organization. For the students, it was all a great lark. But in the eyes of the school and of the parents, such events could also aid in elite-formation: the students came to share experiences, flirted with each other rather than with outsiders, and could learn examples of fitting behaviour from their teachers. Apart from providing an excellent education, studying at the CAS and participating in its extra-curricular activities was a training to be ‘Dutch’ in the colony.

² N.B., ‘Kroniek’, p. 70.
³ Redactie, ‘Wat er deze maand gebeurde’, p. 65.
⁴ ‘De tocht’, pp. 75-76.
Hence the symbolic importance of *boerenkoolstamppot* on a tropical excursion: eating kale hash was one of those practices that set the elite that were the CAS students apart from their environment. The question that presents itself, however, is from whom were they setting themselves apart? Who were these elite students, what was their background, and what criteria governed their belonging to the elite?

**Introduction: ‘European’ and ‘Dutch’**

The imagined colonial hierarchy, as described in the previous chapter, which constructed a layered order distinguishing ‘Europeans’, ‘Western’ Natives, ‘Westernizing’ Natives, and proper ‘Orientals’, has pushed many further internal subtleties to one side. Most importantly, the supposed ‘Europeans’, who were privileged over all the other groups in the sense that they had an inalienable right to attend the ‘European Primary Schools’ (*Europese Lagere Scholen*, ELS), were in fact by no means a homogenous group. They consisted of all the different subgroups that were identified by law as Europeans, namely: ‘pure-blood’ Europeans, Europeans born in the Indies (whether or not of mixed parentage), Americans, Japanese, even the ‘equated’ Natives. As we have already seen in passing regarding the division between first and non-first ELS, these internal differences could have significant consequences. The differentiation made on the basis of the tuition fees that a student’s parents could afford decided for a part to which school the student could go. Thus, as Kees Groeneboer reports, the non-first ELS developed the reputation of ‘Indo-schools’—schools for Indo-Europeans, with lower quality education as a consequence of under-funding and lack of prior knowledge of Dutch by the students.\(^5\)

The problem with the ‘Indo-schools’ label for non-first ELS—which, incidentally, Groeneboer does not base on any particular source-reference, but which seems to accurately reflect the feelings of the commentators at the time—is that we risk falling in the trap of uncritically adopting contemporary concepts. Indeed, the non-first ELS were populated mainly by those ‘Europeans’ who could not afford high tuition fees; an economic determinant rather than the racial determinant that is implied by the term ‘Indo’. Indeed also, the complaints that the children in these schools had little prior knowledge of Dutch were omnipresent, and most likely

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contained a grain of truth.\textsuperscript{6} But that does not necessarily permit us to conclude that the students in these schools were of mixed ancestry. It could also be that we are dealing, rather, with a tendency to label anyone who moves in certain social circles as ‘Indo’—namely: is legally European, of lesser means, and often does not speak ‘proper’ Dutch—regardless of whether they are of mixed background, ‘full-blood’ but born in the Indies, or even immigrated from Europe but fallen upon hard times.\textsuperscript{7}

The same problem occurs with an argument that Robert van Niel, one of the most esteemed writers on education for Indonesians in the late colonial period, has made regarding the perseverance of school segregation. According to Van Niel, the fact that the ELS and HIS remained separate schools, despite a desire expressed by several influential government officials to unify them, should mainly be blamed on the opposition of ‘the insecure and small European lower middle class’, ‘the Indonesian-born Europeans (the \textit{sinjo})’, and ‘certain sectors of the Indo-European (Eurasian) group’.\textsuperscript{8} His claim sounds logical, because these groups would seem to be most directly affected, not being able to pay for high tuition fees and thus risking ending up in the same schools as native Indonesians.\textsuperscript{9} Rich Europeans could afford not to be too alarmed, because they could send their children to private schools with higher tuition fees, keeping them largely separated from undesirable fellow students. A problem with Van Niel’s argument, however, is that it implicitly suggests that all the mentioned groups were of lesser means. With regard to the ‘European lower middle class’ this is not a controversial claim, but with regard to the ‘Indonesian-born Europeans’ and the ‘Indo-European group’, it perpetuates contemporary perceptions that equated ‘Indo-European’ with poor and vice versa. It seems prudent to exercise care in adopting these terms.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{7} This problem of the vagueness of definitions used in Indies society has been well documented by many authors: Houben, ‘Boundaries of race’, especially pp. 69-71, 80-81; Bosma, ‘The Indo’; Meijer, \textit{In Indië geworteld}, pp. 9-12; Stoler, ‘Sexual affronts’, pp. 106-108. Similarly for the term ‘Indisch’: Bosma and Raben, \textit{Being ‘Dutch’}, pp. xiv-xx.
\textsuperscript{9} On the education policy of ‘Indo’ interest groups such as the \textit{Indo-Europees Verbond} (IEV), also see Bosma, \textit{Karel Zaalberg}, pp. 178-182, 285-289, 310, 333-339. Also cf. Meijer, \textit{In Indië geworteld}, pp. 117-128.
In most cases, in fact, it is impossible to determine from the sources what the background of students is. The statistical and archival records are usually silent or inconclusive, making it difficult to question the contemporary choice of words. The records mostly follow the legal terminology in which terms like ‘Indo’ were non-existent. The widespread everyday usage of this term could thus proceed under an unclear or conflicting definition. We cannot judge statistically what, for example, the reputation of the non-first ELS as ‘Indo-schools’ meant in terms of the actual student-population, but rather only what the various commentators thought of these students. Similarly, the students of the CAS schools often discursively delineated themselves from the stereotypical petty ‘Indo’, but from the archival records it is unclear whether (or how many) students of mixed heritage actually frequented the school. Did they only use the epithet ‘Indo’ in reference to the petty Indo, avoiding the term when confronted with fellow students of mixed heritage but high social status? As we shall see, the photographic records—pace all the interpretive difficulties connected to photographic evidence in this matter—as well as the post-colonial recollections of former CAS students at least tentatively suggest as much.

The danger is that we read too much ‘along the archival grain’, blinding ourselves to the social practices that these documents try to capture. If we only follow the terminology used by the colonial contemporaries, even if we try to deconstruct that language into its complex social imaginaries, we will never be able to find the sites where these social imaginaries come into conflict with everyday social practices. But it is precisely the fault-lines between the discursively expressed imaginary and everyday practices that shed light on the contents and prejudices of the former. In other words: if we want to assess to what extent class is expressed in racialized terms (‘he is poor therefore he is an Indo’) or rather ‘race’ is expressed and imagined in economic terms (‘he is an Indo therefore he is poor’), we cannot avoid studying the social background of the people in question.

11 For the statistics on student populations in the various schools, see the volumes of the *Algemeen Verslag van het Onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië*, published annually by the Department of Education. These statistics only differentiate between Europeans, Natives, and Foreign Orientals (although sometimes also Chinese). Cf. Meijer, *In Indië geworteld*, pp. 9–10.

12 Ann Laura Stoler has been the most ardent defender in recent years of reading ‘along the archival grain’ through her book under that title: Stoler, *Along the archival grain*. Stoler’s approach, charting the textures, tendencies and inconstitency of colonial archival language, has great merits, and has been of immense influence on my work. But it also has drawbacks, the threatening encapsulation in the world of the (administrative) social imaginary being one of them. Cf. with similar criticism: Raben, ‘Ambiguities’. For Stoler’s direct response, see: Stoler, ‘Thinking through colonial ontologies’.
As I argue here, being ‘Indonesian-born’ was not in itself decisive (rich, elite Europeans could also be Indonesian-born); it only became noticeable if one was ‘Indonesian-born’ in the wrong circles. The same, though possibly to a lesser degree, applies to being of ‘mixed race’. A close examination of the *Carpentier Alting Stichting* reveals that economic and social aspects were often more important: could one afford a good education, which enabled one to move in the right circles? Through these social and economic aspects, a real and important boundary was drawn through the European group itself, between a self-identified elite and those who were excluded. Not every ‘European’ was considered the same. Wealth and socio-cultural competences (above all language skills) were of decisive influence to define inclusion or exclusion. These strategies of delineation within the European group, I argue, increasingly came to be codified by stressing ‘Dutchness’ over ‘Europeanness’, both discursively and performatively. Being properly ‘Dutch’ in the Indies, assessed on the basis of cultural markers, came to be an elite sub-category of being ‘European’.

**Dutch, European, or Indisch students at the CAS**

The *Carpentier Alting Stichting* (CAS) was a private foundation dedicated to establishing European schools in Batavia. It had come into existence in 1902 when it had started with the foundation of an HBS for girls in the colonial capital. From the mid-1910s onwards, the CAS gradually expanded further to include, by the mid-1920s, four European primary schools (one girls’ school, one boys’ school, and two mixed schools), a teacher-training course for girls, and an HBS for boys. As the crown jewel and completion (for the time being) of the project, in 1924 the CAS founded the first ever Lyceum in the Dutch Indies.\(^{13}\) All of these schools were located in Batavia, the capital and largest city of the Indies. The CAS-schools had the reputation of being particularly elite, with an exceptionally ‘European’ student population and a strong emphasis on education that was equal to schools in the Dutch motherland. In the 1922 annual report, for example, it was noted that out of the 164

\(^{13}\) On these basic data of the CAS, see its annual reports: *Carpentier Alting Stichting: Jaarverslag* (henceforth: *CAS Jaarverslag*). The Lyceum in the Dutch education system was a secondary school with a stronger focus on the humanities (including extensive education in Latin and Greek), in contrast to the HBS, which focused on business and technical subjects. The Lyceum qualified students for acceptance into all academic studies. It was generally perceived within the Dutch education system as more prestigious than the HBS.
pupils in the secondary education facilities (no indication is supplied for the primary schools), 163 were Europeans and only 1 was Native.\(^\text{14}\)

That the population of the CAS schools was predominantly ‘European’ is not something out of the ordinary, although it may have been particularly pronounced in the CAS. Private European schools had a general tendency to focus their educational efforts more on ‘Europeans’ than did the public ELS. It should be explained, however, that the expression ‘private education’ (Dutch: bijzonder onderwijs) in the Dutch Indies (like in the Netherlands) might evoke incorrect connotations. Following the Dutch system, privately founded and administered schools could expect considerable subsidies, comparable to the amounts the government would spend on an equivalent public school, as long as they followed the public school curriculum, submitted themselves to the school inspection, and fulfilled a ‘real need’ for education in society.\(^\text{15}\) The budget of the concerned private schools—like the schools of the CAS and indeed also the schools of the Kartinifonds discussed in chapter 3—was thus largely covered by public funds, and the government certified the education that was offered. Nonetheless, subsidized private schools had a large freedom of policy, for example to convey convictions to their students, organize their education along religious lines, and add content to the curriculum. They were also free to decide on their tuition fees, and to follow their own admissions policy.\(^\text{16}\) Consequently, they could be more selective in their target group, which most of these schools saw as the ‘European’ population. If we look at the statistics, which are based on the legal definition of Europeanness, we therefore see a significant difference: private

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\(^{14}\) CAS Jaarverslag, 1922, pp. 5, 7. Also see: CAS Jaarverslag, 1923. Cf. Marianne Mijers-Dahler (ed.), Terugblik 1938-1992 en de reünies in Nederland: de scholen van de Carpentier Alting Stichting te Batavia—Jakarta (Amsterdam: De Volharding, 1992), pp. 7, 9-10. Though later annual reports no longer specify these statistics, from the recollections of CAS alumni it seems that the number of Indonesian and Chinese students did increase somewhat by the 1930s, but still remained small: Frieda Swart (ed.), Gedenkboek van de scholen der Carpentier Alting Stichting te Batavia—Jakarta en Buitenzorg—Bogor, 1902-1977 (s.i., 1977), pp. 41-43, 206; Marianne Mijers-Dahler (ed.), CAS Jubileumboek 1902-2002: scholen van de Carpentier Alting Stichting (Apeldoorn: VDA-groep, 2002), pp. 5, 19-20. (The latter title to my knowledge is not available in any libraries; I was able to consult it in the CAS alumni private archive maintained by Mr. Harold Penn, Breda, The Netherlands.)

\(^{15}\) A difference to the system in the Dutch metropole is that, there, schools had (and have) a right to funding when they fulfill certain requirements. Such an enforceable right never existed in the Indies. However, schools for Europeans—contrary to schools for Natives—could generally expect to be granted funding provided they met the required standards.

\(^{16}\) On subsidized private education, see generally: Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 31-32, 102-107, 130-131; Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen, pp. 290-291, 310-311. For tuition fees in the CAS schools, cf.: CAS alumni private archive, 41, Tuition regulation HBS for student Van der Hoeven [1931].
European schools in 1930 had a share of ten per cent non-Europeans among their students, compared to nineteen per cent at public ELS.\footnote{Groeneboer, *Weg tot het Westen*, pp. 290-291, 310-311, 484-485. An additional reason for the difference is the gender-disparity: a relatively large share of the native students in ELS were male (at a rate of 3:1 in 1920), whilst a disproportionate number of the private schools were all-girls schools.}

What, however, did it mean to have the objective and reputation of being a particularly ‘European’ school? What traits and behaviour actually made one ‘European’ in the eyes of the CAS board? The buzzwords, as we can see from the promotional material, memorial publications, and annual reports of the CAS, were ‘surroundings’ (omgeving) and ‘milieu’\footnote{See e.g.: CAS Jaarverslag, 1921, p. 8; J.B. Zeylemaker, ‘De plaats van de Carpentier Alting Stichting in het Indische onderwijs’, *School en Huis*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1935; ‘Verslag over het tijdvak Januari 1935 tot Augustus 1936’, *School en Huis*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1936; J.B. Zeylemaker, ‘De Meisjes H.B.S. III, 35 jaar’, *School en Huis*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1936.}. These terms were interpreted in two ways. First, it meant that the students should come from a ‘European’ or ‘Dutch-speaking’ milieu. European and Dutch-speaking were often conflated in this context, showing that to many of the people involved, the two were close equivalents.\footnote{Examples: CAS Jaarverslag, 1921, p. 8; A. de Geus (ed.), *Gedenkboek van de Carpentier Alting Stichting, 1902-1927* (Weltevreden: Visser & Co., 1927), p. 53.} Parents ‘from families, where the unscathed preservation of our mother tongue is considered of vital importance’\footnote{Geus, *Gedenkboek 1927*, p. 53.} would send their children to the CAS-schools—at least that was both the intention and perception of the CAS board—to be educated in an appropriate milieu, namely with classmates who would not spoil their correct Dutch language skills and European ways and principles. Secondly, the CAS itself promised to provide good education in a ‘European’ environment of proper Dutch (and fluently Dutch-speaking) teachers. The school board prided itself on education that was up to Dutch standards.\footnote{‘Verslag over het tijdvak Januari 1935 tot Augustus 1936’, p. 4; Directie der C.A.S., ‘School en Huis herleefd’, *School en Huis*, Vol. 3, December 1938; ‘De Carpentier Alting Stichting te Batavia’, *School en Huis*, Vol. 3, June 1939.} The stated objective was to save parents the pain of having to send their children to the Netherlands to get the education they deserved:

For families who, following their urges or forced by circumstances, go from the Netherlands to the Dutch Indies to unfold their professional energy [*werkracht*] and ambition, the question always remains: ‘What to do with our children once they have reached a certain age?’ People used to desire above all, and people still desire, that the children receive a good upbringing; learn to
think and feel Dutch in an appropriate milieu, and if possible also on broad-minded liberal principles. Formerly, this was mostly only possible by means of at one time or other sending the children to Holland. [...] For the normal, healthy Dutch-speaking and -thinking families it will therefore be of interest to know that they can [now] keep their children close to the family. [...] Especially concerning the education of girls, whose upbringing and education of character sets such specific demands at this age. The advantage that the parents can keep their daughters close for her upbringing and do not have to send her to Europe is of great advantage both to the girls themselves as well as to the parents.22

The focus on ‘Dutchness’ in the minds of the CAS actors becomes abundantly clear. Being a proper European in the Indies meant being part of a ‘normal, healthy Dutch-speaking and -thinking family’. In the sources originating from this organization over the course of the first four decades of the twentieth century, the notion of ‘Dutch’ became increasingly important to refer both to its students and to the education offered. Being able to speak the Dutch language had long been a marker of ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies, but increasingly the extra step of ‘Europeanness’ was simply dropped. Regular slippages occurred between the terms ‘Dutch’ and ‘European’.23 ‘Dutch’ never replaced ‘European’ as a denominator, but at the very least it acquired an equal position—sometimes as a synonym, but sometimes also as the denomination for a sub-set.

Two explanations can be given for this increasing importance of ‘Dutchness’ both as a characteristic of ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies and actually as an alternative concept for ‘Europeanness’. Firstly, the contemplation on the national affiliation with the Netherlands reflects the expanding possibilities of contact with and travel to the metropole. As several historians have noted, during the interwar years the Netherlands became much more visible in the Indies, through newspapers, magazines, radio, and personal correspondence. ‘European’ society in the Indies, in a sense, ever more closely resembled the society of the motherland. Secondly, an ever-larger share of the

22 Geus, Gedenkboek 1927, pp. 20-21. This particular quotation stems from a chapter on the boarding house connected to the CAS girls’ school, which was supposed to extend the mentioned opportunity to parents in the Indies living outside of Batavia.

23 See e.g.: ‘De Carpentier Alting Stichting te Batavia’, School en Huis, Vol. 3, June 1939.
'European' society had recently immigrated from and/or was able to afford regular visits to the Netherlands. All this created a strengthened feeling of connectedness to the homeland.

It is tempting to see the rising popularity of the appeal to ‘Dutchness’ also as evidence of strengthening Dutch nationalism in the interwar years, related to nationalist tendencies in the metropole and directed against other European nationalities. On a political level, it is evident that Dutch nationalist sentiments had a certain appeal to Europeans in the Indies in the 1930s, as the stellar rise of a political party known as the ‘Fatherland Club’ (Vaderlandse Club) and the significant successes for the Dutch National-Socialist Party would suggest. But the evidence is scarce at best for the practical consequences of such political sentiments for everyday practices in the CAS schools. Although they were not registered separately, it is clear that a number of non-Dutch European students attended the CAS without this being a matter of offense or surprise.

This is apparent, for example, from the fate of the German students in 1940. As a former CAS student recalled in later years, after the invasion of the Dutch motherland by German armies in May 1940, a wave of ‘chauvinism’ took hold of the Indies. Children of German parents suddenly and silently disappeared from the CAS schools as their parents were interned by the Indies administration. The implication is that the presence of these students at the CAS had previously been common and unproblematic. The CAS sources, both from the side of the school board and from the student newspapers, betray no anti-German feelings prior to this time. ‘Foreigners’ were part of the normal ‘Dutch’/‘European’ school environment. Non-Dutch Europeans may have been a marginal group in the Indies, in the sense that they were a not fully integrated part of European society (i.e. they were still recognized as ‘foreigners’), but they were by no means the objects of virulent xenophobic

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25 Bosma and Raben claim that it is ‘far from accurate to speak of a “Dutchification” of the Indies; rather, it was a “Westernisation” or “internationalisation”, with American culture playing an increasingly dominant role’. Although they are certainly correct in their view if one analyses the cultural practices that actually entered the Indies (see below), the contemporaries nonetheless strategically employed their physical connection to the Dutch motherland, at times, as a marker of status. Cf. Bosma and Raben, Being ‘Dutch’, p. 340.
sensibilities, at least not before 1940. Although the political climate that stimulated expressions of Dutch national pride may have had some minor influence, the emphasis on ‘Dutchness’ in the CAS seems to have served more importantly as a cultural tool to make a class distinction.

Similarly, also outside of the narrow scope of the CAS, non-Dutch Europeans seem to have been a common presence in the ‘European’ schools. This is clear, for instance, from an incident in 1936/1937. The Department of Education in November 1936 dispatched a circular to the local school boards around the Indies detailing the criteria for admission into the ELS (see also chapter 3), stating that the ELS was ‘in essence’ a ‘Dutch primary school, meant for Dutch children’. Non-Dutch Europeans, according to this circular, should only be admitted to the ELS ‘if it can be assumed that the education in the European Primary School is the most appropriate for them’. 27 In a follow-up circular in April 1937, however, ‘to avoid misunderstanding’, the Director of Education specified that for ‘children of Europeans non-Netherlanders’, it should in fact be assumed as a matter of principle that the ELS was ‘generally speaking the most appropriate school’. This included, the Director continued, Japanese children as well as children of Natives and Foreign Orientals who had been ‘equated’ with Europeans. 28 The phrasing of the follow-up circular seems to suggest that the Department of Education had received protests from the local authorities throughout the Indies, for whom the potential exclusion of non-Dutch ‘Europeans’ from the ELS was impracticable and unacceptable. Within six months the Director of Education had been compelled to justify himself and explicate that his focus on the ‘Dutchness’ of the European Primary Schools should by no means imply the exclusion of other European nationalities. It came down to a cultural disposition, more than to xenophobic sentiments.

The pages of De Echo, De Schakel and De Opgang, three monthly newspapers produced at different times by students from the secondary schools of the CAS, confirm this connection that CAS students and their parents felt with the

27 Circular from the Director of Education to the European school boards in places with a public European Primary school, 12 November 1936, No. 35084/B, found in Arsip Sulawesi Selatan (South Sulawesi Archives), Macassar (henceforth: Arsip SulSel), Archive Selayar 1823-1973, 380.

28 Circular from the Director of Education to the Heads of local governance, 27 April 1937, No. 12503/B, found in Arsip SulSel, Archive Selayar, 380.
The students writing in these newspapers took the Netherlands and its schools as their frame of reference. They compared the quality of their own newspaper to those at Dutch schools, they wrote about tourist excursions and visits in the Netherlands, and celebrated feats of Dutch engineering and bravery. Even the fictional stories published in these newspapers mostly took the Netherlands as their implicit setting. They were set in ‘bleak, raw winter weather’ or on a ‘beautiful Dutch summer’s day’. The Christmas issues were filled with stories of ‘cold December days’. To the reader of these newspapers, it seems almost as if they have been produced by the student body of a school in the Netherlands. In short, students in the CAS schools often considered themselves as ‘normal’ Dutch school children; the only difference was that their schools were rather far away from the Dutch motherland.

Hence, the student body and their parents (as the founders of the school had intended) identified with the so-called trekker group. The term trekkers (lit.: ‘travellers’), which was opposed to blijvers (lit.: ‘stayers’), was used in Indies’ society to indicate those people who prided themselves on their ability and desire to travel back and forth between the colony and the metropole. The student newspapers frequently referenced former classmates and teachers who had gone on to study in the Netherlands.29 The students writing in these newspapers took the Netherlands and its schools as their frame of reference. They compared the quality of their own newspaper to those at Dutch schools, they wrote about tourist excursions and visits in the Netherlands, and celebrated feats of Dutch engineering and bravery. Even the fictional stories published in these newspapers mostly took the Netherlands as their implicit setting. They were set in ‘bleak, raw winter weather’ or on a ‘beautiful Dutch summer’s day’. The Christmas issues were filled with stories of ‘cold December days’. To the reader of these newspapers, it seems almost as if they have been produced by the student body of a school in the Netherlands. In short, students in the CAS schools often considered themselves as ‘normal’ Dutch school children; the only difference was that their schools were rather far away from the Dutch motherland.

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29 De Echo was published from 1932-1934, De Schakel from 1930-1934. The former was run by and for the students of the CAS only, the latter was set up in cooperation with students from the Koning Willem III School and the Prins Hendrik School, two other secondary schools in Batavia. In 1934, De Echo and De Schakel merged to form De Horizon. By 1936, the CAS students had founded another newspaper just for themselves, De Opgang. Nearly complete collections of De Echo and De Schakel, as well as incomplete collections of De Horizon and De Opgang, can be found in the private archive of the alumni association of CAS-students. This archive, maintained by mr. Harold Penn in Breda (The Netherlands), contains material collected from former students. Some issues of the student newspapers (though not all) can also be found in the Leiden University Library.


37 Cf. Directie der C.A.S., ‘School en Huis herleefd’. 152
Netherlands or who had followed their parents on leave to the motherland. These ‘repatriates’ often remained in regular contact. The student population considered ‘trekken’ as a normal part of life for members of their social group. The actual physical act of ‘travelling’, incidentally, was not strictly necessary for these students and their parents to identify with the trekker group, it became merely a notion to refer to the group that was in constant contact and interchange with the Netherlands. After all, as mentioned above, the reason to found the Carpentier Alting Stichting in the first place had been to spare parents the trouble of moving back to the Netherlands to offer their children the Dutch upbringing they desired. Whilst many students travelled to the Netherlands to receive university education after their school career, many also stayed in the Indies. Nonetheless, it was the group of trekkers that they identified with.

The physical connection of trekkers with the Netherlands, and the consequent feeling of ‘connectedness’, is therefore only part of the explanation for the frequent identification of ‘European’ and ‘Dutch’ in the sources of the CAS. Additionally, the socio-cultural and economic elite in the Indies felt the urge to differentiate within their own ‘European’ group. As shown in chapter 2, the category of ‘Europeanness’ could be very inclusive, not only in a legal sense but also in a wider social sense. With the European society in the Indies growing in number, and with the spread of (Western/European) education into ever expanding circles of the native population threatening to widen it even further, a social elite started to delineate itself from the less fortunate members of this group. This elite chose to stress its own Dutchness and its connectedness to the Netherlands as a defining contrast vis-à-vis the rest of the ‘Europeans’, be they Indo-Europeans, educated Natives, or simply poorer, colony-bound Europeans (blijvers). ‘Dutchness’ was a category that could be used to counter the inclusive tendency of the concepts of ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Westernness’. An emphasis on proper Dutch language use and on proper ‘Dutch’ ways, which we find over and over again in the CAS sources, was used to delineate a new, more exclusive subgroup.

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39 The CAS board itself also realized that the term ‘trekkers’ was inaccurate, if taken too literally. Nonetheless, this is the term the group was usually known under, which is why the board used it. Directie der C.A.S., ‘School en Huis herleefd’. 
The more exclusive subgroup of Europeans that the CAS catered to was given further texture by frequent reference to the ‘burgerij’ of Batavia, which was claimed to be kindly disposed towards the school. Burgerij literally means ‘body of citizens’, but also incorporates connotations of the bourgeois. In Dutch parlance, the term ‘burger’ has historically created a connection between these two meanings of active citizen and representative of the middle classes (especially the trading classes). Members of the CAS, as well as its directors, felt a close link to the social life of the upper middle class of Batavia. The CAS publications regularly extol the fact that the schools were originally founded on the initiative of the Batavia Masonic lodge ‘The Star in the East’. Connections to the Batavian world of business were constantly touted. The references to the burgerij of Batavia are numerous, and were mostly made to express gratitude for the financial support that the school received, or for the

Figure 4.2: Lyceum, 1st grade, with Mr. Schouten, 1939. Source: Swart, Gedenkboek 1902-1977, p. 122.
opportunities offered by ‘representatives of Batavian business life’ to the students to explore their businesses through excursions or other events.40

Despite the relatively exclusive nature of the CAS schools, Indonesians were not entirely barred from the school. As no complete statistics or student registers have survived, it is impossible to capture the ‘native’ presence in numbers, but the memorial literature published by CAS alumni in later decades does provide some telling examples. Mrs. Sophie Sarwono-Goenawan, for example, recalled in 2002 that her father, a civil servant in the Department of Interior Affairs (Departement van Binnenlands Bestuur) was adamant that his children had to study in European schools. He did not have an exceptionally high position, but he spoke good Dutch and was willing to invest in the tuition fees. However, to be allowed into the CAS primary school the mother of a prospective Indonesian student had to speak Dutch as well, and Sophie’s mother did not. Luckily, at the time Sophie went to register for school, her aunt (her mother’s younger sister) happened to be visiting, and as she had studied at the Van Deventer School in Semarang she had a good command of Dutch. Sophie was escorted to the school by her aunt rather than her mother, and the school director conducting the admissions interview simply assumed, based on Sophie’s own language skills and her Dutch speaking aunt, that the mother must surely be proficient as well. Thus the family bluffed their way through. Sophie proved them right, going on not only to finish the primary school but ultimately completing the HBS—an education for which her father had to cough up hefty tuition fees of no less than 25,- guilders/month for

the duration of six years.\footnote{Mijers-Dahler, \textit{CAS Jubileumboek 1902-2002}, p. 19-20. (The tuition of 25,- guilders may well have been somewhere between ten per cent and a quarter of Sophie’s father’s monthly income.) An interview with Sophie Sarwono-Goenawan as well as several other Indonesian CAS alumni—many of whom reached positions of influence after Indonesian independence—appears in Tantri Yuliandini, ‘School reunion brings together Indonesia’s uncles and aunts’, \textit{Jakarta Post}, 5 June 2006. Other examples of Indonesians in the CAS school are mentioned in Swart, \textit{Gedenkboek 1902-1977}, pp. 41-43, 206; Mijers-Dahler, \textit{CAS Jubileumboek 1902-2002}, pp. 5, 28.} In this way, ‘Natives’ from an elite, Dutch-speaking background, with the right cultural affiliation, the means and willingness to pay the fees, and a bit of luck, could enter even into the elite bastion of the CAS schools.

The attendance at the CAS of students of a ‘mixed-race’ background is even more difficult to assess. In the contemporary sources I consulted, ‘Indische children’ or ‘Indo-Europeans’ are never mentioned to have frequented the schools. But the question, posed at the outset of this chapter, remains: does that mean that no students of a mixed background attended, or was it rather the case that they were simply not identified as ‘Indisch’ or ‘Indo’ when they were part of the elite that studied at the CAS schools? The photographic records, although obviously a problematic source for resolving these questions, at the very least suggests that school classes at the CAS were more colourful than our cliché of a society obsessed with the slightest shades of pigment might make us expect (see figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).\footnote{Further pictures can be found in the volumes of \textit{De Echo}, \textit{De Schakel}, \textit{De Horizon} and \textit{De Opgang}, as well as in CAS alumni private archive, 51-52. A number of pictures have also been published online (http://cas-reunisten.nl, accessed 13 February 2014), and in the consecutive commemorative books published in 1927, 1977, 1992 and 2002.} The memory literature of the CAS students seems to point in this same direction. Some of the former CAS students, writing in the 1990s and 2000s after having lived as immigrants in the Netherlands for several decades, now explicitly self-identified as \textit{Indisch}.\footnote{Mijers-Dahler, \textit{Terugblik 1938-1992}, p. 9; Mijers-Dahler, \textit{CAS Jubileumboek 1902-2002}, pp. 6-7, 21. See also chapter 6 here for a more elaborate discussion of the intricacies inherent in such racialized terms as ‘Indisch’ and ‘Indo’, as well as for their complicated relation to racist and classist practices.} The discrepancy is obvious between their post-colonial identification as \textit{Indisch} and the absence of this racialized term in the contemporary sources. We need to be cautious therefore in taking contemporary language as evidence for social practices.

The assessment by Hella Haasse, the grand lady of Dutch post-war literature and a CAS alumna, may well have been correct then. In her last interview, just weeks before her death, she said that during her youth in the Indies ‘discrimination toward the Indos was chiefly of a social nature, not racial’.\footnote{Daan Heerma van Voss and Daniël van der Meer, ‘De zwanenzang van Hella S. Haasse: “Een heerlijk instrument, die shredder”’, \textit{De Groene Amsterdammer}, 11 August 2011, pp. 34-37.} Indeed to the directors of the
CAS, as well as to the students and their parents, the social *milieu* of the CAS was associated with a class category. The CAS, and with it a range of other private European schools, were even more restrictive than the Indies administration about who should be allowed to receive their ‘European’ education. High tuition fees and strict language requirements ensured a relatively exclusive population, excluding many more ‘Natives’ than in public schools, but also large parts of the ‘European’ population (in the legal sense). The conflation of ‘Dutchness’ and ‘Europeanness’, and the emphasis on the ‘normal, healthy Dutch-speaking and -thinking family’, functioned as a way of strengthening class differentiation. A genuine bourgeois Dutch/European *milieu* was imagined, which excluded all non-desirable co-students, whether ‘native’ or otherwise. ‘Europeans’ who could not live up to the ‘Dutch’ standards required by the CAS were excluded just the same. For example, in a fictional story in one of the student newspapers we find the author making fun of an ‘*Indisch*’ Dutch character by the name of Si Willem. Si Willem speaks a broken form of *Indisch*-Dutch, interspersed with Malay vocabulary and grammar. In this story, he
and his friends go on a disastrous pig-hunt that ends with him falling out of a tree.\textsuperscript{45} The implication is clear: this kind of man is not a member of the social group of which CAS-students feel part.

Ann Laura Stoler has likewise discussed the central position of the ‘bourgeois’ in defining ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies. She rightly stresses the overwhelming concern of colonial officials and European socialites alike with ‘the making of a European bourgeois self’.\textsuperscript{46} For the maintenance of the colonial hierarchy, the teaching of proper bourgeois habits and values to those belonging to the ruling group—i.e. the European group—was considered essential. These habits should also be forced upon the many people at the margins of the group, such as ‘poor whites, subaltern soldiers, minor clerks, mixed-blood children, and creole Europeans whose economic and social circumstances made their ties to metropolitan bourgeois civilities often tenuous at best’.\textsuperscript{47} To draw the ‘lines between colonizer and colonized and between subject and citizen’\textsuperscript{48} that were essential to the maintenance of colonial rule, the idea of a European bourgeois civility (and connected to that: of ‘European prestige’) was central.

My research corroborates Stoler in her emphasis on the importance of ‘bourgeois’ ways and values for European self-definitions. Yet while her analysis postulates a desire in the colonial imagination to create a \textit{binary} structure of ‘European’ versus ‘Native’—‘colonizer’ vs. ‘colonized’, ‘subject’ vs. ‘citizen’—despite showing that there are internal class distinctions and tensions among Europeans, my analysis shows that a gradual, multi-layered hierarchy rather than a binary structure had already been created in the (elite) colonial imaginary itself. As the example of the CAS schools illustrates, a differentiation was constructed between \textit{trekkers} and \textit{blijvers}, between those who were ‘normal Dutch-thinking’ and those who were not. This differentiation was associated with the category of the bourgeois, and codified in the opposition of ‘Dutch’ and ‘European’. Elite ‘Europeans’ demarcated themselves from the rest of their group by stressing their Dutchness. The colonial imaginary itself was thus more gradual than binary, especially if we recall the

differentiation analysed in the previous chapter between ‘European’ and ‘Western’. Only by carefully taking into account such seemingly synonymous concepts, rather than subsuming them all under the same analysis, can this be made to stand out. To an inhabitant of the Dutch East Indies, ‘European’ was not necessarily the same as ‘Dutch’.

These differences grew over the course of the twentieth century. It may well be that the increasing European population, and especially the increasing immigration of women from the Netherlands, made these internal differences possible in the first place and gave them additional salience. In the late nineteenth century and around the turn of the century—the period, incidentally, from which Ann Stoler takes most of her empirical sources and which is often seen as the exemplary time of ‘high imperialism’—the self-consciousness of internal differentiations was much less present. The Carpentier Alting Stichting, like many comparable schools, only came into existence in the twentieth century and bloomed in the 1920s and 1930s, by which time it had reached a very prominent position in the Indies education scene.49

Studying the turn of the twentieth century may suggest to us that a binary hierarchy is a central feature of a colonial social imaginary. Including the last decades of colonial rule, however, poses the question: to what extent is this something historically specific rather than universal to colonial situations? Both because of changes in the composition of the European group as well as subsequent changes in colonial ideology and self-understanding, imaginations of the colonial hierarchy had shifted. Hierarchization along race and class lines remained central to the colonial imaginary, but not necessarily on the basis of a simple dichotomy.

Performing modern Europeanness
The CAS community thus constituted a limited milieu of elite Europeans, a milieu to which only a bourgeois elite even of the Europeans (in a legal sense) could hope to accede, namely those able to afford it financially and disposing of the cultural

49 Most of the CAS-schools were founded in the late 1910s and early 1920s. The student numbers continued to rise during the 1920s and reached their peak in the 1930s. On student numbers, see the annual reports of the CAS. By this time, according to its own claims, the CAS was the single largest European private schools organization in the Indies, with a total student count of over 750. See: CAS Jaarverslag, 1923, p. 23. The growth of the CAS was not an isolated development. It fits the overall development in the Indies, where the more exclusive private schools steadily expanded from twenty per cent of the total ELS students around 1915 to 56 per cent in 1940. Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen, p. 290.
competences needed to blend in. But what exactly were these cultural competences? What behaviour and appearances did the members of the CAS community associate with ‘Europeanness’ or ‘Dutchness’, what elements helped them recognize and acknowledge each other as such? In other words, how was elite ‘Europeanness’ performed in the context of the CAS schools?

The promotional material published by the Carpentier Alting Stichting shows that the foundation took the performative interpretation of the milieu in their schools very seriously. Of course, we have already seen the importance given to the proper use of the Dutch language by both teachers and students. But ‘Europeanness’ could and had to be lived out in many other ways as well. For example, when invoking the ‘appropriate milieu’ that was pursued in the girls’ boarding house, this milieu was made explicit in such aspects as sports, music practice, food provisions, and outward appearances. Care was taken to exert ‘meticulous supervision of dress, sense of duty, cleanliness, good personal hygiene, physical well-being etc.’ The girls were

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50 On the development of (and policy regarding) the Dutch language in the Indies, over a longer period of time, Kees Groeneboer has written a very detailed account: Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen.
51 Geus, Gedenkboek 1927, p. 23.
provided with ‘regular recreation, healthy physical exercise and practice of sports’.

Parents were assured that the hygienic preparation of food was strictly supervised. The type of food that was served was also specified. ‘The menus are carefully assembled’, the director of the boarding house claimed. ‘Twice a week a rice table is served and the rest of the days Dutch food’. In this last quotation, incidentally, we can witness once again the slippage between ‘Dutch’ and ‘European’. Large parts of the article in which this quotation appears—in a volume celebrating the 25-year anniversary of the CAS—were incorporated into a prospectus for the boarding house, published a few years later. In the later version the same sentence appears, except this time the cuisine was identified as ‘European food’, not ‘Dutch food’.

Such sources contribute to constructing a ‘European’ sphere that is defined in terms of the cultural habits and competences of the members of a bourgeois elite. The students themselves participated actively, and mostly without criticism, in their own socialization through the organization of all types of events, sometimes

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53 Geus, Gedenkboek 1927, p. 25. The ‘rice table’ is a specifically colonial adaptation of a range of Indonesian dishes into one large feast. On the rice table, as well as on food culture in the Indies more generally, see Susie Protschky, ‘The colonial table: food, culture and Dutch identity in colonial Indonesia’, Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2008, pp. 346-357. Also see Locher-Scholten, ‘Summer dresses’.
54 Carpentier Alting Stichting, Pensionaat voor Meisjes, s.i., s.n. [ca. 1931]. The type of food that was intended in both cases was not specified, but we can gauge that meat, potatoes and vegetables were high on the list. Cf. Protschky, ‘The colonial table’; Locher-Scholten, ‘Summer dresses’. Also cf. the story of the Krakatoa school trip.
autonomously, sometimes with stimulation from the school leadership.\textsuperscript{55} The student newspapers and the photographic record of student activities provide insight into the social activities that made up school life. Students engaged in various competitive pursuits, competing against other schools in Batavia in sports such as swimming, athletics, field hockey, football (for boys), and castie (for girls).\textsuperscript{56} They staged regular plays, both modern and classical. The \textit{Elcee}, a student literary club, held monthly literature readings and regular debate nights, during which students could become acquainted with public speaking and learn about civilized debate. Finally, students were strongly encouraged to throw regular parties and dances, the ultimate type of social event that defined Indies social life. The pictures and reports on these parties truly suggest a scene of youngsters in training to become European socialites (see figures 4.5 and 4.6).\textsuperscript{57}

Generally, such social events were not explicitly identified as ‘European’ or ‘Dutch’ in the sources. The CAS materials seldom refer to certain sports, theatre performances or social parties as having a specifically ‘European’ or ‘Dutch’ nature. They do however subsume these activities under what they define as the ‘appropriate sphere’, as an upbringing in a ‘civilized tone and milieu’.\textsuperscript{58} Moreover, the described acts often appear in a context in which the authentic, genuinely ‘Dutch’ or ‘European’ sphere of the CAS is being revelled in. Even when these particular passages do not mention the ‘European’ \textit{milieu} per se, they do form the background against which the claims of representing a ‘European’ \textit{milieu} were to make sense to the reader.

When we compare the promotional material published by the CAS school boards to the papers published by the student body, one difference stands out. It seems that the students, in their youthful hubris, had less inhibition about flaunting their elite status \textit{vis-à-vis} other Europeans explicitly, whereas the materials published by the school board are rather more diplomatic. I already cited the ridiculing of \textit{Indisch} Dutch in the story of the pig-hunt of Si Willem. Similarly, there are a number

\textsuperscript{55} The study of how class is partly constructed through the cultivation of ‘taste’ was famously pioneered by Bourdieu: Pierre Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste}, trans. Richard Nice (electronic reproduction; Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Castie} is a batting sport somewhat comparable to softball. The consecutive issues of \textit{De Schakel} contain illustrated monthly reports on matches in these particular sports. Pictures are also to be found in CAS alumni private archive, 51-52; as well as http://cas-reunisten.nl, (accessed 14 September 2014).

\textsuperscript{57} On these events, see almost every issue of \textit{De Echo}, \textit{De Schakel}, \textit{De Horizon}, or \textit{De Opgang}. Reporting on these kinds of activities was one of the primary \textit{raisons d’être} for the student newspapers. Also see the previously mentioned photo-collections, as well as: CAS alumni private archive, 41.

\textsuperscript{58} Zeylemaker, ‘De Meisjes H.B.S. III’.
of contributions in the student newspapers that make fun of clashes between police officers and brash students committing traffic violations. In these stories, the students proudly emphasize the fact that they attend the CAS secondary schools, whilst the police officers are portrayed as universally dim-witted. Usually, reference on the part of the student to the school he or she attends is enough to shy the initially authoritative officer into a more conciliatory and respectful stance, sometimes even saving the respective student from being issued a ticket.\(^{59}\) In these kinds of stories, CAS students self-consciously construct themselves as different (better) than certain other tiers of Indies’ European society.

Such differences were sometimes portrayed as juxtaposing proper Europeans—i.e. Europeans in connection to the metropole—on the one hand to *Indische* or *verindischte* (lit.: Indianized) Europeans on the other. Another example is a report written on the occasion of the launch of a series of debate nights. The reporter of the newspaper *De Echo*, one E.M., applauded this initiative. It showed, E.M. claimed, ‘that the school mentality has not been fully *verindischt*’.\(^{60}\) Differentiations that in practice were at least partly class-based were thus occasionally cast in racialized language to explicate and emphasize the boundaries. ‘Speaking’ and ‘doing’ race or class could diverge.

The school board of the CAS enjoyed portraying this differentiation between *verindischte* Europeans and those who had retained their original European vitality as a diachronic difference. This offered the opportunity to boast of the contribution that the CAS itself had provided in safe-guarding proper Europeanness. An intriguing document in this respect is a peculiar article included in the volume published on the occasion of the 25-year anniversary of the CAS. In his article ‘A glance into the future’, the author C.S.—most likely Mr. A.B. Cohen-Stuart, a member of the CAS board—tries to imagine a gathering another 25 years into the future, on the occasion of the 50-year anniversary. C.S. describes a film that he envisions might be shown during this future celebration, a film that commemorates the development of the CAS. The film follows the history of the CAS from its humble beginnings in 1902, through a big leap forward to 1927—the author’s time—into the imagined present of 1952.


The description of this imaginary future film deserves to be quoted at some length here, because it illustrates, very poignantly, what the CAS hoped its contribution had been to the development of ‘European’ society in the Indies, namely from a lazy, verindisch society to a rapidly modernizing one:

At the signal given by [the president], a film is now shown on a high screen, which represents first the year 1902, the year in which the Rev. A.S. Carpentier Alting together with several friends laid the foundations of the CAS. The Indies back then were not yet a political unity, many of the islands were still terra incognita to science. Batavia was not yet a municipality; there was no higher education and hardly any native education; there were no cars and no asphalt roads; no electric lighting; no swimming pools; no water pipes; no sports competitions; no cinemas. It was a ‘ville sans lumière’. The European population lived at home in sleeping trousers and kabaai [a type of shirt common to the Indies, BL]. The easy chair was abundantly used, [...]. The drinking table was the centre of spiritual life. In this darkness a ray of light broke through when the Reverend Alting et al. decided to establish an H.B.S. and boarding house for girls, [...]. Through restless activity for the better, so they thought, humanity had to be brought to a higher level. The future mothers of a next generation had to be made aware of this first of all. These arduous idealists looked into the future with more hope and trust than the drinking men in sleeping trousers and kabaai with their easy-chair philosophy.

In 1927—the film skipped 25 years—what a change! Batavia modernized and awakened to a fresher life. Intellectual and physical development both risen to a higher durability. [...] But, still in many ways a time of transition and of unfulfilled expectations. The audience burst into spontaneous laughter when they saw how awkwardly people danced the Charleston in 1927; how primitive rail- and tram-traffic were organised in Batavia in 1927, how unfortunately and inadequately many schools were still furnished. Another dark side was still the low level of well-being and development of the mass of the population. [...]
Then the lights were switched on again and the President could finish his speech. He was indeed successful in sketching, on the bleak background of 1902 and 1927, how 1952 represented progress in almost every aspect.61

This rich quotation shows us, among other things, the importance of an idea of modernity in defining ‘Europeanness’. ‘European’ society in 1927, as opposed to native society (‘the mass of the population’) but also to the verindischte European population in 1902, was more modern, as could be gauged both from technological advances (asphalt roads, cars, electricity, water pipes) as well as in socio-cultural changes (swimming pools, sports competitions, cinemas, the Charleston). Furthermore, a change of mentality was vital for this modernization to take root: ‘restless activity for the better’ needed to replace an ‘easy-chair philosophy’. Proper Dutchmen/Europeans were thus portrayed as unaffected by lazy and improper Indies’ ways (living in sleeping trousers, drinking). They were modern both in a technological and in a spiritual and behavioural sense.

Another aspect that this quotation highlights is the emphasis on women’s education. It was the ‘future mothers of the next generation’ who needed to be imbued with the modernizing spirit first of all. This is why the CAS focused heavily on founding girls’ schools. At first glance, the assessment of education to European girls in this quotation looks very similar to the arguments we have seen surrounding education to native girls in the Kartini schools: a modernizing (and hence ‘Europeanizing’ or ‘Westernizing’) effort could be initiated and/or secured by focusing on girls. However, a closer look shows important differences. Education to ‘native’ girls had as its primary objective the training of modern, Westernized ‘housewives and mothers’. Education for a domestic future was key. ‘Modernity’, in this context, meant Western-style family relations, domestic hygiene and enlightened child-care (see chapter 3).

The ‘European’ girls in the CAS, by contrast, were equally educated to become modern women, but ‘modernity’ in their context had different connotations. It was associated with women’s emancipation, participation in ‘the full social life’, and the preparation for the future ‘struggle for existence’ that ever more women had to participate in, since ‘the strive for independence of the woman in Society has come to

the fore ever more strongly’. Education to ‘European’ girls in the CAS was, at least rhetorically, associated with an independent, potentially professional position in society. Girls were still seen as ‘future mothers’ too, but their role as such was seen more in leading by example than in performing child-care and domestic management. Possibly, the expectation that European women in the Indies had servants to undertake daily domestic chores was at the back of commentators’ minds, although this was not made explicit. In any case, a potential professional future for these girls was taken seriously, witness the myriad articles in the CAS sources on possible career paths for girls as primary school teachers or in business as typists and secretaries.

This is not to say that no gender differences between ‘European’ girls and ‘European’ boys were constructed. It was for good reason that the CAS invested in single-sex education. It was claimed that girls benefitted more from a ‘general education’, including more extensive teaching in (modern) languages, art history, and music. They were considered less apt at mastering the dry theoretical knowledge of exact sciences. Despite these gender differences, however, modern ‘European’ women were perceived as active in ‘the full social life’, whereas modern ‘native’ women were seen as conscientious housewives and mothers. Modernity was a very malleable concept in these discourses. Even though Europeanness, as I have shown repeatedly in this thesis, was closely associated with a concept of modernity, the flexibility of this latter concept made it an ambiguous characteristic. Thus the possibility emerged to see modernity as something European, but simultaneously to consider certain people (in this case ‘native’ women) as ‘modernized’ without being necessarily ‘European’.

Another recurring site of conflict regarding supposedly ‘modern’ cultural practices was the respective position of ‘Europe’ and ‘America’. Many of the cultural practices that defined a modern European society in the Indies (e.g. automotive


64 NL-HaNA, Kolonieën / Openbaar Verbaal, 2.10.36.04, 72, Verbaal 20 August 1901 No. 1, Considerations and recommendations by the Director of Education (J.H. Abendanon), 21 August 1900; Zeylemaker, ‘De Meisjes H.B.S. III’; ‘De Carpentier Alting Stichting te Batavia’, School en Huis, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1936.
culture, music and dance, film) were in fact imported from the United States, not from ‘Europe’ (let alone the Netherlands). It is probably true, then, as Bosma and Raben claim, that ‘American culture play[ed] an increasingly dominant role’ in the Indies.\(^65\) American modernity was the inspiration for people in the Indies. The question, however, is how the people performing these cultural practices perceived their provenance. In fact it is striking that the tension between ‘European’ and ‘American’ was almost entirely absent. ‘American’ was often subsumed under ‘European’. Where (the value of) ‘American culture’ did become an explicit point of contention, the different stances can be analysed in terms of a generational conflict.

Most noticeably, this conflict was played out in regard to music and dance. The students of the CAS revelled in their dance parties, where all night long they danced the Charleston, the Foxtrot and other ‘modern’ dances to the sounds of jazz and swing bands. The student newspapers contained numerous reviews of the latest dance-records,\(^66\) regular advertisements from local music-retailers extolling their jazz collections,\(^67\) and even contributions on the history of dance and music.\(^68\) In these pieces, the dance music was often recognized explicitly as an ‘American’ import and was thus contrasted to classical ‘European’ music. Significantly, though, this importation into the Indies is generally not portrayed as direct, but rather as occurring through the mediation of ‘Europe’. The author of the mentioned history of dance, for example, noted: ‘Around the beginning of 1900 [sic], the so-called Washingtonpost came from America, as one of the first of all the eccentric dances that were borrowed from the negros and introduced in Europe: cake-walk, tango, foxtrot, etc. [...] [E]ven later we received the rumba, which caused great enthusiasm, and now on school parties we can be seen dancing foxtrots and slow foxes to the tones of a screaming and thumping jazz band’.\(^69\) Europe itself had been modernized through American culture, and the Indies were catching up.

The other side of the argument similarly reproduced an opposition between ‘Europe’ and ‘America’, but interpreted it in a negative way, characterizing American


\(^66\) *De Echo*, for example, starting with Vol. 2, No. 7 had a monthly feature review discussing some of the latest releases. Also see: ‘t Herdertje, ‘Een kleine verhandeling over Jazz’, *De Schakel*, Vol. 1, No. 8, 1931, pp. 3-5; Mille, ‘King of Jazz’, *De Echo*, Vol. 2, 1934, pp. 229-230.

\(^67\) E.g.: *De Schakel*, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1931, p. 4.


jazz-music as ‘barbarism’. An article taking this stance was published in *De Horizon* of November 1934:

We should seriously consider whether we are not taking on a heavy responsibility for the future of our European culture. [...] The young generation that respects itself should realize that, when today art falls victim to barbarism, tomorrow science, morality, our legal principles, who knows even technology may fall victim to the Moloch of our times: false modesty and excessive yearning for the latest new thing, as a result of which the mentioned values would likewise fall prey to barbarism.  

In the eyes of the author, jazz composers were not original, but merely pirating the great works of nineteenth-century European composers in the most brazen way: ‘It is not unthinkable that such barbarians, when permitted access to Western-European architecture, would convert a gothic cathedral into a horizontal, straight-lined block of flats’. Regarding music and dance, then, a rather banal generational conflict between ‘tradition’ and ‘the latest new thing’ was ignited. This conflict created an opposition between Europe and America, where Europe stood for wholesome tradition and America represented the frantic modern ways. Nonetheless, American culture was presented, both by its enthusiasts and by its opponents, as intimately intertwined with and of large influence for modern European (and by extension Indies’ European) culture.

The disagreements on the value of ‘American’ modernity notwithstanding, it can certainly be concluded that the elite Europeans of the CAS performed their ‘Europeanness’ through acts that they liked to perceive as modern, with much emphasis on technological and scientific progress, and a recurring (implicit or explicit) reference to America. They comported themselves as forerunners, as an avant-garde in Indies’ society that would propel society, as a whole, towards a brighter future. The position of the European (Dutchman) in the Indies was that of leader and leading example, of teacher both in a literal and figurative sense. The

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70 ‘Jasz en klassieke muziek’, *De Horizon*, Vol. 1, November 1934, pp. 26-27. This article is a reprint from the magazine *Contact: maandblad voor de rijpere jeugd*.

71 ‘Jasz en klassieke muziek’, p. 25. Note that gothic architecture is not portrayed here as ‘European’, but actually as ‘Western-European’, i.e. from Western Europe.
modern, progressive European was spreading the blessings of European-American modernity in the Indies, leading to a more prosperous future society where rank and class would fade. It hardly needs to be explained that this expected equal society always remained in a mid- to long-term future. The elite Europeans of the CAS enjoyed seeing themselves as benevolent leaders—both of the less fortunate fellow Europeans and of the ‘Westernizing’ Natives.

**Conclusion: ‘Dutch’ and ‘European’, strategies of delimitation**

This chapter has explored how elite ‘Europeans’ in the colonial capital of Batavia, through the educational choices for their children, constructed boundaries with the rest of the European group in the Indies. In the previous chapter we focused on the discussions surrounding the question of whether Western education should be extended to ‘Natives’ and if so in what manner: in separate schools (the HIS) or through co-education with Europeans in the ELS. Too much emphasis on that question, however, might lead one to forget that the category of ‘Europeans’ was itself hardly homogenous. For one, the so-called ‘equated’ Natives were already quietly subsumed under this term in the administrative debate, which paints the question of whether ‘Natives’ should be allowed into the ELS in a somewhat different light. As the discussion of the Carpentier Alting Stichting and its milieu have shown, it is also important to look inside the ‘European education for Europeans’. There were treacherous internal boundaries, confirming the idea that the hierarchy in the Indies was multi-tiered with many subtle layers rather than only one or two major chasms.

Although the internal boundaries within the European group were sometimes discursively racialized, in daily social practices they were mostly constituted on the basis of socio-economic or cultural aspects. What mattered was wealth, cultural and social affiliation with the Dutch metropole, cultural choices in such areas as dress, food, music, literature or sports, and last but certainly not least (accent-free) proficiency in Dutch. An important differentiator was hence whether one moved in an appropriate ‘Dutch’ milieu. Significantly, though, the ‘Dutchness’ at issue was not necessarily related to racial attributes or even dependent on being born in (or traveling regularly to) the Dutch metropole. Rather, the genuine ‘Dutch’ milieu was assessed on the basis of cultural competences and social associations defined within the Indies context. A boundary was thus created between average Indisch ‘Europeans’ and the ‘Dutch’ elite Europeans.
Chapter 5
Counterfeit Europeans or a ‘life free from trammels’: Indonesian voices in the education debate

Prologue: Hanafi, ‘half a man’

In 1928, a well-known figure from the Indonesian national movement, Abdoel Moeis, published what has since become one of the classics of Indonesian literature. His novel Salah Asuhan¹ (literally: ‘Wrong upbringing’) follows Hanafi, a young man from West-Sumatra who has been educated in a European primary school and at a HBS. Hanafi has great respect for European culture, which he considers superior in all respects to his own Minangkabau (West-Sumatran) traditions. When he gets his first job and builds a house for himself, his mother—a simple ‘country woman’ who comes to live with him—is dismayed at the furnishing:

Hanafi, who reminded everyone that he had lived in Dutch people’s homes since he was a child, insisted that he could be comfortable only in a house that was furnished in such a fashion. From the front veranda to the kitchen and the bathroom, the house was laid out like a Dutch person’s home. Hanafi’s mother could not feel at home in such a house. [...] But Hanafi hated his mother’s world and filled every corner of the house with small tables, flower pots, and the like.²

Hanafi’s great dream is to marry his childhood friend, Corrie du Bussée, an Indo-European girl of a French father and a Minangkabau mother. But eventually Corrie rejects him and Hanafi ends up marrying his cousin Rapiah, a simple native girl, with whom he has a son. As he is unhappy in his marriage, over the years Hanafi becomes increasingly abusive towards his devoted and submissive wife. Then, after a rabid dog has bitten him, he is sent to Batavia for treatment, where he happens to run into Corrie. Their love is rekindled and eventually, after Hanafi has been legally equated

¹ Abdoel Moeis, Salah asuhan (Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1991). Originally published in 1928, translated into English as: Never the twain, trans. Robin Susanto (Jakarta: Lontar, 2010). The quotations used here are based on the 2010 translation (which takes considerable literary liberties), but I have amended them where necessary to reflect a more literal rendering.
² Moeis, Salah asuhan, p. 22-23 (in Never the twain: p. 21).
with Europeans and has divorced his first wife, Corrie gives in to his overtures and
marries him.

At first, Hanafi is happy in his new married life. But his guilt over having led
Corrie into social isolation by marrying a ‘Native’—despite his new legal status—
starts to gnaw away at him and eventually he becomes abusive to his second wife as
well. After Hanafi has hit her during an argument, Corrie runs away from home to
Semarang where she starts to work in an orphanage. Hanafi’s remorse is unbearable
and he travels to Semarang to beg her forgiveness. When he finds Corrie again he
discovers that she has contracted cholera. She dies soon after, sending Hanafi into
even deeper despair and a severe depression, prompting him to return to his native
land and re-evaluate his life choices:

Hanafi knew that both his wives lacked neither heart nor soul nor love for him.
But he mistreated them all the same. And it was all because he had become half
a man [orang tanggung], as he was brought up wrong. His two wives had fallen
victim to his wrong upbringing.  

Hanafi fears that the son he had with Rapiah, his first wife, may end up making the
same wrong choices that he has made:

At best, he could hope that his son Syafei would not follow in his footsteps. It
would be all right if he obtained enough of a Western education that he could
eliminate and replace the bad customs of the Easterners [orang Timur] with the
good customs of the Westerners [orang Barat]. But, as an Easterner, his
upbringing must certainly also follow the Eastern way.  

Upon arriving back in West-Sumatra, Hanafi apologizes to his family and to Rapiah
for his many mistakes in life. Deciding that he can no longer fit in and that he will
only be a burden upon the happiness of his mother and Rapiah, he decides to take his
own life and he poisons himself.

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3 Moeis, Salah asuhan, p. 241 (in Never the twain: p. 219).
4 Moeis, Salah asuhan, p. 233 (in Never the twain: p. 196).
Introduction: ‘Western’ versus ‘Oriental’ education reprised

The question of the usefulness of ‘Western’ education for ‘Natives’ remained at the heart of the late colonial education debate in the Indies, despite the subsidiary efforts at internal differentiation within the European group analysed in the previous chapter. Whereas until the late nineteenth century the Indies administration had almost exclusively focused on educating Europeans, this had changed radically with the advent of the ‘ethical policy’ in the 1900s and 1910s. In the words of the Minister for Colonial Affairs, Charles Welter, in 1939, the issue of education to ‘Natives’ in the twentieth century had become the ‘preponderant concern’ (overwegend belang) of the Indies government.\(^5\) After the first two decades of the twentieth century, discussions concerning primary and secondary education to Europeans became no more than a sideshow on the political stage of the colonial state. Yet the shift in public debate and concern should not blind us to the fact that education to Europeans continued as before. Education for Europeans had become, to a large extent, business as usual. Consequently, a comparatively small share of the total student population in the Indies, those from the European group, still drew a disproportionally large share of the state’s budget.\(^6\) The costs pertaining to education for Europeans, elite or otherwise, were taken for granted. Education for Natives, let alone Western education for Natives, was not.

This discrepancy may have been no more than normal to privileged Europeans and government officials, but to many Indonesians, particularly the slightly more prosperous, it was anything but self-evident. Why did Europeans deserve a separate, better system of education? When Europeans would speak of the threat of an imminent ‘over-production’ of Western-educated Indonesians, who could no longer all be employed in the limited number of positions in government or Western businesses (see chapter 3), the Indonesians in question were surely justified in wondering why nobody ever pondered the possibility of an overproduction of


\(^6\) Cf. Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 52-56. ‘European’ education did in fact continue to pose a concern for Indo-European interest groups like the Indo-Europees Verbond, but their efforts in this respect did not gain much traction in wider political circles. Cf. Bosma, Karel Zaalberg, pp. 437-438. The exact share of ‘European’ education in the budget can unfortunately not be quantified, because in the education budget the European schools (ELS) and the Dutch-Native schools (HIS) appear under one heading as ‘Western education’. Yet ELS generally had more (and better educated) teachers, making them surely more expensive than the HIS (let alone the basic village schools). For some budgetary data Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, pp. 221-223, 279-281.
educated Europeans. If there were too many educated people for the scarce jobs, why did the Indonesians have to yield whilst the Netherlands was still sending people from overseas?

More and more Indonesians were starting to ask this question in the 1920s and 1930s. In chapter 3 we have examined different perspectives on the question of whether education to ‘Natives’ in the Dutch Indies should be based on a ‘Western’ or an ‘Oriental’ curriculum. This discussion remained largely an argument among legislators and school boards, with little ear for the wishes of those targeted by this education. The question remains of how Indonesians appreciated ‘Western’ or ‘European’ education: did they indeed wish for instruction in a ‘Western’ curriculum, or did they prefer authentically ‘Oriental’ schools? Moreover, what in this context were their connotations with the concepts of ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Westernness’? Did they see a (necessary) relation between ‘modernization’ and ‘Westernization’ when imagining the future of the Indies/Indonesian state?

When asking these questions, it should be realized first of all that the historical sources yield only a very partial and skewed representation of Indonesian voices, even more so than regarding ‘Europeans’. We are dealing with a population of which only a small minority had a functional level of literacy. The opinions that we do in fact find in the sources are automatically biased towards the minority that had received an education, whether in government schools or in private schools run by their fellow countrymen. In fact, the large majority of sources, even those coming from emerging Indonesian nationalist organizations, stem from individuals who had themselves received a ‘Western’ education. These are unavoidable biases that we need to keep in mind. The ‘simple Indonesian peasant’ or the ‘country woman’ is a figure we only find written about, never writing him- or herself.

Opinions expressed by Indonesian actors that we do have are plentiful, and reveal striking differences of opinion. As I demonstrate in this chapter, two main

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8 It is difficult to quantify literacy figures. The only thing we can calculate with some certainty is the share of the population that had visited any kind of school. In practice though, even many of the children who had visited the desa-schoools could not be regarded as functionally literate at a later age (also because many left school prematurely). That being said, it can be estimated that in 1930 literacy was under 10 per cent (or 30 per cent of the adult population), even if we count this most basic level of literacy. See: Idenburg, ‘Beginselen van onderwijsbeleid’, p. 654n2; Van Niel, The emergence, p. 69; Volksstelling 1930, Vol. 8, pp. 29-31, 110-111.
conceptual lines of thinking can be discerned. On the one hand, there were those striving for undiluted ‘Western’ education, studied here among the ranks of Indonesian parents of Kartini school students. It is this stance that the committed nationalist Abdoel Moeis deplored and ridiculed in his novel Salah Asuhan. Chasing the Indisch dream of securing for their offspring a profitable position in a ‘Western’ company or in the colonial administration—or marriage with a spouse in such a position—these Indonesians jostled for the limited places in publicly funded ‘Dutch-Native’ or ‘European’ schools. And not only did they pursue a ‘Western’ education, they frequently also styled themselves as ‘European’ as possible, in their outward appearances as well as their cultural expressions. To become ‘modern’, one had to become ‘European’.

On the other hand, the 1920s and 1930s saw an increasing desire for ‘Indonesian’ education based on ‘Eastern’ principles and traditions, linked to the emergence of Indonesian nationalist movements in this same period. Here I study this development through Taman Siswa, an organization founded in 1922 and dedicated to establishing ‘national Indonesian’ schools, independent from public funding. The leaders and teachers of Taman Siswa’s schools envisioned a future generation that would be simultaneously ‘modern’ as well as authentically ‘Indonesian’ or ‘Eastern’/‘Oriental’ (timur). Like Abdoel Moeis (through the sentiments of the repentant Hanafi), the Taman Siswa leaders felt that it was essential for Indonesian children’s upbringing to ‘follow the Eastern way’. Some education in Western subjects could be beneficial to teach the ‘good qualities of the Europeans’, but this should be restricted to technical and scientific knowledge and not extend to the social

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9 Cf. Geschiere, ‘De meningsvorming’, pp. 61-71; Lelyveld, ‘Koloniaal onderwijs’, p. 90. Naturally, there were also individuals expressing hybrid forms or acting in a grey in-between area of the two opposites discussed here (see for example: Coté, Writing between the lines), but these two models can be seen as the conceptual ideal types.

10 My study of Taman Siswa is based mostly on its own publications and the writings of its leader Ki Hadjar Dewantara (see below), as well as some sources from the colonial government archives. The various Taman Siswa periodicals and magazines can be consulted in the National Library in Jakarta. Incomplete collections are also kept in various Dutch libraries. As far as I have been able to ascertain, no Taman Siswa archive has survived from the colonial period.

11 The term ‘Oriental’ in English can be a somewhat misleading translation of timur, as it has come to incorporate many layers of association with ‘Orientalism’. Orang timur literally means ‘person from the East’ and is the direct antonym of orang barat, ‘Westerner’. (Dutch makes a very similar distinction between Westerling and Oosterling, and the latter term equally lacks many of the connotations that the English ‘Oriental’ carries.) For reasons of legibility I do use the translation ‘Oriental’ in this chapter, but the reader should bear this proviso in mind.
cultivation of the child. If Indonesians ever wanted to achieve independence, they would have to find their own path to ‘modernity’.

As I argue here, the Indonesian nationalists in Taman Siswa imagined the possibility of an alternative form of modernity, by severing the self-evidence of the link between ‘progress’ and ‘Europeanization’. Incidentally, their argument in this respect displayed a curious resemblance to the cultural relativism of their conservative European counterparts (see chapter 3). Somehow, namely, these Indonesian nationalists still had to grapple with the perceived European progeny of the notion of modernity. Their solution was to distinguish between, on the one hand, ‘Western’ knowledge (especially in the technological and scientific realm) that could be unproblematically appropriated as a way to modernize Indonesia and, on the other hand, ‘European’ culture that they rejected and interpreted as an instrument of imperial oppression. Hence, these Indonesian nationalists found themselves in surprising (and awkward) agreement with their European counterparts, to the extent that both distinguished discursively between ‘Western’ and ‘European’ as a means of validating their cultural relativism. Whilst for European colonizers this construction helped them justify continued (political and social) privilege for their own group, for Indonesians it opened a way to imagine alternative roads to ‘modernity’, free from debilitating colonial connotations.

Chasing the Indisch dream: Indonesians in pursuit of Europeanness

The anthropologist P.L. Geschiere once described the parents of children attending the Dutch-Native schools (*Hollands-Inlandsche Scholen*, HIS) as a ‘middle-class of civil servants’. It would be more accurate to speak of a class of aspiring civil servants. Many of the parents of HIS students worked in low-level positions for the Dutch Indies government or as clerks in Western businesses, but as we saw in chapter 3 regarding the Kartini schools, a number were also employed in more humble occupations, such as domestic service or even farming. These parents sought education for themselves and their children that resembled education to ‘Europeans’ as closely as possible. It was especially important to them to receive education in the Dutch language. For most people, the main motivation was economic. Knowledge of Dutch, as well as the other subjects taught at ‘European’ or ‘Western’ schools, made

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it possible (or at least so people hoped) to work in better-paid positions for the government or in Western business, in other words: to advance in society. Unsurprisingly, therefore, many people were willing to make considerable sacrifices, paying a substantial share of their salaries for their children’s tuition fees.

For at least some, the love and respect for all things European went a lot deeper than merely crude economic designs, even to the disfavour of their ‘own’ culture. Raden Kamil for example, a Javanese man employed by the Dutch Indies school inspection and a member of the Volksraad (People’s Council), professed:

A domestic education such as exists among civilized Europeans is lacking among the large majority of the Natives. [...] Luckily, there are signs of late that some improvements have occurred in this family life, mostly among those who have attended good schools. In this matter, European influence can clearly be discerned.

People like Raden Kamil were attempting to fit into a mould of what they perceived as a ‘civilized’ European. They adopted cultural ways and practices and often also applied for legal ‘equation’ before the law. As we have seen, for instance, in the case of the doctor and later member of the People’s Council, Abdul Rivai (see introduction to this thesis), sporting the ‘European’ dress code—trousers, shoes, a jacket and a tie—was an important part of that effort.

Other cultural choices, such as interior design or music, could play a role. Raden Soerjomihardjo for example, a Javanese man who had studied in Delft (the

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14 NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 2, Second annual report of the Kartini Foundation in the Netherlands Indies, 1 July 1914—30 June 1915, pp. 27-30; NL-HaNA, Kartini Fonds, 2.20.38.03, 42, Letter from the board of the Buitenzorg Kartini school to the Board of Directors of the Kartini Foundation, 7 April 1933. Also cf. Van der Veur, ‘Progress and procrastination’, pp. 15-16.
16 See chapter 2. Many of the applicants for ‘equation’ in their petition claimed that—through their education—they had lost touch with the ‘society they originated from’. E.g.: ANRI, AS, Bt. 18 March 1915 No. 9 (Mas Soengkono); ANRI, AS, Bt. 21 April 1925 No. 17 (Andrias Andaria); ANRI, AS, Bt. 31 December 1917 No. 25 (Jacob Tahalele).
Netherlands) in the late 1910s and early 1920s and now worked as a tax-collector in the Indies, kept in correspondence with Mrs. Betsy van Deventer Maas, the long-term matriarch and benefactor of the Kartini schools. In March 1940, he wrote her a five-page letter updating her on the recent developments in his life. In two of the five pages he discussed legal troubles that he had become embroiled in at work. Most of the other three pages were dedicated to his love of music, describing in meticulous detail the classical pieces—by Beethoven, Mozart, Handel, Grieg, Brahms, Debussy—that he had been practicing on his violin, as well as the (invariably European) partners with whom he played. He also boasted about the grand piano he had recently bought, ‘for a bargain’, from a European family about to leave the Indies, and reported that he and his family had recently acquired an excellent new radio set as well as a gramophone player, so that he could practice his violin along with the records.¹⁸

In such ways, people like Raden Soerjomihardjo ‘mimicked’ (supposedly) civilized European behaviour in their domestic and social lives. Yet they habitually felt they were falling short, drenched as they were in the ideology present in the education they had received, which told them they could never quite become ‘real’ Europeans, only ‘counterfeit Europeans’.¹⁹ A clear example of such an inferiority complex can be found in Mrs. Raden Ajoe S.K. Abdoerrachman, a Javanese lesser noble who in 1936 became the president of the school board of the Batavia Kartini school. In a letter to a former board member and friend, Mr. François, though written in practically fluent Dutch, she apologized profusely for her spelling mistakes and awkward style: ‘Please consider this letter as written by a woman from the good old days, [...] Only through her good will and persistence has she come this far in society.’ In the same letter, Mrs. Abdoerrachman decried that she really was not suited for the chairmanship of the board that she had recently assumed:

¹⁸ NL-HaNA, Collectie 424 Van Deventer-Maas, 1879-1944 (henceforth: Deventer-Maas), 2.20.38.05, 15, Letter from R. Soerjomihardjo to Mrs. Van Deventer, 5 March 1940. On the cult of the radio in late colonial Indonesia, cf.: Mrázek, “‘Let us become radio mechanics’”.

As I had thought, the work of the board of the Batavia Kartini Foundation is not running as smoothly as it used to, without you and without a European lady of standing as president. Three times already I have asked for a new president at the board meeting, but no one wants to take it upon him or her. [...] The gentlemen are overburdened by their professional affairs, so I do not blame them if they do their work for the Kartini Foundation a bit more slowly. But I do pity myself, because I may have too little authority over my fellow board members, [...].

As an Indonesian woman rather than a ‘European lady of standing’, Mrs. Abdoerrachman felt that she could not muster the required respect and standing among her colleagues, despite her best efforts to live up to the European model.

Other telling examples of ‘mimicking’ behaviour can be gathered from student letters to Betsy van Deventer-Maas, written by recent graduates of the Van Deventer schools (the secondary schools appended to the Kartini school). The girls wrote to thank Mrs. Van Deventer-Maas for her efforts for the Kartini schools in general, and for the graduation present that she had sent them (a silver refillable pencil) in particular. All of these girls wrote in nearly flawless Dutch of a truly remarkable level for non-native speakers, albeit sometimes somewhat adolescent. Nevertheless, with coy self-effacement, many of them asked to be forgiven for their supposedly numerous errors. And indeed, Betsy van Deventer-Maas marked all the mistakes in these letters in pencil and made notes in the margins, presumably as an aide-memoire for when she wanted to write a reply, in which she regularly lamented bad spelling and grammar.

The content of these letters reveal the girls’ hopes and dreams to be part of a European society, and to keep doing all the ‘European’, civilized things they had learned in the Van Deventer school. One girl narrated that she had established a tennis club, and she proudly announced that the majority of the other members were

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20 NL-HaNA, Deventer-Maas, 2.20.38.05, 15, Letter from R.A. S.K. Abdoerrachman to Mr. François, 3 July 1936. This letter is now kept in the archive of Mrs. Van Deventer-Maas, because Mr. François forwarded it in order to discuss the problems in the Batavia Kartini school board.

21 NL-HaNA, Deventer-Maas, 2.20.38.05, 26. Frances Gouda has used some of these same letters in her *Dutch culture overseas*, pp. 97-107.
Europeans. Others reported their efforts to start a girls’ club in order to brush up the knowledge they had acquired at the Van Deventer school in the fields of home economics, handicrafts, cooking and hygiene. They feared that their isolation in the uncivilized outback might mean they would forget all their recently acquired civilized European skills. They prided themselves, thus, for moving in European circles, and doing the things a well-educated European girl of their age should be doing.

In January 1932, to offer these girls and young women a vehicle to express their wishes and worries, the former head of the Van Deventer school in Semarang, Mrs. F.A. Volkers-Schippers, founded a magazine under the title *Widoeri*. The publication was directed at alumni of the Van Deventer and Kartini schools, as well as any other Dutch-educated Indonesian women who might be interested. At its height the magazine reached a subscription membership of approximately seven hundred. Much of the content was provided by Volkers-Schippers herself, addressing such matters as practical tips on domestic hygiene, sowing patterns, and instructions for modern child rearing. More importantly, she left ample space for contributions from her loyal readership. Every issue of *Widoeri* contained two features entitled, respectively, ‘Voices from here and there’ and ‘A little chat with letter-writers and other readers’. In these features, readers recounted occurrences from their daily domestic and family life—who had recently had a baby, whose husband had recently found a new job, etc.—and received responses from Mrs. Volkers-Schippers and other readers to all kinds of practical questions.

Judging from these many letters and contributions, the central function of *Widoeri* lay in providing its readership of young Western-educated Indonesian women—dispersed all over the Indies—with a sympathetic ear from their peers as well as Mrs. Volkers-Schippers, to whom they could submit their enquiries about

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22 NL-HaNA, Deventer-Maas, 2.20.38.05, 26, Letter from Sariyoe to Mrs. Van Deventer-Maas through the former VDS director, Ms. Hoorn, 24 April 1932.
23 NL-HaNA, Deventer-Maas, 2.20.38.05, 26, Letter from Adi to Mrs. Van Deventer-Maas through the VDS director, Ms. Hoorn, 10 March 1932.
24 F.A. Volkers-Schippers, ‘Een praatje met briefschrijfsters en andere lezeressen’, *Widoeri: Wiljen—Doen—Richten*, Maandblad voor inheemsche vrouwen en meisjes, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1936, pp. 80-81. ‘*Widoeri*’ was the Indonesian word for a type of plant, but was also interpreted as an acronym for ‘Wiljen—Doen—Richten’ (‘To Want—To Do—To Guide’).
25 In Dutch: ‘Stemmen van hier en daar’ and ‘Een praatje met briefschrijfsters en andere lezeressen’. These two features were a fixture throughout *Widoeri*’s four-year existence, and frequently covered several pages each.
On the occasion of the foundation of *Widoeri*, one of the readers wrote enthusiastically: ‘I am so, so glad that we now have our own magazine, and a magazine written in Dutch. I welcome the publication of *Widoeri* with open arms and cheer it on. We can now try, in this magazine, to express our feelings.’

Another girl, Sripanoeroen from Semarang, chimed in with a similar sentiment:

To me, possibly the only nurse among the many subscribers, the birth of ‘*Widoeri*’ is a ray of light in my existence. I live in a boarding house and rarely come into contact with the outside world. Day in day out I move amidst suffering people, either children or adults, who need my help. […] Because I need further development besides these activities, I did not pass on the excellent opportunity to register as a subscriber of ‘*Widoeri*’.

These girls, apart from their efforts to associate with ‘European’ women in their direct surroundings, craved the companionship of their fellow ‘Western’-educated Indonesians. Moreover, the availability of Mrs. Volkers-Schippers as the ultimate authority on ‘modern’ European ways, who could help them to avoid committing embarrassing *faux pas*, remained a reassuring presence in their insecure lives.

**Europeanizing for independence**

Girls like these, and their parents, who wanted to ‘become European’ as far as possible and to integrate in the (more powerful, more prestigious and wealthier) European society, were joined in their desire for undiluted Western/European education by some rather strange bedfellows. Starting in the 1910s, there was a (relatively small) number of anti-colonialists active in Indonesian public opinion that also pleaded for Western education to Indonesians, but for very different reasons. Chief among them was Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, a fervent activist involved in various anti-government organizations. Later, several leading figures in the nationalist

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26 For a more extensive appraisal of *Widoeri*, see: Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas*, pp. 106-107. Gouda is particularly interested in Volkers-Schippers’ calls upon her readership to share their learning of Western notions with common Indonesian village women, to achieve a trickle-down effect of education. Such a narrative is certainly present in the pages of *Widoeri*, but in my reading the magazine’s function as a type of ‘club journal’ for ‘Europeanized’ women—a virtual peer-group—was more at the forefront of both Mrs. Volkers-Schippers’ and her readership’s minds.


movement like Mohammed Hatta and Soetan Sjahrir adopted similar positions. These people were vehemently opposed to the colonial system, but they thought that the only way to achieve the ascent and eventual independence of the Indonesian people was through education in the Western mould. According to Tjipto, the situation of traditional Java was hopeless. Only the ‘destruction of Javanese culture’ could result in the ‘rebirth of Indonesia’. Paradoxically, Tjipto, the radical anti-colonialist, in his demands for the spread of Western education, and even of the Dutch language as the language of a unified Indonesia, went even further than some of the most ardent European supporters of the ethical policy. In a lecture in 1916, he argued for abandoning the Javanese language as a backward relic and instead adopting Dutch as the language of instruction in all native schools:

As a nationalist I love my people as well as their language, but, sensing that the life of that language is beyond saving, I am compelled to speed up the process [...] [...] To put it more forcefully, to exaggerate it, it could be said that the salvation [verlossing] of his country from isolation has promoted the Javanese into a citizen of the world. The contact of foreigners with the Javanese must have influenced his psyche! Such must influence the language, which is now no longer suitable to express the thoughts of the Javanese. [...] Whether we want it or not, we will have to adopt Western civilization.

In Tjipto’s eyes, Javanese children needed to receive the same education as European children, otherwise a viable independent Javanese society would not be able to develop. Both these viewpoints—that of the mimicking Indonesians who were co-opted by the colonial system and that of anti-colonialists like Tjipto—have one element in common: their conviction that ‘modern’ civilization was something specifically Western. An ‘Indonesian’ or ‘Javanese modernity’ was impossible in their minds. They had to rely on ‘Europe’ and the ‘Europeans’ to supply modernity to Indonesia.

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29 Cited in Tsuchiya, Democracy and leadership, p. 44.
30 Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen, pp. 323-325.
spheres as this was expressed by many of the (European) organizers of education in the Indies. In their perspective, culture and civilization could not be separated, and therefore a ‘civilized’ or ‘modern’ version of Javanese tradition was an oxymoron. ‘Development’ and ‘progress’ could only come to Indonesia through European education and culture. They only disagreed on whether this should happen under the guidance of Europeans, or rather independently.

Efforts by ‘Indonesian’ nationalists like Tjipto should be seen in a context of a dual demarcation, at once from the colonial rulers but also from a traditional Javanese feudal aristocracy. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, another form of cultural nationalism centred on an idea of ‘Javanese’ tradition and identity. For proponents of that form—united in organizations such as Boedi Oetomo and largely themselves members of the Javanese aristocracy, the higher priyayi—‘Java’ was the primary frame of reference when thinking of alternatives to ‘Western’ ways. But to people like Tjipto, who identified himself as of lesser birth,33 traditional Javanese feudal society, which displayed rigid hierarchies bolstered by elaborate cultural and linguistic rituals, was at least as repressive and far more out-dated than Western civilization. In his eyes, the old and intricately layered Javanese aristocracy, which in many cases had been co-opted by the Dutch in various forms of indirect rule, was possibly even more of an impediment to ‘modernization’ than the oppressive colonial system. Hence Tjipto’s insistence on the need to reject ‘Javanese culture’ in exchange for an idea of an Indonesian nation.34

A preference for an appeal to ‘Indonesia’ as opposed to the more restricted ‘Java’ was a feature of nationalism in the archipelago that spread quickly and widely, far beyond the small circles of those, like Tjipto, who wanted to import ‘Western’ civilization. ‘Indonesian’ nationalism developed in opposition not only to the colonizer but also against the identification with regional identities and traditions, chief amongst them being Javanese culture. In fact, the idea of an ‘Indonesian’ nation was something that was constructed only in the early 1900s. The term ‘Indonesia’ itself came into being only as recently as the mid-nineteenth century, as a neutral

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33 Tsuchiya, Democracy and leadership, pp. 19-20.
geographical notion to refer to the Indies archipelago. It took until the turn of the century before the term became accepted by academics as a technical geographical designation used to refer to the area under the tutelage of the Dutch East Indies state. As a term to refer to a political or cultural unit, ‘Indonesia’ was only established through its increasing use among anti-colonialists, starting as late as the 1910s and 1920s.\textsuperscript{35} Outside of the framework of a Dutch Indies state there was as yet little that bound the disparate regions of the archipelago together. As Benedict Anderson has convincingly argued, therefore, Indonesian nationalism could only develop simultaneously in opposition but also in reference to the colonial state.\textsuperscript{36}

**An alternative modernity: Taman Siswa’s ‘national Indonesian’ education**

Tjipto’s form of anti-colonialism, which stressed the use of undiluted ‘Western’ education, was by no means the only existing form. It was only of secondary influence if one considers the whole range of Indonesian national movements. By the 1920s, a new streak of nationalism had developed, that would rapidly become of decisive political and cultural importance. It posited, propagated and to an extent created authentic ‘Indonesian’ traditions and culture, and considered it possible and desirable to educate children on the basis of ‘Indonesian’ traditions and through Javanese or Bahasa Indonesia (lit.: ‘the language of Indonesia’; a semi-official form of the *lingua franca* Malay which in 1928 had been adopted as the ‘language of unity’).\textsuperscript{37} In the arena of education, it was most conspicuously represented by a movement called Taman Siswa\textsuperscript{38} (Garden of Students), which was founded and led by Raden Mas Soewardi Soerjaningrat, a Javanese nobleman who had spent six years in


\textsuperscript{38} ‘Taman Siswa’ was sometimes (especially in its early years) also written as ‘Taman Siswo’. Both terms mean the same, but the former is in *Bahasa Indonesia* whilst the latter is in Javanese.
the Netherlands after an incident in 1913, when the colonial administration had banished him from Java for publishing an incendiary article. Soewardi spent much of his time in the Netherlands giving lectures on the history and cultures of Indonesia, trying to expunge the myth that the Indies were a land without history or civilization. He also took the opportunity to study the concepts of modern Western reform pedagogues like Maria Montessori, Friedrich Fröbel and the Dalton school system.\(^{39}\)

Taman Siswa was an organization that founded so-called ‘wild schools’: private schools that were not subsidized by the government, and that were more or less free to decide their own curriculum and teaching methods as long as the administration did not see them as a threat.\(^{40}\) After a slow start in 1922 with one school in Yogyakarta led by Soewardi himself, from the late 1920s the Taman Siswa movement grew astronomically, with hundreds of primary schools under its wings, as well as several secondary schools, a teacher training course, and plans to organize tertiary education. By the late 1930s, Taman Siswa could justly be said to have set up a fully evolved system of education, parallel to and independent from the colonial school system. Taman Siswa itself identified this system as ‘national’, by which it meant ‘Indonesian’.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{40}\) The ‘wild schools’ were a constant concern of the government, partly because they were feared as potentially subversive. However, strict regulation was never adopted and implemented, despite one highly publicized attempt in 1931 that faltered in the wake of massive opposition from Indonesian movements, under the leadership of Taman Siswa. See: NL-HaNA, Kolonieën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 387, Verbaal S, 16 January 1933; NL-HaNA, Kolonieën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 391, Verbaal W5, 17 March 1933; NL-HaNA, Kolonieën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 533, Verbaal M13, 12 April 1939, Report by the advisor for Native Affairs on the third quadrennial congress of Taman Siswa, held from 16 until 22 November 1938 in Yogyakarta; Singaranoe Diksoewana, ‘O.O.1.O’, *Soeara Taman Siswa*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1932, pp. 1-2; Tsuchiya, *Democracy and leadership*, pp. 151-204.

Taman Siswa’s attitude towards Western education, and towards the West and/or Europe in general, was rather different from that of people like Tjipto. It was a complicated relationship. On the one hand, ‘Europe’ was the origin of the hated oppressor, but on the other, there was a great deal of admiration for the achievements in science and technology that the Europeans had accomplished. The belief was still widely shared that Indonesians needed to acquire ‘Western knowledge’ for their own political, social, and economic development. Emphasis was put in particular on the use of exact sciences and engineering, but sometimes also on such aspects as hygiene and pedagogics.42 Taman Siswa had a very instrumental view of the West: it was possible to pick and choose from Western knowledge, technology and customs what was useful for Indonesians, without ascribing to something like a Western civilization or a European culture. One Gadjah Mada (a pseudonym of Soedjono Djojopraitno, one of the leading figures in Taman Siswa by the early 1930s) in a seven-piece article entitled ‘Educate yourselves!’ (1931-1932), published in the Taman Siswa journal *Poesara*, even went as far as to say that Indonesians should use Western exact sciences as a ‘weapon’ to strengthen themselves.43 In the eyes of the Taman Siswa leaders, this was in no way contradictory with their emphasis on offering education based on ‘national’ principles, traditions and culture.

The educators in the Taman Siswa system thus promised the possibility of a compromise between ‘progress’—the adaptation of Indonesian society to the ‘modern’ outside world—and traditional values and cultural forms.44 In this context, the association of Taman Siswa with the royal house of Paku Alam is illustrative. On central Java, in the region around Yogyakarta and Solo, the Dutch Indies administration in the nineteenth century had constituted four so-called *Vorstenlanden*, territories where the traditional princes continued to govern through a system of indirect rule. Paku Alam was the smallest of these self-governing principalities. Its

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real power was limited, but as one of the houses of Javanese high aristocracy it commanded significant respect and authority.

Soewardi Soerjaningrat himself, the unrivalled leader of Taman Siswa, was a member of the Paku Alam family (his great-grandfather was prince Paku Alam IV). Moreover, the first Taman Siswa school and its organizational centre were located just around the corner from the Paku Alam palace. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the rulers of the Paku Alam house had been well known for fostering Western education among their many descendants, sending them to European schools and some even to the Netherlands to pursue further intellectual training. At the same time, however, they placed high value on teaching their children respect for the values, customs and manners associated with traditional Javanese court life. This same awkward balance between tradition and modernity was the stated objective Soewardi and the other leaders of Taman Siswa.

Their solution to this dilemma was to gradually create a conceptual rift between ‘modernity’ and ‘Europeanness’, in a strikingly similar way to the conservative Dutch educators in the 1920s—through their differentiation between ‘Western’ education and ‘European’ culture (see chapter 3). Also in the eyes of Taman Siswa leaders it was no longer necessary to be ‘European’ or even to ‘Europeanize’ to be able to achieve ‘progress’ (kemadjuan) or a ‘modern’ (modern) society. Consequently, they likewise disconnected acquisition of knowledge from notions of cultural expression and belonging. And they even went a step further than their Dutch counterparts, in that they also disconnected ‘knowledge’ from civilization.

Not only was a ‘European’ way of life no longer thought necessary, even ‘Western’

45 I thank Hans Pols for pointing out the importance of the Paku Alam connection to me.
civilization was no longer considered the necessary bearer of ‘modern’ knowledge. A ‘progress [...] equipped with Oriental customs and religion’ was contrasted to a ‘progress a la Barat’ (Barat = West/Western). 48 ‘Technology’ and ‘exact sciences’, the standard-bearers of ‘progress’, originated in Europe, but by now were out there for anybody to learn, adopt and integrate into their own civilization. The examples of Japan, the Soviet-Union, and the native movements in the Philippines and British India were cited as sufficient proof, as were the recent attempts at autonomous cultural and/or political ‘progress’ in Egypt and Turkey. 49 In a sense, Taman Siswa presented itself as the specifically Indonesian incarnation of a pan-Asian (or sometimes pan-Islamic) effort to appropriate and adapt ‘modernity’.

The result of this ‘progress [...] equipped with Oriental customs’, in Taman Siswa’s eyes, would not be a Western civilization but neither would it be a return to some sort of original traditional Javanese society. It is no coincidence that Soewardi had chosen to stop using his noble title ‘Raden Mas’ with all its connotations of Javanese feudalism, or that in 1928 he abandoned his birth-name altogether and adopted the new name Ki Hadjar Dewantara. 50 This change of name happened in the same year as the adoption by nationalists of Indonesian as the language of unity at the All-Indonesian Youth Congress. The language politics in the various journals and publications of the Taman Siswa movement reflects this transformation. In the early years, the publications were often in Javanese and sometimes in Dutch. After the late 1920s, Javanese was almost entirely phased out, and the use of Dutch was equally curtailed to a minimum (used only in those cases where viewpoints were intended to be broadcast to the outside world). 51 Yet the Indonesian language used in the pages of

48 Achmad-Soemadi, ‘Kearah perbaikan masjarakat’.
51 See especially the volumes of Taman Siswa’s earliest regular magazine, Wasita, which appeared from October 1928 until August 1930. Approximately half of the earlier issues are filled with articles
the Taman Siswa publications for a long time remained of a peculiar kind. It was a language in development, being adapted from an informal ‘market’ language into a fully-fledged ‘modern’ language. Consequently, it was interspersed with Dutch loanwords especially for technical or abstract political concepts. Alternatively, whenever an Indonesian neologism was introduced based on an adaptation or reinterpretation of an older term, it was followed with the equivalent Dutch word inserted in brackets. After all, Ki Hadjar Dewantara (Soewardi Soerjaningrat) and many of his fellow leaders had themselves been educated in Dutch. Writing and working in Indonesian did not come naturally to them, but was a conscious choice and took considerable effort.

In their dismissal of ‘Western’ civilization, Taman Siswa’s leaders regularly pointed out (particularly when they knew that Dutch actors were listening) that a movement for ‘cultural renewal’, partly also through education, had equally taken root in Europe itself in the years during and after the First World War. They were not saying anything radical, they claimed, when they proposed a re-evaluation of the value and meaning of Western civilization, but rather had important thinkers in Europe on their side. Taman Siswa took up a post-World War I discourse that had equally developed in ‘Europe’ or ‘the West’ on the crisis of civilization and the need for cultural renewal. Oriental traditions and values were offered as a possible solution to revive a Europe undergoing cultural crisis.

In Taman Siswa’s writings, a special disdain was reserved for their fellow countrymen who were attempting to ‘become European’. Articles in various journals published by Taman Siswa lamented the irrational love for anything Western in Javanese, but by 1930 Javanese had all but disappeared and had been replaced by Indonesian. *Wasita* was superseded in 1931 by *Poesara*, which was practically mono-lingual in Indonesian. Dutch was used by the Taman Siswa organization mainly for pamphlets and larger essays explaining the essentials of the Taman Siswa approach. See for example: Dewantara, *Een en ander*.

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52 Mrázek, *Engineers*, pp. 31-42.
54 ‘Taman-Siswa dan moderne paedagogiek’, *Poesara*, Vol. 7, 1937, pp. 116-118; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 533, Verbaal M13, 12 April 1939, Report by the advisor for Native Affairs on the third quadrennial congress of Taman Siswa, held from 16 until 22 November 1938 in Yogyakarta (there see speech by R.M.T. Mr. Wongsonagoro); NL-HaNA, Ministerie van Koloniën: Geheime Mailrapporten, serie AA, 1914-1952 (henceforth Koloniën / Mailrapporten geheim), 2.10.36.06, mail report 561x/31, Letter from the Advisor for Native Affairs to the Governor-General, 1931 (see the report on Ki Hadjar Dewantara’s speech).
55 Cf. Tsuchiya, *Democracy and leadership*, pp. 140-143.
(kebaratan). Many Indonesians, so it was argued, suffered from an inferiority complex. They had a perverse veneration for anything ‘European’, but in their attempts to imitate Europeans they only managed to become incomplete and pitiful copies: ‘Belanda-polan’.\(^{56}\) They merely adopted the outside materialities whilst losing their independent spirit. There are numerous instances in which this kind of ‘Dutchism’ (Blandaisme\(^{57}\)) or ‘Dutchification’ (membelandakan\(^{58}\)) were derided. These bear witness to the difference that was discursively created between ‘imitating Europeans’ in outward appearances and using their technological and intellectual achievements for one’s own purposes. Ki Hadjar Dewantara for example noted in 1935, in a seminal article explaining the ideology of Taman Siswa:

We [Indonesians] had a feeling of satisfaction or mild delight every time we had the opportunity to be among Europeans, to speak Dutch even to our own countrymen, to appear in western clothes, to arrange our houses according to western style. We even went further in our imitation: a small party at home would be too common, too banal without western food, without a jazz band, without a glass of Dutch gin from Schiedam itself, so necessary to the ‘modern’ sociability [gezelligheid] and ‘European’ freedom usually on such occasions. [...] We may certainly sigh together with Rabindranath Tagore: ‘Our life is a quotation from that of the westerner; our voice an echo of that of Europe; instead of intellectuals we are nothing but a bag full of information; there exists such an emptiness in our mind that we are not in a position to absorb what is beautiful and worthy.’\(^{59}\)

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\(^{58}\) Dewantara, ‘Koerangnja dan ketjewanja onderwijs’.

\(^{59}\) Ki Hadjar Dewantara, ‘Some aspects of national education and the Taman Siswa insitute of Jogjakarta’, Indonesia, Vol. 4, October 1967, pp. 150-168. I have quoted from the 1967 English translation, but verified the use of the terms ‘European’, ‘Western’, ‘Dutch’ and ‘modern’ against the original Dutch version. The original was published in 1935 in Dutch in the Vrouwenjaarboek and as a separate pamphlet, and re-published with significant changes in 1938. The 1938 version was again re-published in Ki Hadjar Dewantara’s collected works, both in Dutch and in an Indonesian translation. McVey, ‘Taman Siswa’, p. 149. See for similar passages: Dewantara, ‘Associatie’; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten geheim, 2.10.36.06, mail report 561x/31, Letter from the Advisor for Native Affairs to the Governor-General, 1931 (see the report on Ki Hadjar Dewantara’s speech); Gadjah Mada, ‘Madjoe ke organisasi’, Poesara, Vol. 3, No. 6, 1933, pp. 77-78.
Dewantara professed that this inferiority complex and inadequacy of Indonesians was caused and augmented by Western-style schools organized by the government. On a different occasion he told a representative of the Indies’ government, H.J. Kiewiet de Jonge, that ‘[t]he Western schools uproot many students, they are alienated from their own traditions and still do not become a Westerner either. In some cases this may be inevitable, but we are trying to counteract it as much as possible.’

The position that was assigned to Dutch language education is pivotal here. Dutch was extensively taught in the Taman Siswa schools, for two ostensible reasons. Firstly, Dutch language ability was seen by many Taman Siswa leaders as an important asset in and of itself, because Dutch functioned as a gateway to Western knowledge: ‘The Dutch language is to be the key to open Western science, needed for the progress of this country, economically, socially, politically, as well as culturally’. But secondly, there was also a very practical incentive. In the words of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, members of Taman Siswa could not be idealists ‘living with their heads in the clouds’. The implication was that Taman Siswa would receive far fewer students if it did not teach Dutch. As Indonesianist Ruth McVery has argued, many parents of Taman Siswa students were ‘upwardly mobile commoners, clerks and petty bureaucrats, who could not place their children in the limited number of government-run schools. The families to which Taman Siswa teachers and students belonged were usually on the fringes of the group that had been drawn into the modern sector of colonial society, [...].’ Many parents were merely choosing Taman

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60 NL-HaNA, NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 387, Verbaal S, 16 January 1933, Letter from the Government Envoy for General Affairs at the People’s Council (Kiewiet de Jonge) to the Governor-General, 26 October 1932, pp. 9-10. In this document the terms ‘Western’ and ‘Westerner’ are used. However, Dewantara’s words are mediated by Kiewiet de Jonge, so we cannot be certain which terms he had used himself.


63 McVey, ‘Taman Siswa’, p. 146. Cf. ‘Verslag Conferentie Taman Siswa Djawa-Timoer’, pp. 25-26. Cf. Van Niel, The emergence, p. 222. McVey’s assessment is corroborated by the circumstance that some of the Van Deventer School alumni writing to Mrs. Van Deventer Maas (see above) reported that they were now teaching in Taman Siswa schools, because they had not found a (better-paid) position in a government HIS: NL-HaNA, Deventer-Maas, 2.20.38.05, 26, Letter from Adi to Mrs. Van Deventer-Maas through the VDS director, Ms. Hoorn, 10 March 1932: NL-HaNA, Deventer-Maas, 2.20.38.05, 26, Letter from Binti to Mrs. Van Deventer-Maas through the VDS director, Ms. Hoorn, 26 March 1932.
Siswa schools because they could not get their children into a public HIS, but still wanted to offer them Dutch-language education.

At the same time though, Taman Siswa was hesitant to teach Dutch too elaborately, as it was afraid to transfer ‘colonial spirit’ through the Dutch language. For this reason, education in Dutch was only introduced in the third grade, after the children had passed their most impressionable age and had already learned to think in their own language. Furthermore, Dutch was only taught as one subject among others, whilst the language of instruction in most other subjects was Indonesian (or sometimes Javanese). Taman Siswa feared that the use of Dutch might turn the students into the servile imitation-Europeans they so despised. In the previously mentioned article ‘Educate yourselves!’, for example, the author Gadjah Mada (Soedjono Djojopraitno) describes his experience of Dutch-lessons in a public HIS:

The teacher fetches pictures to aid in the teaching of the Dutch language, hangs these pictures in front of the blackboard, and then we are taught: ‘This is a man. This is a gentleman. This is a woman. This is a lady. This is a thief’. When the teacher says: ‘this is a man’, we see an Indonesian man... ‘This is a woman’. We see an Indonesian woman. And when the teacher says: ‘This is a thief’. We see a commoner [Kromo]. But when he says ‘This is a gentleman...’ a Dutch person, sitting in a chair smoking a cigar. ‘This is a lady...’ a Dutch woman getting into a carriage, or relaxing on a chair drinking coffee with milk.

In this way, in all our Dutch reading, we see that our people are presented as inferior. [...] And if we now see a Dutch person, even if he does not look different from our own people who we would refer to as kang or bang [brother], when we talk about such a Dutch person, in 99½ out of 100 cases we would say in Dutch, ‘that gentleman!’ [...] not ‘that man!’

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64 ‘Perslah rapat besar persatoean Taman Siswa pada h.b. 13-17 djanoeari 1932 di Mataram’, Poesara, Vol. 2, 1931, pp. 3-10; NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Mailrapporten geheim, 2.10.36.06, mail report 1148x/39, Memorandum from the Assistant-Resident Statius Muller with some information regarding the character and organization of Taman Siswa, 1 November 1939. Cf. Groeneboer, Weg tot het Westen, p. 416.

65 Gadjah Mada, ‘Didiklah’, pp. 10-11. The article is written in Indonesian, but the quotations in this particular fragment are in Dutch, e.g. ‘dit is een man’ (this is a man) and ‘dit is een heer’ (this is a gentleman).
This kind of behaviour, the author assures us, shows that Dutch language education in public schools indoctrinates children with a ‘colonial spirit’. It turns Indonesians into ‘blandatjes and sinjotjes and nonitjes’.

The use of these latter terms is revealing. First of all, the author applies a diminutive form in this quotation, suggesting that people like this will never be able to develop into full adulthood. Secondly, both in contemporary Dutch and in Malay, the terms ‘sinjo’ and ‘noni’ were normally used to refer to the lower strata of the European population, mostly Indo-Europeans, those people who spoke with a thick Indies’ accent in their Dutch. In adopting these terms, then, the author illustrates that Indonesians can never become ‘real’ Europeans but can only reach the sphere in-between Indonesians and Europeans. Consequently, this quotation shows an ideology that postulated—as rich, well-situated Europeans had from the other side—two equally valuable cultural spheres. Everything in between, regardless of whether it had moved from the European side towards the Indonesian or vice versa, could only be incomplete and therefore inferior.

One partial solution that was proposed by some, among them Soedjono Djojopraitno, was to focus more in the Taman Siswa schools on the acquisition of other foreign languages, chiefly English. In an earlier part of the previously cited article he wrote:

[W]e must extinguish the love for the Dutch language that exists in our heart. Once we have extinguished our love for anything Dutch [kebelandaan], then we can understand that the Dutch language is nowhere near as important as is pretended! English is the language that we can teach for the purpose of international relations.

Taman Siswa was not alone in considering this solution. An increasing number of schools were teaching in English, the new language of international communication, or in some mission schools also in German. This development worried the...
government. If too many natives were to learn foreign Western languages, this might hurt Dutch influence and control in the Indies.\textsuperscript{68} For Taman Siswa and other ‘wild schools’, conversely, focusing on English (even though Soedjono’s proposal was never fully implemented in practice) offered the theoretical possibility of appropriating ‘Western’ or ‘European’ knowledge, whilst simultaneously rejecting Dutch as the language of colonial rule. This discussion can thus be seen as an example of a situation where Indonesian nationalists started to strategically differentiate between ‘Dutch’ and ‘European’.

The use of Dutch language among fellow Indonesians was not the only thing that Taman Siswa activists lamented in their countrymen who they saw as ‘copy-Europeans’. There were various other customs and cultural expressions that they derided and presented as un-Indonesian, which were therefore discouraged in the Taman Siswa schools. The previously cited passage by Ki Hadjar Dewantara offers some clues. He dismissed the imitation of Europeans in such aspects as ‘western clothes’, a ‘western style’ of interior decoration at home, parties with western food, jazz music, and hard liquor. This quotation is no exception; these are exactly the kinds of cultural practices that were ridiculed, with some regularity, in the Taman Siswa sources. An ‘excessive love for anything western’\textsuperscript{69} was pointed out especially as an example of such supposedly immoderate private behaviour, which, it was thought, could be remedied by an appropriate upbringing in school.

Great emphasis was therefore placed on absorbing ‘traditional’ cultural expressions into the ‘modern’ Indonesian education offered in the Taman Siswa schools, in order to create an alternative (non-European) path to ‘progress’. It was important for the Taman Siswa leadership that their schools reserve space in the curriculum for traditional Javanese/Indonesian customs, including music, dance, theatre, games, and sports. Children were taught the traditions and principles of wayang orang theatre, girls were taught serimpi dances, and they were actively shielded from jazz music and ‘European’ ballroom- and jazz-dancing. They were encouraged to wear traditional Javanese dress rather than Western clothes. Low tables and floor mats were used rather than the Dutch-style school desks. Students were


\textsuperscript{69} Dewantara, ‘Associatie’, p. 52.
taught ‘national’ children’s games and children’s songs rather than the Dutch equivalents. They were kept from playing certain European sports ‘of which the influence on the Javanese youth [was] considered less desirable in several respects’. The alleged undesirable influence of certain European practices was only rarely made explicit. It was usually deemed sufficient to point out the necessity of raising children in a ‘national’ way, that through games, songs, music and dress, certain ‘national’ values and attitudes were transferred to the children. Implicitly, ‘European’ practices were thus disqualified as immoral or indecent.

This argument received particular salience whenever leaders of Taman Siswa, both men and women, discussed or wrote about gender-relations within the Taman Siswa movement. Taman Siswa prided itself on the fact their schools were co-educational. Incidentally, the fact that Taman Siswa practiced co-education defies the view held by many administration officials (cited earlier in chapter 3 here) that ‘Natives’ were generally opposed to co-education for boys and girls and exposes that view as a clear case of Orientalist projection. Moreover, Taman Siswa’s leaders claimed that women had a position of equality in their organization, as they presumably had traditionally in Indonesian societies. Ki Hadjar Dewantara for example asserted that women had always received a good education on Java, up to the highest levels. In contrast, the first woman to receive a university education in the Netherlands, Aletta Jacobs, only had done so several decades earlier.

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71 NL-HaNA, NL-HaNA, Koloniën / Geheim Archief, 2.10.36.51, 387, Verbaal S, 16 January 1933, Letter from the Government Envoy for General Affairs at the People’s Council (Kiewiet de Jonge) to the Governor-General, 26 October 1932. Unfortunately, unlike for the Kartini schools and the CAS schools studied in the previous chapters of this thesis, the surviving photographic record of the Taman Siswa schools is very limited.


73 Ki Hadjar Dewantara, ‘Systeem pondok dan ashrama itoelah systeem nasional’, in Dewantara, Pola-wasita, pp. 8-10.
Women’s position of equality, Taman Siswa leaders explained, should not be confused with similarity with men. This was the big mistake that the ‘modern’ women’s movement in Europe had made. ‘[O]ur movement of Indonesian women is very different from the movement commonly known as Emancipation in Europe’, explained Soenarjati, a teacher in the Taman Siswa movement and one of the leaders of its women’s league. ‘Even regarding futilities they want to be the same, such as similarity of clothing, similarity of recreation, sport. Even their hair needs to be equally short.’ The record of the assembly in which Soenarjati spoke notes that the audience was laughing at this point of her speech. Taman Siswa claimed that ‘European’ women had been misguided, striving for similarity rather than equality. Women, they maintained, simply had a different nature, and therefore different obligations and needs. Women were born to become mothers, and were consequently of a different physical and psychological constitution. They should not be made to play the same sports and/or do the same jobs as men.

The implication in this argumentation was that ‘European’ women behaved indecently, and were in fact encouraged by their society to behave indecently. Indonesian women, on the other hand, even though they were fully equal with men, knew their place, were modest, and were allowed by society to be modest. On one occasion, for example, Taman Siswa’s central council gave directions to its branches that they were allowed to organize charity fairs to raise money, as long as they were ‘organized according to our people’s respectability; we are not allowed to participate in a European-style fancy-fair’. The council further explained:

What we call a ‘Western-style [sic] fancy-fair’ is a charitable fair, where adolescent girls and if possible the pretty ones, smartly dressed, behave coquettishly and joke around with anyone as long as he pays money, it doesn’t

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75 Dewantara, ‘Kodrat perempoean’.
matter whether he’s a countryman or Dutch or Chinese, as if they were selling their beauty, plus a flower as an extra, for 1 rupiah.\textsuperscript{76}

Similarly, Taman Siswa prohibited the sport of korfbal, a popular Dutch pastime similar to netball and traditionally played in mixed-gender teams. The physical contact this entailed may have been normal in Europe, but it was not considered appropriate for Indonesian children.\textsuperscript{77} Even worse were the European forms of dance that involved the close physical embrace between men and women. Rather, physical education for girls should revolve around the restrained forms of Javanese dance, which could teach the girls command of their own body and modesty.\textsuperscript{78} In short, the position granted to women by Taman Siswa and the gender relations between men and women were discursively used to demarcate ‘Indonesians’ or ‘Orientals’ (orang timur) from ‘Europeans’ and their ways, employing stereotypes of female licentiousness to discredit the other side. ‘Europeans’ were portrayed as unrestrained because of their intimate and indecent interactions, whilst Indonesians were more controlled and modest.

The characterization of ‘Europeans’ as unconstrained in this way fits with a more widely held judgement on ‘Western’ or ‘European’ customs and culture in the Indies. If we return for a moment to the derision that Taman Siswa directed at their countrymen trying to imitate Europeans, we see that the main criticism is one of materialism and individualism, or in other words: of hedonism.\textsuperscript{79} In classically Marxist-influenced terminology,\textsuperscript{80} Taman Siswa classified ‘European’ or ‘Western’ culture, or at least its manifestation in the Indies, as part and parcel, instrument and consequence of European imperialism in the Indies. ‘European’ culture is merely interested in material gain, and merely enjoys material pleasures.\textsuperscript{81} By subscribing to this culture, through colonial schools and Dutch language education, Indonesians

\textsuperscript{80} On how Marxist writings came to influence Indonesian nationalists’ thinking (mostly by way of Dutch translations), see Anderson, ‘The languages’, pp. 136-138.
allowed themselves to be soothed, numbed, and appeased. In doing so, they became the willing instruments of Western imperialism, which Taman Siswa’s leaders asserted was a capitalist endeavour. As we saw before in Gadjah Mada’s words, Dutch language education taught Indonesian children that Europeans were ladies and gentlemen, and that Indonesians were simple commoners. Or in the succinct formulation supplied by another Taman Siswa activist: ‘Bahasa Belanda itoelah bahasa Belandja’—the Dutch language is the language of budgets.82

‘Western’ education to Indonesians, then, was denounced as an instrument to create clerks and civil servants for Western business and the colonial state. Indonesians are ‘Westernized’ or ‘Dutchified’ in order to become obedient ‘workers’, albeit sometimes workers of the pen (‘intellectual proletarians’).83 This Marxist-influenced thinking coincides strikingly with perspectives that we have seen among conservative Europeans. Both conservative Europeans and Taman Siswa nationalists saw ‘Western’ education as highly ‘intellectualistic’, and therefore as uprooting Indonesians from their own cultural sphere.84 They disagreed on whether it was the intention of the colonial state and whether it was beneficial to that state to create a semi-intellectual proletariat, but they did agree that an ‘intellectualistic’ attitude was (and should be) a difference between Europeans and Indonesians. The image of the ‘European’ as particularly ‘intellectual’ or ‘intellectualistic’ was thus a co-creation of Europeans and Indonesian nationalists.

The notion of the European as bourgeois was likewise a shared view. The materialistic lifestyle, both of European capitalists (and all Europeans were capitalists in the eyes of Taman Siswa) and—especially—of ‘Westernized’ Indonesians, was derisively characterized by Taman Siswa authors as ‘bourgeois’. A ‘bourgeois life’ of material gain, good food, wild dancing and drinking, not to mention an individualistic

indifference towards other Indonesians or the nationalist cause in general, was what Taman Siswa’s members scoffed at above all. The fear of becoming ‘bourgeois’, of choosing ‘a pleasant life’ over the cause of national education, is one of the main themes in the autobiographical novel Buiten het gareel (translated as: A life free from trammels), written by Taman Siswa teacher Soewarsih Djojopoespito. Soewarsih, together with her husband, had worked in various Taman Siswa schools throughout the 1930s. In the book she describes the material and psychological struggles they had endured as teachers for the nationalist cause. The only thing that could be worse was to be small-minded and yield to the comforts of a ‘bourgeois’ life, at least if it meant working for the government and abandoning one’s principles. At one point in the novel Soewarsih describes ‘bourgeois ladies’ as ‘parasitical tapeworms’. To be bourgeois, in her eyes, encompassed all that was related to ‘proudness, heartlessness, egotism, conceitedness and so on’. The (elite) European self-definition of their lifestyle as the life of a bourgeois, then, which we have seen in the previous chapter in regard to the CAS schools, is a definition that was shared and co-created by a group of Indonesian nationalists.

Consequently, very similar constructions of ‘Europeanness’ and ‘Westernness’ in the Indies prevailed on two very different sides of the education debate, namely on the ‘Indonesian’ nationalist and on the most conservative ‘European’ side. Even though they disagreed on the use, value and preferred form of ‘Western’ and/or ‘European’ education in the Indies, they shared an image of the ‘European’ as an intellectually educated bourgeois. Even the practices they associated with ‘European’ or ‘Western’ life were similar, namely parties and dances, certain sports and games, and a close affiliation with business and government. This surprising accordance of opposing views is confirmed if we turn once more to language subtleties: the question of whether the terms ‘European’, ‘Western’ and ‘Dutch’ (in their colonial-era usage) can be regarded as synonyms, or whether they should be examined in all their subtle nuances.

87 Djojopoespito, Buiten het gareel, p. 167.
88 Djojopoespito, Buiten het gareel, p. 53.
Defining the oppressor: ‘European’, ‘Western’, ‘Dutch’—or ‘White’?

From its inception in the 1920s, Indonesian educators in the Taman Siswa movement created distinctions between ‘European’ and ‘Western’ in a similar vein as their European colleagues of around the same time. Although the use of these terms at times seems even more muddled and interchangeable than it was in the sources of their counterparts, certain patterns can be discerned. The exact sciences and other knowledge that Taman Siswa hoped to acquire were generally referred to as ‘Western’ (barat). The model of ‘progress’ (kemajuan) that they saw as an inspiration—though not as an ideal to be copied slavishly—was also mostly identified as Western, as was the ‘civilization’ to which they juxtaposed their own ‘Eastern’/‘Oriental’ (timur) civilization. When speaking about people, about the actors that had introduced these ideas to the Indies, Taman Siswa’s members usually referred to ‘Europeans’ (orang Eropa) or ‘Dutchmen’ (orang Belanda), not ‘Westerners’. Likewise, the territory from which they stem is typically known as ‘Europe’ (tanah Eropa), not ‘the West’. And finally, the colonial education system that the Europeans were supposedly trying to force upon Indonesians through the HIS—which, in the minds of Taman Siswa members, was geared towards turning children into obedient colonial subjects—was predominantly known as ‘pendidik tjara Eropa’ (‘education in the European way’ or simply ‘European education’).

This last use of ‘European’ instead of ‘Western’ is particularly striking, because it is diametrically opposed to the way that administrators and other ‘European’ actors employed the terms. As we have seen in chapter 3, they consistently referred to education for Indonesians in the Dutch-Native schools as

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89 See for example the previously cited article on charitable fairs, where within only two lines the fairs were referred to first as ‘European-style fancy-fairs’ and then as ‘Western-style fancy-fairs’. Dewantara, ‘Djangan toeroet Fancy-Fair’.
‘Western education,’ because this offered the opportunity to differentiate between ‘real’ Europeans and Westernizing Indonesians. Taman Siswa’s educators, b contrast, employed a different mental differentiation and therefore came to a different use, though of the same concepts. Differentiating between ‘European’ and ‘Western’ offered an opportunity to separate ‘Europeans’, the concrete *individuals* that they associated with the capitalist, suppressive regime, from the more abstract *products* of ‘Western’ civilization, such as knowledge and technology, that were not necessarily to be dismissed but rather to be adopted and emulated. While ‘Western’ civilization had many bad but also many good things to offer, ‘Europeans’ were inherently not to be trusted. ‘European’ education, the education offered by the government, was therefore suspect; but education in ‘Western’ subjects in the Taman Siswa schools could have its merits. The creation of a differentiation between ‘Western’ and ‘European’, then, was a shared effort between the extremes on both sides of the divide between Europeans and Natives, but they had very different means and motives for doing so.

We do find a difference in the vocabulary of the Indonesians in the Taman Siswa schools and their European counterparts regarding their hesitance towards using the very pejorative term ‘white’ (*putih* or *kulit putih*).95 The use of racial terminology was of course less problematic for these Indonesians, because they could safely portray themselves as on the receiving rather than the perpetrating end of racist discrimination. Although the racial epithet ‘white’ was certainly not a central feature of the Taman Siswa vocabulary—‘Western’ (*barat*), ‘European’ (*Eropa*) or ‘Dutch’ (*belanda*, see below) were more commonly used—it was in fact a notion that they could (and did) fall back on in certain situations. Ki Hadjar Dewantara himself used explicit references to skin colour especially to signal the insidiousness of the colonial oppression, which many Indonesians were internalizing through their ‘love’ for everything European and their pursuit of education in the government schools. Dewantara lamented that, surreptitiously, through ages of colonial indoctrination, even Indonesians themselves had automatically come to expect less from someone with a ‘black skin’ (*kulit itam warna*) than from a ‘white person’ (*orang kulit putih*).

Such, Dewantara explained, was the power of the ‘colonial spirit’ that Taman Siswa should aim to break.\textsuperscript{96} The subtle demarcations in the minds of Taman Siswa actors, demonstrated through their notions of ‘Western’ (for knowledge and civilization) and ‘European’ (for people and culture), take on even more pronounced shape if we also take into account their frequent use of the term ‘belanda’ or ‘blanda’ as a denominator of individuals and their customs. Many of the supposedly deplorable traits and practices were derisively termed belanda. When Taman Siswa members spoke disapprovingly of adopting the ways of the colonizers, they termed this ‘membelandakan’ or ‘blandaisme’. They made fun of ‘Belanda-polan’ (imitation-Dutchmen) or of excessive respect for ‘kebelandaan’ (everything Dutch).\textsuperscript{97} Part of the explanation for this use of ‘belanda’ can be found in the etymological tradition of the word. It is most commonly translated as ‘Dutch’, because it is derived from ‘Holland’ and, obviously, most frequently used in relation to the Dutch colonial regime and its actors in the Dutch East Indies. However, by the twentieth century it had long since acquired the secondary, more general meaning of ‘European’ person.\textsuperscript{98} In the minds of Malay-speakers in the Indonesian archipelago—or, from 1928 onwards: Indonesian-speakers—‘Dutch’ and ‘European’ may have been even more closely related concepts than they were for speakers of the Dutch language.\textsuperscript{99} Nonetheless, the primary meaning of ‘belanda’ remained ‘Dutch’ and the term never lost this connotation.\textsuperscript{100} Most conspicuously, the identification of ‘Dutch’ with


\textsuperscript{99} In the historiographical literature belanda is sometimes also taken to mean ‘White’, but that translation represents the same fallacy as equating the colonial-era notions of ‘European’ and ‘White’ (especially considering the fact that the literal translation of ‘White person’ into Indonesian was ‘orang kulit putih’, not ‘orang belanda’).

\textsuperscript{100} The predominance of this primary meaning can be deduced not only from the fact that it is always listed as the first and sometimes also as the only possible translation in the mentioned dictionaries, but
‘Europe’ or ‘the West’ occurred in relation to language training, which, as shown, was the central cultural-political problem in which Taman Siswa had to determine its relationship to ‘Europeans’ or ‘the West’. The importance of Dutch as the language of the colonizer is paramount. This significance only increased with the growing emphasis on proper Dutch language use by colonial administrators and elite Europeans. No wonder then that Taman Siswa educators regularly identified their despised colonizer discursively with the ‘Dutch’, rather than with ‘Europeans’ or ‘Westerners’.

But this might not be the only reason; another part of the explanation is that the use of this term made it possible for them to differentiate among ‘Europeans’, as indeed the elite Europeans of the CAS had done, although with different objectives. For Taman Siswa, describing the cultural sphere of the colonizer as ‘Dutch’ made it possible to loathe the Dutch and everything they stood for, without having to fully reject everything ‘European’, as we have seen in Soedjono Djojopraspito’s proposal for English-language training over Dutch lessons. The more exclusive potential in the term ‘belanda’ made it conceivable to limit and be more specific about what to reject (the repressive imperial regime) and what to accept (Western science and openness to international contacts). Consequently, although the frequent use of the term ‘belanda’ with all its etymological difficulties cannot give us a decisive conclusion in its own right, it did open possibilities for a more fine-grained demarcation.

To summarize, the Indonesian nationalists in the Taman Siswa movement, in cooperation and confrontation with their ‘European’ counterparts, were actively participating in the shifts of meaning regarding the concept of ‘Europeanness’ from a very inclusive concept that encompassed both civilization and culture to a more restrictive concept used only as a denominator for a smaller group of people and their culture. They were also involved in popularising the concept of ‘Western’ as a term used to refer to such notions as knowledge and technology. These abstract attributes were still seen as products of Europe, but were no longer specifically and characteristically ‘European’ in and of themselves. Rather they were ‘Western’, and as such open to universal adoption, adaptation and emulation. ‘European’ became a power-category related to people, ‘Western’ became a category that was perceived as

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also from the fact that since decolonization (i.e. after the ‘Dutch’ lost their position as predominant representative of ‘Europe’ or ‘the West’ in Indonesia), ‘Belanda’ has lost its secondary meanings.
more neutral and objective, related to things and developments. Finally, these same Indonesian nationalists were also complicit in the shift from a more inclusive terminology of ‘European’ society in the Indies to the more restrictive emphasis on ‘Dutchness’. All in all, although for very different reasons and in very different ways, both Indonesian nationalists and European conservatives share the responsibility for creating a shift of meaning that caused the term ‘European’ to mean something quite different in 1940 than it had in 1900.

Conclusion: of Europeans, Westerners, and Dutchmen

Over the last three chapters I have, through a study of various corners of the education system, analysed the construction of the competing categories ‘European’, ‘Western’ and ‘Dutch’ in the colonial context of the Dutch East Indies. Around the turn of the twentieth century the education system was still characterized by a reasonably straightforward division between ‘European’ and ‘native’ education. Over the following decades, the system became increasingly complicated and fractured through the addition of various intermediate and parallel stages, defined by means of subtly differentiated discursive tools.

‘Europeanness’, the central category of privilege around 1900, was partly replaced by the newly adopted alternative concept of ‘Westernness’. By the 1930s, ‘modernity’ and ‘civilization’ were no longer exclusively connected to ‘Europe’, and ‘European’ and ‘Western’ were no longer synonyms. ‘European’ became a denominator strongly associated with individuals and was used to refer to a cultural sphere, whereas civilization—in line with a global trend—became known as ‘Western’. This shift was created in cooperation and confrontation between two antithetical groups: the ‘European’ (Dutch) colonialists on the one side and Indonesian nationalists on the other. The former used it to uphold their idea of superiority and their position of power vis-à-vis an increasingly educated Indonesian population, the latter to create the possibility of ‘modernizing’ the Indonesian nation without being co-opted by the colonial regime.

Simultaneously, ‘Europeanness’ was facing competition from a different angle in the form of the concept of ‘Dutchness’. In the years after the First World War, the ‘Dutchness’ of the (elite of the) European colonizers came to be increasingly emphasized. Mastery of the Dutch language was a central marker in this respect, but so were other, widely varying, cultural competences. Again, the discursive
differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘Dutch’ was a shared phenomenon between ‘Europeans’ and Indonesian nationalists. For elite ‘Europeans’, it offered the opportunity to further differentiate within their own European group, thus carving out a more exclusive elite group identified through a close connection to the Netherlands and bourgeois ways and manners. For Indonesian nationalists in the Taman Siswa movement, it created the possibility to be more discriminating in their rejection of the ‘Dutch’ oppressor, without throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

Consequently, both sides paid close attention to the interaction between differentiating categories on the one hand and structures of power and hierarchization on the other hand. For Europeans, differentiating between ‘Western’, ‘European’ and ‘Dutch’ created opportunities to envision a continuous hierarchy, rather than the binary differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ often associated with the colonial mentality. One of the foremost markers in this hierarchy was a social and cultural idea of class. Race, of course, also played a major role, but it was not all-decisive. Furthermore, a hierarchy was not only created by the agency of the ruling class (the self-identified Europeans). The ‘subaltern’ group of Indonesians also had a voice, and actively co-created new concepts that reshaped imagined—but therefore no less real—hierarchies. For Indonesians, differentiating between ‘Western’, ‘European’, and ‘Dutch’ opened the possibility to propagate entirely new hierarchies whilst being more nuanced and selective regarding cultural and technological advances. To them, ‘European’ and ‘Dutch’ could be used to refer to power-categories, whilst ‘Western’ became less tainted. Even though they did not always agree on the right ways to differentiate, both Europeans and Indonesians found advantages in using ‘Dutch’, ‘European’, and ‘Western’ as parallel rather than synonymous concepts.

The last three chapters have shown that it is essential to distinguish carefully between seemingly synonymous concepts. ‘European’ in the Dutch East Indies was not necessarily the same as ‘Western’ or ‘Dutch’, as many historians have uncritically supposed. By overlooking the subtle but important differences, the meaning and functioning of various (internal) group demarcations becomes invisible. As a consequence, the literature overemphasizes the grip on the colonial mind of a supposedly binary, racial differentiation. In reality, there are various overlapping but distinct concepts for group denomination. They were used at different times for different reasons and had various ranges of inclusivity, based on race as well as on
education, cultural behaviour, wealth and class. Only with a keen eye for the subtleties of language, in this case the differences between ‘European’, ‘Western’ and ‘Dutch’ in the Indies, can we accurately fathom the consequences for this hierarchy and ultimately the power structure in colonial society.
Part III

Working on the railroad:

*Indisch* Europeans in a modern world
Chapter 6
Multiple segregations on the Indies labour market: Indo-Europeans or an *Indisch* lower middle class?

**Prologue: two careers**

On the afternoon of 29 July 1937, a short man with a light brown complexion, greying hair and a bushy moustache embarked the ocean steamer *SS Bontekoe*. This man, Karel Willem Jan Michielsen, had recently retired from his position as one of the directors of the *Javasche Bank* (Java Bank), the most prestigious bank in the Dutch East Indies. Accompanying him was his wife, Margarete Michielsen-Esinger, a stocky woman, born in Austria. Everyone who was anything in Batavia, both from the government as well as the private sector, had come to the docks to bid the Michielsens farewell. The *Bontekoe* was to take them to South Africa for a short holiday, after which they would travel on to The Hague to prepare for a quiet retirement.¹

Michielsen could look back on a successful career. The Java Bank board of directors consisted of three members, and these positions were among the most prestigious—and well paid—in the colony. They required the official approval of the Governor-General (due to the Java Bank’s simultaneous function as the national bank of the Indies) and instantly made one a well-known public figure.² Yet Michielsen’s position among the absolute elite of the Indies European society might come as a surprise considering his background. He was born on 21 June 1882 in Sampit (Borneo), a far-flung corner of the colony, as the illegitimate child of a Chinese concubine and a subordinate civilian.³ Michielsen was fortunate because unlike many other concubine children in the Indies, he was not only acknowledged by his

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² See the many newspaper articles on (and by) K.W.J. Michielsen during his tenure as director (1929-1937), available through the KB digital newspaper database: www.delpher.nl.
³ Archive *De Javasche Bank* at Bank Indonesia, Jakarta (henceforth: DJB), 2159, Service record Karel Willem Jan Michielsen (no. 220), 31 March 1924; DJB, 111, Minutes board meeting 6 June 1928; DJB, 111, Minutes board meeting 13 September 1928; DJB, 120, Minutes board meeting 28 April 1937. For the name of K.W.J. Michielsen’s mother, see his wedding certificate: Registry of Marriages, Batavia, 1911, No. 60. A microfilm copy of this register is kept by the family research centre of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Amsterdam. For information on Michielsen’s father, see obituaries in *Het Vaderland*, 3 March 1926; *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 4 March 1926.
father but also provided with a good education in the Netherlands. Michielsen Sr. would later go on to become Governor of Sumatra’s West coast and eventually, in 1898, a member of the Council of the Indies. Michielsen Jr. clearly benefitted from his father’s growing prestige, ultimately leading him to the coveted seat on the Java Bank’s board of directors, despite his ambiguous family background.

Only a few months before Michielsen stepped aboard the Bontekoe, another European man, J. Dijkman, experienced that, conversely, invoking his supposedly ‘full-blood’ racial background could not automatically ensure him favourable treatment. Dijkman had been born in the Netherlands, received no more than elementary education, and made his way to the Indies as a common recruit with the colonial army. Like many of his fellow veterans, he settled in the Indies after his retirement, more out of financial necessity than by choice. To supplement his army pension he took a job as a train conductor with the Semarang Joana Steamtram Company, a private railway firm operating on North Java. In January 1937, he was fired because he had made irregular use of the company’s emergency hostels, where
he had stayed for several days with his wife without the proper permission. Feeling that his punishment was unduly harsh, Dijkman appealed directly to the board of directors in The Hague. In his letter, composed in a ramshackle kind of Dutch riddled with spelling mistakes, he admitted his guilt but signed off with an appeal to the directors’ compassion, openly attempting to invoke racial privilege: ‘Hoping that you could treat more justly a full-blood Dutchman who has never caused harm to the company, considering my family. The train inspector [signed] J. Dijkman.’

His invocation of racial solidarity was to fall upon deaf ears.

Michielsen and Dijkman represent opposite ends of the labour market for Europeans in the Indies. Nonetheless, both their predicaments confirm the same reality of workplace discrimination in the Dutch East Indies: racial privilege for ‘white’ Europeans was not granted automatically, nor was a mixed background an automatic disqualifier. A ‘Eurasian’ was not necessarily lower class, nor was a ‘full-blood’ Dutchman ensured a cushy job. On the Indies labour market, education and class background were at least as important.

Introduction: Indos or a European lower middle class

Over the past twenty years, historians have started to pay increased attention to the plight of lower (middle) class Europeans in the Dutch Indies (as well as other colonies). Studying the position of this class of lower-level European clerks,
foremen, engineers, and other employees has been seen as pivotal for understanding how colonial societies created social and racial boundaries. The behaviour of marginal ‘Europeans’, so the argument goes, sometimes challenged received notions of what it meant to be ‘European’ in the colony, and their more elite contemporaries therefore regarded them as a threat to European prestige. At the same time, these people on the periphery of the European group were tasked with upholding the boundaries of that very group. They were living, to quote Ann Stoler, ‘on the imperial divide’, constantly at risk of toppling over the edge, and hence constantly obsessed with maintaining their ‘European’ status.⁶

A common problem among scholars—and in itself a matter of important scholarly attention—is the question of how to identify (and how to refer to) this group. It has become an almost obligatory caveat that we are dealing with an excruciatingly complex social group, and with a bewildering array of source terms to describe them.⁷ Are we talking about ‘Indo-Europeans’ (commonly shortened to ‘Indo’), about Indisch people, about European settlers (in Dutch blijvers as opposed to trekkers = sojourners), or about the ‘common man’? A popular choice in the sources is the term Indisch (Indische Nederlanders or Indische mensen). This term is conveniently (or frustratingly, depending on your perspective) vague. Its colonial-era meaning, according to Robert Cribb, ‘lurks somewhere between ethnicity—mainly mixed race Indo-European/Eurasian—and culture, standing for the whole complex of cultural adjustments between East and West which took place in the Indonesian archipelago’⁸

The vagueness of the term Indisch was convenient for contemporaries because it allowed an underlying equation or at least connection of these two aspects (ethnicity and culture) that did not need to be explicitly drawn out. Because of its popularity in the sources, Indisch is also a popular term among historians,⁹ but Indo or Indo-

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⁸ Robert Cribb, “‘Indisch’ identity and decolonization”, IIAS Newsletter, No. 31, July 2003, p. 52.
⁹ See for example: Bosma and Raben, Being ‘Dutch’; Bosma, Raben and Willems, De geschiedenis van Indische Nederlanders; Cribb, “‘Indisch’ identity”; Houben, ‘Boundaries of race’.
European runs a close second.\textsuperscript{10} In any case, a widely accepted premise seems to be that there is a significant amount of overlap, or at least a distinct discursive connection, between what one could call a lower middle class of Europeans and the ‘Indo’ or ‘mixed-race’ group—even if any historian will immediately add that this is far from a neat equation.

And rightly so, because identifying ‘Indo-European’ with ‘lower middle class European’ is not only a contention challenged by the sources, but it is also analytically highly problematic. To identify someone as an ‘Indo-European’ or rather as ‘\textit{Indisch}’, as ‘common’ or as a ‘less educated European’, carried very different implications. My endeavour in this chapter is to pay careful attention to the language that contemporaries used, and to explore in which situations they used what terms. There is no denying that ‘Indo-European’, ‘\textit{Indisch} European’ and ‘lower middle class European’ had closely related meanings. But, still, contemporaries had reasons for choosing one term over the other in specific situations. We also need to consider which way around the equation functioned in the colonial mind: was someone considered to be an Indo-European because he was poor, or was he expected to be poor because he was an Indo?\textsuperscript{11}

What I argue, firstly, is that historians have tended to overemphasize the importance of the concept of the ‘Indo-European’ in everyday life. The self- or other-identification as ‘Indo’—with its inevitable racialized connotations—was only prevalent in certain discursive domains, most prominently in the political world through the \textit{Indo-Europeesch Verbond} (Indo-European Union, IEV). In many other aspects of life, colonial actors purposely chose to resort to other identifiers, such as the more culturally inflected ‘\textit{Indisch}’, or even a clearly class-based denotation—such as ‘lower class’ or ‘middle class’. Often, education or place of birth (rather than parentage) had more importance for determining career prospects. Because of the


\textsuperscript{11} Cf. Bosma, \textit{Indiëgangers}, p. 13, who claims that ‘[o]ne was “Indo” mainly because of one’s low social status’. This contention is criticized by Protschky, ‘Race, class, and gender’, pp. 552-554. Protschky quotes Bosma and then asks the question (apparently intended as a rhetorical question): ‘But does it equally hold that one was of low social status simply because one was deemed “Indo”?’ This seems to me to be the wrong counter-question. The question needs to be whether it equally holds that one was \textit{always} (or at least habitually) deemed an ‘Indo’ if one was of low social status. Asking the question in this way resolves the circularity of which Protschky (in my opinion undeservedly) accuses Bosma.
overemphasis on the political sphere, I argue, the perception still lingers that people from a mixed background were automatically disqualified in colonial society. As people like K.W.J. Michielsen demonstrate, however, social background, education and upbringing play a significant and autonomous role in determining European respectability in Indies’ society. That is not to say that a mixed heritage was not a disadvantage. But it *is* to say that race was not the only, nor necessarily the decisive factor—as the fate of people like J. Dijkman illustrates.

**The Indies business world: a word on case-selection**

In the last three chapters of this thesis, I study the aforementioned issues through an analysis of employment structure and workplace relations in the private business world of the Dutch Indies, thus widening and nuancing a perspective that has tended to overemphasize the importance of ‘Indo-Europeanness’ by focusing primarily on the political arena.¹² Occupational position and professional status, obviously, are major elements in the self-understanding and social positioning of an individual. People often define themselves by their occupation, and their rank and advancement in the professional hierarchy form significant factors in their sense of self-worth. For the small European society in the Dutch East Indies, as in many other colonies, this importance of professional identity was even more pronounced. Social life for Europeans, especially in the smaller towns, mainly revolved around their circle of professional relations and their families. Consequently, as a well-founded Indies’ cliché goes, social hierarchy was generally measured very bluntly by the size of one’s pay-check, with the relative position meticulously scrutinized by the spouses during the many parties held among the circle of colleagues.¹³ Social as well as racial boundaries can only be upheld if they are continually affirmed and reproduced through everyday social interactions.¹⁴ In the Indies, the workplace was a vital arena for such interactions.

In the present chapter my interest is in the recruitment policies for various ranks of ‘European’ employees, examining the (explicit and implicit) prejudices

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¹² Most conspicuous in this context is the work by Hans Meijer, who contends to study the *Indisch* world in the late colonial period essentially by writing a history of the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond*: Meijer, *In Indië geboren*.


regulating the professional hierarchy. In the following two chapters I subsequently analyse, respectively, the experiences on the European furlough, and the social and residential life of employees outside of office hours. My particular interest in all these chapters is in the position of the lower-paid (Indo-)Europeans, those people who occupied modest jobs that were generally more prestigious and better paid than those of the common Indonesian labourers, but still far from the top-level management and leadership positions.

I focus explicitly on the world of private business rather than on the ranks of the civil service. With the exception of the plantation economy, the Indies business world has only occasionally been studied in empirical detail by historians. Nonetheless, statements abound that private enterprise was generally much more (and much more openly) racist and segregationist than the government offices (and the same point has been made for colonies other than the Dutch Indies). Bosma and Raben, for example, in their influential study Being ‘Dutch’ in the Indies claim that in the business world there was open discrimination based on skin colour; advertisements would appear explicitly asking for “pure-blooded” employees. At this point in their text, they refer to only one such advertisement (from the Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad in September 1910). Similarly, Thomas Lindblad in his Bridges to new Business—one of the few recent works that takes private business as its central object of study—reminds that the only appreciable progress in Indonesianisasi [the recruitment of Indonesians in advanced ranks, BL] occurred within the ranks of the civil service. Considering this widespread conception of the business world as more openly and radically racist (and hence as a type of worst-case

16 See e.g.: Kolsky, Colonial justice.
17 Bosma and Raben, Being ‘Dutch’, p. 313.
18 Lindblad, Bridges, p. 35. For further statements about the particular nature of private employment, see e.g. Van der Veur, ‘Eurasians’, pp. 199-200; John Ingleson, ‘Labour unions and the provision of social security in colonial Java’, Asian Studies Review, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2000, p. 486.
scenario), it is appropriate to make this the last testing ground of my study into the
primacy of differentiating categories.

My principal case of study is a conglomerate of four private railway
companies collectively known as the Sister Companies: the Semarang-Cirebon
Steamtram Company (SCS), the Semarang-Joana Steamtram Company (SJS), the
Serayu-valley Steamtram Company (SDS), and the East-Java Steamtram Company
(OJS). These four companies were formally separate entities, but they worked closely
together, shared one board of directors (based in The Hague), and saw a regular
mutual exchange of personnel. The main interregional railways on Java were
exploited by the State Railways (Staatsspoorwegen or SS), but many of the secondary
lines were left to private enterprise. The Sister Companies together were among the
more prosperous and influential. Because their board of directors was based in The
Hague, the company archives have been preserved in the Dutch National Archives.
These collections include, among other documentation, considerable correspondence
with the various layers of management in the Indies, reasonably extensive (though
ostensibly incomplete) personnel files, as well as some correspondence with the
railway trade unions.19

These railway companies represented a particularly ‘modern’ industry in the
Indies. Railway lines were concentrated on the urban centres on (particularly) Java
and connected these to each other, as well as to the plantation industries further
inland. The railways were not only one of the larger industries in the colony, they
were also one of the few that brought any form of ‘modern’ labour organization to the
Indies. Workers and other employees were largely urban dwellers and had started to
organize in trade unions modelled on the metropolitan examples. This presence of
well-organized trade unions (both for native and for European personnel) means that
we have the opportunity to hear the voices of those people involved, rather than just

19 The archives are dispersed over several collections in the NL-HaNA that have been made accessible
through sometimes confusing inventories. See especially the collections 2.20.14.01, 2.20.15, 2.20.16,
2.20.17, 2.20.18, 2.20.19. Some of the collections relating to the Sister Companies have erroneously
been identified as relating to the NISM (Nederlands-Indische Spoorwegmaatschappij), which in fact is
da different railway company (see collections 2.20.10, 2.20.52). Furthermore, the Sister Companies
together with the NISM and several smaller companies were united in the ‘Association for Dutch-Indies
Railway and Steamtram Companies’, which in Dutch is confusingly called the Vereniging van
Nederlands-Indische Spoor- en Tramwegen or Vereniging NISM (see collection 2.20.20). The
designation of ‘Steamtram’ (rather than ‘Railway’) is likewise confusing. In the Dutch Indies context,
the ‘Steamtram’ was a form of secondary (mostly regional) rail transport with lower top speeds, for
which the legal requirements were more lenient than for the proper railway services, but which should
not be equated with (local) urban tramways.
from the managerial classes. Furthermore, as one of the few trades to be unionized to any significant degree, the railway industry clearly shows signs of a nascent collective identity based on occupation rather than merely on social background.\footnote{On unionization in the Indies (and the role of the railway unions), see: John Ingleson, \textit{In search of justice: workers and unions in colonial Java, 1908-1926} (Singapore, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).}

For these same reasons, the railway companies do not offer an entirely representative case. To balance out the argument with material from a more decidedly white-collar enterprise, I conducted additional research in the archives of \textit{De Javaasche Bank} (DJB, Java Bank), now kept at the \textit{Bank Indonesia} (the Indonesian national bank) in Jakarta. DJB was a large privately owned commercial bank active in the Dutch Indies, which had a rather peculiar position because it simultaneously functioned as the central bank of the Indies, responsible for regulating monetary circulation. In its function as central bank, DJB was a symbol of the colonial state. As a commercial bank, it had a reputation for being very conservative.\footnote{Lindblad, \textit{Bridges to new business}, p. 102.} Unsurprisingly, given this status, DJB set very different social requirements for its recruitment than the railway companies. The largely administrative work had an ‘intellectual’ reputation, which meant that the lower administrative personnel of the DJB could be seen as the example \textit{par excellence} of a class of (lower-)middle class white collar workers. All in all, DJB presents a suitable counterbalance to the railway companies.

\textbf{Justifying income segregation}

Before we examine where colonial actors drew their boundaries, it is necessary to investigate briefly a more fundamental question, namely why employers and employees alike considered it no more than natural and justified to segregate the Indies workplace. In other words: why did some people, in the colonial mind, deserve higher wages than others?

The dominant reasoning was a combination of an economic and a cultural argument. Still, lip service was often paid to the eventual goal of income-parity. Even the well-known, staunchly conservative journalist Henri Zentgraaff wrote in 1932 that ‘for the bulk of positions we should come to a singular form of remuneration, pensions, and regulation of furloughs for all those who have been educated and recruited in the Indies for these positions. Hence: put an end to all privileges that do
not find their justification in knowledge and suitability." This was also the position taken by the administration. However, so the argument immediately proceeded, for the time being it would remain necessary to import educated and suitable candidates from Europe for certain positions that could not be filled by candidates from the Indies. This was especially true for positions that required an academic education. To attract such candidates, appropriate and competitive wages remained indispensable. Thus an argument based on market-forces was claimed to be at the root of the wage disparity.

But this argument was not sufficient to justify professional differentiation between, on the one hand, ‘Europeans’ born and educated in the Indies and, on the other hand, their ‘native’ counterparts. For this purpose, a different reasoning prevailed. The difference in pay was justified on the basis of differences in lifestyle. For certain positions, the government claimed, recruitment still had to take place among ‘circles in the Dutch Indies, of relatively small numerical strength, whose general standard of living for the time being requires a higher salary’. This rather circumspect formulation was universally understood, both by contemporaries and later historians, to mean the ‘settled’ European or Indo-European community. As the influential socialist publicist D.M.G. Koch put it, in the Indies ‘three kinds of standards of living apply: the standard of living in the indigenous society, those of the Europeans born and educated in Europe, and in-between those the Indische Europeans’. Or in other words, as the conservative director of the Central Bureau for Statistics, W.M.F. Mansvelt, stated: ‘It is decisive whether the salary scales of [...] at least the intermediate clerical positions allow for a standard of living, that can still be called “European”.’

Apart from these two fundamental arguments, some more conservative commentators resorted to more explicit racism. As, for example, the aforementioned

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23 Cf. basic principles stated by the Salary Commission for Civil Servants (Commission-Damme 1924), responsible for drafting the 1925 salary regulation (see below), as cited in D.M.G. Koch, ‘De vakbeweging en de “Indianiseering”’, *Koloniale Studiën*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1932, p. 353.
journalist Zentgraaff explained, Europeans should not be worried about unifying wage scales. It would obviously remain permissible to differentiate on the basis of merit:

A normal self-confidence leads to the positive conviction that knowledge and energy will also come to full advantage without the appearance of privilege. [...] It should be kept in mind that different landaarden will not have the same value for the same type of work. One only needs to think about the high military value of ‘Jan’ [the common European soldier]; and there are many other types of work for which typically Western traits offer an over-average suitability, [...].

However, such openly racist arguments were made only incidentally; they never appeared, to my knowledge, in official government material. To most administrators, it seemed safer to argue along economic and cultural lines.

The economic and cultural arguments were not obviously or automatically in accordance. Each applied to a different set of professional positions. Nevertheless, both were an integral part of the justification for the deeply ingrained wage hierarchy in the Indies. Together, they created a system of three layers, with ‘imported’ Europeans earning high wages to compensate for their relocating from their country of origin, ‘settled’ Europeans on an intermediate wage-scale to support them in their more expensive standard of living, and native Indonesians on the lowest scale. This tripartite structure was most conspicuously embodied in the so-called Besluit Bezoldiging Landsdienaren (BBL, Decree on Compensation for Civil Servants), which was adopted by the colonial administration in 1925 and regulated the pay scales for all employees in government service, prescribing three basic pay scales for each of the aforementioned groups. Still, the BBL did not define this structure as explicitly racial. At least in principle, and to a certain degree in practice, all positions were open to anyone with the right education and qualifications—the catch there being that access to these qualifications was highly skewed.29

In a different way, however, the BBL did cement racial segregation in government employment. The BBL included a proviso that as soon as ‘native’ employees began to dominate in a certain profession on the intermediate scale, the remuneration for this position should be transferred to the lower scales. (The same system applied to the transfer from the highest scale to the intermediate scale.) In other words: as soon as sufficient Indonesians had started entering ‘European’ professions these would be declared ‘native’ and the incomes reduced accordingly. This automatic adjustment meant that any further ‘indianization’ of the civil service would eventually, rather than bringing Indonesians up to a European level, bring the incomes concerned down to a native standard of living, which, unsurprisingly, infuriated many of the (Indo-)Europeans unlucky enough to occupy positions that were at risk of being rescaled.\textsuperscript{30} In this way, the option was kept open to encapsulate the gradual infringement of ‘Natives’ (and Indo-Europeans) on European social preserves.

**Employment structure in the Sister Companies**

The justification for income disparity described above has until very recently been studied predominantly in the realm of government employment.\textsuperscript{31} However, the management of the Sister Companies used broadly the same argumentation.\textsuperscript{32} Surprisingly, considering the established image of the private business sector as more openly and viciously racist, I found no evidence of explicitly racist reasoning of the type represented by Zentgraaff. In all likelihood, as I will explain below, racial prejudices were among the contributing factors in the way the employment structure was organized, but they were never presented as an explicit reason.

The employment structure of the Sister Companies was somewhat different from that in government service, but in essence they followed the same principles.


\textsuperscript{31} One prominent recent exception is: Lindblad, *Bridges*.

\textsuperscript{32} See e.g.: NL-HaNA, Gemeenschappelijk archief Zuster-Spoorwegmaatschappijen, 1880-1975 (henceforth: ZSM), 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from the chief agent (G. Diephuis) to board of directors, 20 December 1928; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the chief agent to board of directors, 28 May 1930. In the archive inventories of the NL-HaNA this archive is erroneously identified as originating from the *Nederlands-Indische Spoorwegmaatschappij en Tramwegmaatschappij NV*. In fact it is the archive of the Sister Companies.
Originally (the first of the Sister Companies, the SJS, had been founded in 1881 and the others in the following 15 years), the basic differentiation that the companies applied was that between ‘European’ and ‘native’ employees—‘Foreign Orientals’ were automatically subsumed under the heading of ‘native’. In the wake of the rapid growth of the companies in the 1910s, and of an increasingly diverse composition of the personnel, the companies decided to overhaul their employment regulation and put in place new categories that better reflected the emerging practice of recruitment. The differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘Native’ among the personnel was not abandoned entirely, but was made subordinate to new, more important categories: ‘hoofdambtenaren’ (senior officials), ‘ambtenaren’ (officials) and ‘beambten’ (subordinate officials), respectively.33

The distinction between ‘hoofdambtenaren’ and ‘ambtenaren’ was a rather straightforward subdivision of the higher management ranks (heads of exploitation and section heads) versus the middle management or administrative positions.34 It differentiated the (European) elite from the rank and file of mid-level and administrative personnel (both European and native). The difference between the latter two terms, ‘ambtenaren’ vs. ‘beambten’, is much more confusing. Both terms mean ‘official’, ‘clerk’, or also ‘civil servant’. The difference is merely one of gradation, in which ambtenaar suggests a higher position than beambte. The closest translation of these terms would be ‘official’ and ‘subordinate official’, respectively, but this translation obfuscates that the original Dutch uses two different words rather than a qualifier placed in front of one overarching category. The boundary between ambtenaren and beambten had no legal or clear semantic meaning, and was therefore ‘entirely arbitrary’, as the chief agent of the Sister Companies R.P. van Alphen explained to his board of directors in 1915.35 It is precisely this arbitrariness, however, that seemed to suit the management of the Sister Companies. It allowed them to make ad hoc decisions and constantly adjust and re-adjust, according to the

33 See Dossier No. 920 of the Sister Companies’ archive for the discussions on this reform: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920; there especially: Letter from board of directors to chief agent, 19 March 1915; Letter from the chief agent to board of directors, 16 September 1915; Letter from the chief agent to board of directors, 28 May 1930. Cf. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from the chief agent (G. Diephuis) to board of directors, 20 December 1928. Also see the various versions of articles 1 and 2 in the ‘Provisions concerning the Personnel’: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 177.
34 Art. 3 of the Provisions concerning the Personnel, 3rd edn.: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 177.
35 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the chief agent to board of directors, 16 September 1915.
perceived needs of a specific situation, which positions belonged in the realm of *ambtenaren* and which in the realm of *beambten*.

In all, the tripartite structure of *hoofdambtenaren*, *ambtenaren* and *beambten* corresponded with, respectively, top-level, mid-level and lower-level (administrative) positions. This structure is of course reminiscent of the BBL with its three different wage scales, although the chief agent of the Sister Companies in the Indies G. Diephuis explained in a memorandum in 1928 that the Sister Companies’ system was much more flexible. Rather than looking merely at school certificates or other official credentials to judge the suitability of a candidate for a certain position, the Sister Companies relied more on the personal judgement and approval of the immediate superior. Official credentials, Diephuis claimed, were not everything. Even the Dutch language skills of candidates in the Sister Companies were assessed by their superior rather than by an exam or school certificate. Consequently, respectability and sociability were of the utmost importance for (especially ‘native’) employees wishing to advance in their career, because they had to cajole their superiors into certifying their eligibility for promotion.

The introduction of the differentiation between *ambtenaren* and *beambten* thus gave the management more opportunity to be flexible than the old categorization of ‘European’ vs. ‘Native’ that had prevailed until 1914. Consequently, by the 1920s there was a small but stable and respected contingent of ‘native’ employees in the lower and middle *ambtenaren*-ranks. That is not to say, however, that the categories of ‘European’ and ‘Native’ were abandoned entirely. Although the most important matters (primarily the wage scale) were now determined on the basis of *ambtenaar* vs. *beambte*, for various secondary benefits the European vs. Native differentiation remained decisive. For example, the extent to which an employee’s family could share in his old age pension—that is, whether a widow was entitled to a pension after her husband had died—was dependent on ‘race’ rather than position. The following 25 years saw constant change of exactly which regulations made use of which differentiation, but the general tendency was towards the increasing use of the

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36 NL-HaNA, 2.10.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from the chief agent (G. Diephuis) to board of directors, 20 December 1928; cf. NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 59, Personnel file Soewandi.

37 See e.g. the personnel cards for Sarwin, Soebadi, Soedomo Soerohadikoesoemo, Soemardjo, Soenoto, Sopakuwa, Rasiman, Soekardi: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 164; Abdulgadi, Adi, Mas Awal, Raden Mohamad Hadi: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 166.
functional rather than the ethnic. The question of pensions, for example, was subsequently reformed in 1918 (following substantial protest from several native ambtenaren), allowing native ambtenaren to share in the same pension fund as their European colleagues.\textsuperscript{38}

To be sure, the difference between the old and the new system should not be exaggerated. As the directors of the Sister Companies were quick to point out when this change was implemented, they felt that it was important to establish the meritocratic standard as a matter of principle, but in the foreseeable future it would only cause marginal practical differences. Europeans would generally continue to be privileged (because they were presumably more highly skilled), just not on principle.\textsuperscript{39} Throughout the following decades, the ambtenaren category continued to denote the ‘positions that are as a rule occupied by Europeans’, as the chief agent Diephuis stated in 1928 in the previously quoted memorandum, even if a small number of Natives had by now become eligible for these positions.\textsuperscript{40} Nonetheless, this small number is significant. It shows that the directors took their own promises seriously, increasingly treating well-educated Indonesians on a par with Europeans, as long as they lived up to the established social and professional norms of respectability set by the management.

The flexibility of the employment structure shows a somewhat asymmetrical nature, in a way reminiscent of the legal status of Europeanness (see chapters 1 and 2). Under the post-1914 system it was possible for ‘Natives’ to enter a position as ambtenaar, but only if they had acquired an official ‘declaration of eligibility’ for such a position, issued by the agent of their branch. Europeans, by contrast, did not need such a declaration.\textsuperscript{41} The reverse situation—Europeans taking lower-level

\textsuperscript{38} On the issue of pensions and other secondary benefits see various documents (especially from 1918/19) in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920.

\textsuperscript{39} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the board of directors to the chief agent, 31 December 1913; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from board of directors to the chief agent, 19 March 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the chief agent to board of directors, 16 September 1915.

\textsuperscript{40} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from the chief agent (G. Diephuis) to board of directors, 20 December 1928. Also cf. the clarification given by Diephuis in his reaction to the HIOC inquiry of 1929: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920-II.

\textsuperscript{41} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the chief agent to the heads of exploitation, 6 January 1913; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from board of directors to chief agent, 19 March 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Memorandum drafted by director Caspersz regarding the equation of Natives, 24 August 1915. For an example of a ‘declaration of eligibility’, see: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 59, Personnel file Soewandi.
positions as beambte or as common workers—was different. Although this was not prohibited, the management frowned upon it. Europeans, it was thought, should do administrative work or be in positions of leadership (i.e. as foremen or warehouse managers). They should preferably not be doing manual labour. The directors were especially wary of Europeans entering positions where they might have to be supervised by a Native, fearing this would ultimately lead to tensions.\(^\text{42}\)

If we consider both these things together—the view on ‘Natives’ entering typically ‘European’ jobs and vice versa—an intriguing paradox emerges. Europeans were considered inherently suitable for positions as ambtenaar as long as they fulfilled the necessary qualifications. But this notion was based on a self-fulfilling prophecy, because the Sister Companies were hesitant to hire Europeans in lower-level positions or as manual labourers. The people that could have challenged the notion of Europeans being particularly suitable for higher administrative or management functions remained largely absent from the companies’ personnel.

This paradox is vividly reflected in a casual remark that appears in the reaction from the board of directors to the aforementioned memorandum by their agent in the Indies, G. Diephuis. They stressed, once again, the reason why the Sister Companies used the terms ambtenaar and beambte rather than European and Native: namely because, in their opinion, they selected on the basis of capability rather than race. Therefore, they explained, it was their express intention that deserving Natives could be appointed ambtenaar, and they went on to briefly mention the reverse option:

On the other hand, some Europeans are also employed in positions as beambte, i.e. positions that are as a rule occupied by natives because they require manual labour, for which no Europeans can be found, or for the fulfilment of which [...] no further general education is required than can be acquired in an ordinary native school.\(^\text{43}\)

\(^{42}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the board of directors to chief agent, 31 December 1913; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from board of directors to chief agent, 23 August 1929. Also cf. the reaction to the HIOC inquiry of 1929: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920-II.

\(^{43}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from board of directors to the chief agent, 23 August 1929.
The interjection ‘for which no Europeans can be found’ that the directors used here is rather peculiar, considering that only half a sentence earlier they mentioned that there are actually some Europeans working in these positions.

This case of cognitive dissonance shows the paradox that people like the directors of the Sister Companies confronted: they had a certain social and cultural image of what it entailed to be ‘European’ and who was part of that category, but they were simultaneously unwilling or unable to relinquish a racial and legal definition that sometimes ran counter to this image. This tension reminds us once again of the fact that the boundary between ‘European’ and ‘Native’ was not the only boundary that colonial actors concerned themselves with. Differentiating within the group of ‘Europeans’ was equally important.

**Recruiting in practice: ‘import-Europeans’ versus settlers**

One might be tempted to conclude that the tripartite employment structure in use by the Sister Companies was essentially a differentiation between, respectively, expatriate ‘full-blood’ Europeans in the highest ranks, Indo-Europeans in the middle ranks, and native personnel at the bottom, in much the same way as the BBL for government employees. Interestingly, though, the differentiation between hoofdambtenaren (senior officials) and ambtenaren (officials) was never explicitly phrased as separating ‘import’ from ‘Indos’ by anyone in the management—though it was by some representatives of the European trade unions (see below)—whereas for government employ this ‘ethnic explanation’ of the BBL was regularly discussed. More importantly, such an interpretation, whilst convincing at first glance, is not entirely supported by the actual practice of recruitment in the Sister Companies. Education, social origin and professional skill played a role in recruiting decisions, alongside considerations of (mixed-)race and geographical origin.

To be sure, the Sister Companies did discriminate between ‘import’ and Indisch, but not to the extent that an Indisch candidate lucky enough to have a favourable social and educational background could not overcome his disadvantage.44

A good education, even one acquired in the Indies, could cancel out the stigma of

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44 Cf. the description that Bosma and Raben gave of the late-nineteenth-century colonial civil service: ‘[T]he image of the Indies-born civil servant being ousted by newcomers is not an accurate one. [...] However, the route followed by local-born men was often long and tedious.’ Bosma and Raben, *Being ‘Dutch’*, p. 192. This description still held true for the Sister Companies in the twentieth century.
being born in the Indies. One Christiaan Bürer, for example, born in Semarang in 1906, was hired in 1927 after finishing the HBS in Semarang. He was taken on in the position of clerk 1st class on an initial monthly salary of f. 150,–, which was comparable to the starting salary for many new recruits from the Netherlands. He was promised ‘good prospects’ in the company if he proved to do a good job.\(^45\) His birth and education in the Indies seemed no obstacle to a promising career.

The differentiation between what were known in the Sister Companies as ‘imported employees’ (importkrachten) and ‘Indische employees’ (Indische krachten) had no real legal basis, but was rather an informal and highly volatile distinction.\(^46\) In 1929, for example, the chief agent of the Sister Companies received a survey, sent to all private firms in the Indies by the Dutch-Native Education Committee (HIOC, see chapter 3), in which (among other questions) he was asked to categorize his personnel into four columns: (1) employees in positions that were usually occupied by individuals recruited in the Netherlands or another European country, (2) employees who needed adequate written and spoken knowledge of the Dutch language, (3) employees who only needed Malay or Javanese writing skills, and (4) all other employees not requiring any specific qualifications. In his reply, chief agent J.W.G. Pels Rijcken explained to the HIOC that it had been difficult to apply this categorization to the Sister Companies. Especially since the boundary between the first two categories could only be made tentatively. If we examine Pels Rijcken’s further comments on the completed survey, it becomes clear that the management of the Sister Companies did indeed have certain notions of which positions were generally occupied by ‘import’ and which were typically the preserve of Indische employees. But these notions were not rigid and fixed, and the Sister Companies envisioned a broad range of positions in which imported and Indische employees mixed, creating a gradual transition rather than a discrete boundary.\(^47\)

Moreover, even this fickle and informal differentiation between ‘import’ and ‘Indisch’ was based more on where one had gone to school rather than on the place of birth. This becomes obvious when we study the standardized application forms kept

\(^{45}\) NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 9, Personnel file Ch.H. Bürer. Also cf. NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 21, Personnel file L.F. Geerligs.

\(^{46}\) Cf. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 187, Verzameling Regelingen betreffende Personeelszaken, 1929.

\(^{47}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920-I, Letter from the chief agent (J.W.G. Pels Rijcken) to HIOC, 3 October 1929; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920-II, Survey HIOC completed for SJS, 3 October 1929.
in some of the individual personnel files. These forms could either be completed by the applicant him/herself or by the interviewing official of the Sister Companies. In the latter case, they seem to have cared more about where the applicant had been educated (as well as to which level) than where he had been born. The line for ‘place of birth’ frequently remained blank. The section on ‘education’, by contrast, was always meticulously completed (even for primary schools) and usually included an explicit mention in case this education had been taken in the Indies.

The aforementioned Christian Bürer actually resigned from his job within six months, presumably because he had a better offer (although the documentation is silent on this). Hence, we cannot follow his career progression. But the promise of ‘good prospects’ for this Indisch employee was by no means illusory or merely theoretical. One Henricus Franciscus Butteling, for example, born in Yogyakarta in 1886, started working for the SJS in 1906 as a temporary clerk 2nd class. He had passed the Kleinambtenaarsexamen (lower civil service examination) and had taken further classes in administration at the evening-school in Surabaya, making his education roughly equivalent to finishing the first three years of the HBS. During his long career at the Sister Companies, Butteling slowly but steadily rose through all the intermediate ranks, until he finally reached the position of Chef de Bureau (section head) at the SCS in 1927, the lowest rank on the hoofdambtenaren-scale, which he occupied until his retirement in 1933.

Employment in the Sister Companies thus encouraged climbing through the ranks. The functional hierarchy was gradual and continuous rather than discreet and rigid. That is not to say, of course, that there was no hierarchy at all, or that the hierarchy did not show a racial bias. Most of the ‘import employees’ started halfway up the hierarchy, whereas this would have been the endpoint for most of the less privileged (and less well-educated) Indische employees, or a middling stage for some of the more privileged Indies-based employees. What it is to say, however, is that

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48 Personnel files from the Sister Companies are kept in NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15. Unfortunately, the great majority of these files are very incomplete. It is unclear what has determined which files (and which documents in the files) have survived. The files hence do offer occasional insight into individual cases, but do not provide an exhaustive or general overview.

49 See e.g. the files for W.L. van Bronckhorst and for K.J. van Brugge, both in NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 9.

50 NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 166, Personnel card Butteling. Butteling’s retirement at the age of 47 was not unusual. ‘Europeans’ in the Indies normally retired at 50, and in the years during the 1930s depression the company tried to soften the blow of necessary cutbacks by sending some employees on early retirement rather than by firing younger employees.
below the ranks at the absolute top of the functional hierarchy, there was a colourful mix of people from various backgrounds and differing career paths. As a consequence, it was not unusual to find an Indische employee in a superior position to an ‘imported’ colleague.\footnote{Cf. commies J. Pauwels, commies B.W. Wiebenga and commies A. Poeteray, all in a list of all ambtenaren for the SJS with their respective educational background, compiled by the head of the SJS in September 1914: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 902. Also cf. NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 21, Personnel file O. Gerlach; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from the chief agent (G. Diephuis) to board of directors, 20 December 1928.}

The very highest positions in the company, those of chief agent or head of exploitation, were almost exclusively filled by people educated and recruited in Europe.\footnote{See also e.g. personnel files as well as the personnel cards for Van Berckel, d’Artillac, Brill, Diephuis, C.J. Harding: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 1, 14, 15, 23, 78, 80; NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 164-166.} But even for these positions it is important to appreciate the weight of education over place of birth. The poster child in this context is G.P.J. Caspersz, who joined the Sister Companies in 1913 at the rank of chief agent and was nominated as one of its directors in 1916. Through his tenure of more than 25 years in this position, he became one of the prime movers in the Sister Companies. His background was decidedly Indisch. Born in 1866 in Gajamprit, a small village on central Java, both his father and his mother were Indies-born Europeans—born in 1824 and 1838, respectively, both in Semarang—and had spent most of their lives in the colony, his father as an officer in the colonial army (retiring at the rank of captain). Caspersz spent his early years in the Indies but received most of his education in the Netherlands, graduating from the HBS in The Hague and continuing his education at the military college in Breda. He served in the colonial army for over 20 years, primarily in Aceh and North-Sumatra, before eventually joining the Sister Companies in 1913.\footnote{NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 166, Personnel card G.P.J. Caspersz; ‘Jubileum G.P.J. Caspersz’, Het Vaderland, 5 January 1938; Obituary Mrs. A.M.Ph. Caspersz-Mühlenfeld, Het Vaderland, 18 December 1924; Obituary notice J.P. Caspersz, unknown newspaper, 7 December 1871, accessed through the database of the Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie (henceforth: CBG).} His birth on Java or his family background were clearly no obstacle to his career, because he was well educated (in the Netherlands) and had the respectable reputation of one from a family of colonial officers.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess the role that ‘race’ (in the sense of social meaning attached to somatic or biological qualities) played in all these recruiting decisions. Being born or being educated in the Indies did not automatically entail
mixed ancestry, but there was an obvious correlation. The fact that employees educated and recruited in the Netherlands predominated exponentially in the higher ranks makes it plausible that, overall, a logic of ‘the higher the whiter’ prevailed. Nevertheless, the fact that their ‘race’ in this sense was never explicitly discussed in the Sister Companies’ internal correspondence is noteworthy in itself. The directors of the Sister Companies were based in The Hague rather than in the colony. They relied on their agent in the Indies for information. Consequently, regarding the aforementioned Christiaan Bürer, for example, we do not know whether he was of a mixed background — but neither did the directors when they allowed their agent to appoint him, because they had never seen him. Racial discrimination was a reality in the Sister Companies, but primarily because it was correlated to the place of birth and education, not because it had salience in and of itself.

This is not a trivial conclusion, as it had real consequences for those people who did not conform to the desired situation in which ‘race’ and ‘class’ aligned. A case in point is the example of the train inspectors (i.e. conductors) working for the Sister Companies. The train inspectors were the lowest-paid employees still falling within the ambtenaren bracket. Discussions among the management about the personnel employed in these jobs were characterized by a derogatory tone, depicting the conductors as simple, uncouth, and uncultured individuals. Many of the men in these jobs were veterans from the lower ranks of the Indies army. Most of these veterans had joined the Indies Army from a modest background in the Netherlands or another European country, often with no more than primary education, and were now more or less stranded in the Indies. For these people, we can safely assume that they came from what would have been considered a racially ‘pure’ background. Among their ranks was J. Dijkman, the train inspector from the introduction to this chapter, who unsuccessfully tried to invoke racial privilege.

54 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 234, Staten van het personeel der Amtenaren en der Europeanen in lossen dienst, 1926-1940.
55 See e.g.: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from head of exploitation OJS to chief agent, 25 October 1913; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 909, Letter from head of exploitation OJS to chief agent, 8 December 1914; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 57, Dossier No. 706-II, Letter from administrator of the Sister Companies to chief agent, 27 December 1926.
56 See various personnel files in NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15. Some examples: M.J. Croux (inv.nr. 12); J. Dijkman (17); A.Y. van Zinderen (75); L.F. de Busschère (10); J. Lutgen (118). The latter two men were born in Belgium and Luxemburg, respectively, all others in the Netherlands. Also cf. the list of SJS ambtenaren with their respective educational background in 1914: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 902. As Hans Meijer reports, still in 1932 about two-thirds of the troops in the European army actually consisted of ‘import’ soldiers: Meijer, In Indië geworteld, p. 40.
As historians have remarked previously, most prominently Ulbe Bosma, the soldiers and veterans of the European contingent of the Indies army not only contributed significantly to the new immigration into the colony but were also the prime example, or at least the largest group, of what might be called ‘lower-class Europeans’ in the Indies.\textsuperscript{57} The veterans who found some additional income in the Sister Companies were among the least respectable Europeans in the company. They were staunchly part of what the Sister Companies considered their ‘\textit{Indische} employees’, despite originally coming from the metropole. The fact that a significant number of these men actually came from a ‘full-blood’ but modest background corroborates the conclusion that class co-determined their social position in the Indies economy. Their ‘Whiteness’ did not ensure them privileged treatment. ‘Racial’ notions of categorization may be useful to describe the basic principle of hierarchization in the Sister Companies. But they do not exhaustively explain the gradual nature and the chaotic fractures within this hierarchy.

**Europeans or Dutchmen?**

The veterans employed by the Sister Companies collectively serve to illustrate a further point: that the personnel in this firm were by no means exclusively Dutch. Among the train conductors and other low ranks there was a significant number of non-Dutch Europeans. In this regard, the workforce of the Sister Companies reflected a general characteristic of European society in the Indies, which according to the census of 1930 consisted of approximately 13 per cent non-Dutch nationals (out of just over 240,000 individuals).\textsuperscript{58} Although that constitutes a considerable minority, it can hardly be considered an overwhelming one. The question is then to what extent were these people indeed perceived as ‘foreigners’, or to what extent were they a normal and integrative segment of European society in the colony. If the latter is the case, this can go some way towards explaining why the colonial community


\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Volkstelling 1930}, Vol. 6, pp. 18, 78, 82. ‘European’ in this context refers to the legal status (cf. chapter 1 and 2). Of the non-Dutch Europeans, the largest nationality groups were Germans (ca. 3 per cent), Japanese (3 per cent), and British (1 per cent). Cf. on the position of non-Dutch Europeans in the Indies society (though focusing on an earlier period, namely the nineteenth century): Bosma, \textit{Indiëgangers}, pp. 40-80
continued to designate itself as European rather than Dutch until the end of the colonial era.

When studying this issue for the Sister Companies, however, the problem for the historian is that nationality was not generally registered in the personnel files. In some cases we can infer the nationality from the place of birth, but for individuals born in the Indies this does not work. Many non-Dutch veterans of the colonial army, for example, had children in the Indies, who if recognized would receive their father’s nationality. Moreover, many established families in the Indies had some German, French, British, Belgian, or Portuguese heritage, causing many Indisch surnames to have a foreign ring to them. Consequently, many non-Dutch Europeans working in the Sister Companies might fly under the radar. Yet even if we only look at those individuals actually born in a ‘foreign’ country, it does seem that many non-Dutch Europeans served in the Sister Companies without their nationality being much of an issue.

Foreigners were especially numerous in two distinct groups of employees. Firstly, they were a common sight among the veterans of the colonial army. As we know from the work done by Martin Bossenbroek, the European contingent for the colonial army actively recruited abroad, in particular signing up significant numbers of Germans and Belgians. Many of these men joined the Sister Companies after their demobilization. A typical example was Léon Frédéric de Busschère, who was born in 1873 in Bruges (Belgium). He joined the Indies colonial army in 1892 and served until 1905 when he demobilized at the rank of sergeant. Meanwhile, he had fathered three children with an Indonesian woman. After leaving the army in 1905, he stayed in the Dutch Indies and joined the Sister Companies as a train conductor. He would continue to work there until his retirement in 1928.

What is more, the Sister Companies frequently prioritized family members of current employees when recruiting for the lower ranks. Again De Busschère is a case in point. His son, Victor Léon de Busschère, born in 1901 in Magelang (Java), grew

up in the Indies and joined the Sister Companies as an overseer in 1920.\footnote{NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 166, Personnel cards L.F. de Busschère and V.L. de Busschère; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 902, List of SJS amtenaren with their respective educational background in 1914. Some other examples of veterans born in non-Dutch European countries, working for the Sister Companies: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 164, Personnel cards W. Schulz, E.E. Schulze; NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 165, Personnel cards H.M. Lücke, J. Lutgen; NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 166, Personnel cards L. Aarts, W. Bauer, L.F. de Busschère, V.L de Busschère. Also cf. the Personnel files of the same employees, respectively: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 5, 10, 118.} In this way, many Indies-born children of non-Dutch veterans—who themselves would equally have foreign nationality—further swelled the number of foreign employees in the Sister Companies’ lower ranks. In the case of all these non-Dutch veterans and their children joining the Sister Companies, their ‘foreignness’ was never discussed in their personnel files, nor does it seem to have been a matter of debate during recruitment.

The second group in which non-Dutch Europeans were conspicuously present was that of the engineers and technical personnel, where we can find a considerable number of (especially German) engineers. These were often highly trained technical experts, recruited for specific tasks. Strikingly, the foreign nationality of these workers was more regularly and more explicitly noted than in the case of the lower ranks. Even if the nationality of these engineers was no direct impediment to their career, it did make them stand out among the personnel of the Sister Companies and frequently caused them to be treated differently.

One Wilhelm Biele, for example, an engineer from Dortmund, was originally recruited in 1907 on an assignment to oversee the building of several bridges. When in the early 1910s the company decided to keep him on, it was mutually agreed that rather than giving him an ordinary engineer’s contract, he would continue to work for the Sister Companies under an exceptional contract. He remained distinct from the rest of the work force, for example by not paying into the pension fund (in exchange for a higher salary). Partly, of course, his imperfect Dutch would have already caused him to stand out among his well-educated colleagues—a circumstance that was much less conspicuous for the foreigners among the lower ranks. The fact that Biele travelled back to Germany in 1914 to find a wife contributed further. Nonetheless, he did become a part of colonial society with a certain connection to the Indies, as is witnessed by the fact that he stayed on Java and looked for a new job in the colony once he left the Sister Companies in 1921. Biele remained a foreigner in primarily Dutch elite circles, but he could still be a respected and accepted member of colonial
society. In short, then, ‘foreignness’ was a noteworthy (but accepted) characteristic for the elite, where it was largely unremarkable for the lower class Europeans.

A final telling illustration of the extent to which a ‘foreign’ heritage or background could be unremarkable in Indies European society, at least for the lower middle classes, is to be found in the story of C.F. Frese. Frese was an ordinary clerk at the Semarang branch of the Javasche Bank. Upon his recruitment to the bank in 1937 he was described by his superior as an ‘Indische boy of respectable appearance’. The reports on his performance in the following years were positive, if unremarkable. On 13 May 1940, however, Frese would face the shock of his life. The manager of the Semarang branch of the DJB received a notice from the local authorities ordering that Frese was to report himself to be interned. Just three days before, German forces had overrun the Netherlands, and the Indies authorities were responding by interning most of the German population in the colony. Official sources showed that Frese was ‘of German origin’, hence the ominous tidings.

Technically the Semarang authorities were correct. Frese’s father was born in Germany and had signed up with the Dutch colonial army in 1890. He served in the Indies for 23 years, but he never took Dutch citizenship. His son, consequently, was a German citizen like his father, even though he was born in the Indies in 1913 and hence a ‘Dutch subject’. He had been educated in Dutch Indies schools and had never travelled out of the country. When the letter from the authorities came, therefore, the Java Bank branch manager stood up for Frese: ‘I would emphatically like to point out that in the daily association in my office over the course of three years, it has been entirely clear to me that Mr. Frese in all his doings, his thoughts and his expressions, is 100 per cent a Dutchman.’

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62 NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 6, Personnel file W. Biele; NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 166, Personnel card W. Biele. Also cf. Personnel cards for F.R. Schmidt, H.T.J. Köhler, P.A. Lindner: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 164-165.
64 DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 109/33, 30 December 1936.
66 The sources do not make clear whether C.F. Frese was of mixed descent (although considering his father’s background as a common foot-soldier it is likely that he was).
67 DJB, 1969, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 113/9, 13 May 1940.
noticed anything different about Frese; Frese was a decent *Indische* boy like any other.

The *Javasche Bank*: a conservative bastion?

Frese was not the only *Indische* employee working for the Java Bank. The bank’s branches had many petty administrative positions to fill, offering ample employment in a sector of low-paid but well-respected and prestigious white-collar work. Therefore, a short exposé into the recruitment policies of the Java Bank—a business with a staunchly conservative reputation—is a counterbalance against the conclusions reached above on the employment policies of the Sister Companies. The railways were the closest there was to an industrialized sector in the Indies context. Could it be that *De Javasche Bank* (DJB) comes closer to the established image of a more explicitly and viciously racist private firm, with an ‘Indo’ class of clerks working under a lily-white management?

Thomas Lindblad in his recent book *Bridges to new business* has been one of the few historians to use the archives of DJB extensively. He concluded that employment within DJB had been a highly segregated affair: ‘Throughout the 1920s and 1930s one or at most two out of about 100 supervisory employees listed in the annual reports were indigenous Indonesians, whereas, strikingly, almost all of the cashiers were ethnic Chinese. Social segregation based on ethnicity was even stricter in private business than in government institutions.’ The evidence that Lindblad provides for this claim is based on the names of all employees listed in the annual reports: an employee is counted as ‘European’, ‘Native’ or ‘Chinese’ on the basis of the sound of his or her name. This approach, while not entirely watertight, does indicate the degree to which ‘Natives’ and ‘Chinese’ could penetrate the managerial ranks. The degree to which such ‘indianization’ took place in DJB is indeed minimal, though it was not impossible.

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68 Lindblad, *Bridges*. Another important recent publication using this archive: Claver, ‘Commerce and capital’.
70 Lindblad uses the term ‘*indonesianisasi*’ (indonesianization) due to his interest in the longer-term developments (1930s-1960s). However, the term used in the 1920s-1930s was ‘*indianisatie*’ (indianization). See e.g.: *Nota betreffende de Indianisatie van ’s Landsdienst* (Batavia: Centraal
Lindblad’s approach does not give us any indication of the relative position of ‘import employees’ and ‘Indo/Indische employees’, as either would have carried the name of their ‘European’ forebears. Neither have I been able to find relevant information in a charted form about the family background or place of birth in the DJB archives, meaning that a statistical grasp of this matter is hard to obtain. What we can find, however, are a number of individual cases in which employees’ backgrounds were discussed between the board of directors in Batavia and the agents of the local branches. The qualitative investigation of this correspondence sheds some light on the notions that prevailed within DJB.

First of all, these documents confirm that DJB was more resolutely segregationist than the Sister Companies. As Lindblad mentioned, DJB did not make a habit of promoting native employees to a rank of *stafgeëmployeerde* (‘executive employee’), and in the few cases where the directors made an exception, they could be explicit in their discriminatory reserve. A telling case is that of Raden Mas Pandji Gondo Soebario. Gondo Soebario was of high birth (he was the grandson of the former sultan Mangkonegoro IV of Surakarta and nephew of the current sultan) and had received a good education at the HBS in Utrecht (the Netherlands). Partly because of his promising educational background and partly because good relations with the house of Mangkonegoro were highly appreciated, Gondo Soebario was taken on in an executive rank in 1919. The assessments of his work in the following years, however, kept referring negatively to his Javanese birth. In 1925 his superior at the Semarang branch wrote:

Raden Mas Pandji Gondo Soebario will never be a high achiever. European diligence and zest for work cannot be expected from this Javanese of good family. Education and upbringing are so entirely different that we cannot apply the same standards as to our European employees. Of his sort Soebario is one of the better ones and may even be called very diligent. [...] He speaks excellent

Dutch, is well seen in European circles, and enjoys a certain popularity as a member of the city council of Semarang.\textsuperscript{71}

Even though it was theoretically possible for ‘Natives’ to venture into the higher positions of DJB, then, it was not only very rare, but also not expected to be a common part of the system.

The situation was similar regarding the discrimination of \textit{Indisch} employees compared to those who were ‘imported’. Even though DJB did not make an official distinction between employees recruited in the Netherlands or in the Indies, it routinely looked to the metropole for new high-potential recruits through the Amsterdam office. The preferred candidates had either an academic background (especially in law) or had been to trade schools, with several subsequent years of experience in international business.\textsuperscript{72} Vacancies in the highest positions in the bank, those of branch agents or of section heads in the main Batavian office, were almost always filled with in-house applicants who had come through the Amsterdam office and had gained several years of experience in both Amsterdam and as a deputy in one of the smaller branches in the Indies.

Also in this context, the racialized nature of the management’s preferences were occasionally revealed. In one case in 1926, just as they were looking for two new recruits, the Amsterdam branch received an application from one Theodoor Walter Soesman, accompanied by a warm recommendation from a former DJB employee. Soesman had been born and raised in the Indies, but had moved to the Netherlands with his father at the age of eleven and received the rest of his education there. The last name of this young man suggests a mixed ancestry, and indeed the Amsterdam branch remarked on this. In their letter to the board they explained that the candidate had a respectable education at the higher trade school and that he had ‘spent several months in London and Paris, which has greatly improved his language skills’. Nonetheless, they were hesitant to engage him, because, they explained, ‘he is

\textsuperscript{71} DJB, 1933, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 97/22, 19 March 1925. On Gondo Soebarijo, cf. DJB, 1944, Surabaya to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 101/28, 27 December 1928; DJB, 1944, Board of Directors to Surabaya, PZ No. 101/31, 12 January 1929.

\textsuperscript{72} See for all correspondence of the Directors with the Amsterdam branch concerning personnel matters (1930-1945): DJB, 2076-2079. The Amsterdam branch and the main office were in an almost weekly exchange. A set topic of discussion was the recruitment of new high-potentials and their subsequent development.
an *Indische* boy and this is what makes it difficult for us. We do not know what your opinion is on us hiring *Indische* youngsters, and we believe to have reason to doubt this is your intention.’ They advised Soesman to move to the Indies on his own initiative and apply directly in Batavia rather than through the Amsterdam office.\(^{73}\)

The directors in their reply approved of this stance, welcomed Soesman’s application once he reached the Indies, and wrote in their reply: ‘[W]e prefer not to engage youngsters of Soesman’s *genre* in the Netherlands.’\(^{74}\)

For the lower administrative positions meanwhile, the members of the management did frequently state that they preferred to find employees of the type of C.F. Frese: an ‘*Indische* boy of respectable appearance’,\(^{75}\) an ‘unmarried *Indische* boy’\(^{76}\) or—for the position of typist—an ‘*Indische* girl’.\(^{77}\) These were positions that were too humble and poorly paid to appoint a recruit from the Netherlands, but considerations of the bank’s prestige made it preferable to fill them with a respectable ‘European’ over a Native or Chinese. In short, *Indische* candidates were in demand to fill the ‘respectable’ lower-level positions, but simultaneously their respectability was deemed insufficient for them to occupy the higher positions.

This stance seems to confirm the classic image of the *Indische* employee as the colonial middleman. But it only represents the ideal image of the DJB management. Social realities sometimes played out in a more complicated way. For one thing, the particular position that I just cited for which the management had envisioned an ‘unmarried *Indische* boy’ was eventually offered to a Chinese man, Khoe Soe Khoan. Khoe had made ‘a pleasant and intelligent impression’ on the agent and he spoke good Dutch. He was even offered a higher starting salary than originally intended for the position, to match his ‘excellent credentials’.\(^{78}\) When it came to actual hiring practices, a particularly qualified individual could overturn the management’s preconceptions. Likewise, the aforementioned Theodoor Soesman, who had been of the wrong ‘*genre*’ to be hired in Amsterdam as a trainee for the higher position, was actually accepted in the DJB upon his arrival in the Indies (on the

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\(^{73}\) DJB, 1936, Letter Amsterdam to Board of Directors, PZ 98/17, 18 January 1926.

\(^{74}\) DJB, 1936, Board of Directors to Amsterdam, PZ No. 98/25, 18 February 1926.

\(^{75}\) DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 109/33, 30 December 1936.

\(^{76}\) E.g. DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 109/30, 14 December 1936. Also cf. DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 109/34, 5 January 1937; DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 110/58, 10 March 1938.

\(^{77}\) E.g. DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 110/57, 2 March 1938.

\(^{78}\) DJB, 1968, Semarang to the Board of Directors, PZ No. 110/13, 5 June 1937.
strength of his educational credentials), and offered the opportunity to prove his worth as deputy agent at the small branch in Bandjermasin (South Borneo).\textsuperscript{79} The racial prejudice that the board had against Soesman put him at a disadvantage (e.g. he had to pay for his own passage to the Indies), but it was not a debilitating disadvantage. Soesman was stigmatized as a representative of a particular ‘genre’, but his education and social background did set him apart from other members of that genre.

This potential for class to trump race, even in the conservative environment of the \textit{Javaanse Bank}, is most striking in the fate of Karel Willem Jan Michielsen, the DJB director portrayed in the introduction to this chapter. His position on the board, which he reached in 1929 after a 20-year career through the ranks of the bank, made him a member of the absolute elite of the Indies European society.\textsuperscript{80} Even after his retirement in 1937, when he moved to The Hague with his wife, Michielsen remained an influential figure in Indies circles, acting as advisor to the government and joining various boards of commissioners for Indies businesses (among them the Sister Companies who made him a commissioner in 1938).\textsuperscript{81}

One tends to assume that someone in Michielsen’s position must be a ‘pure-blood’ European, simply because we have learnt to expect that this is how colonial society functioned. Indeed, I myself would not have given him another thought had I not chanced upon a collection of photographs in the DJB archives, among which there were several of the board on which Michielsen was a director (see figure 6.1).\textsuperscript{82} These photographs show a man whose appearance seems to suggest a mixed family heritage. Yet when I tried to verify this in the DJB sources it proved impossible to find any reference to such a circumstance.\textsuperscript{83} This suggests that a reference to employees or applicants as \textit{Indisch} or ‘Indo-European’ had a decisive class dimension: no one would have dared to call Michielsen an ‘\textit{Indische} boy’, at least not by the time he had made it to director of the \textit{Javaanse Bank}.

Research in other sources did ultimately reveal Michielsen’s social and family background. His father, W.M.J. Michielsen, had come to the Indies in 1861 at the

\textsuperscript{79} DJB, 1936, Board of Directors to Bandjermasin, PZ No. 98/6, 3 March 1926.
\textsuperscript{80} DJB, 2159, Service record Karel Willem Jan Michielsen (no. 220), 31 March 1924.
\textsuperscript{81} ‘De Zustermaatschappijen’, \textit{De Sumatra Post}, 28 September 1938.
\textsuperscript{82} DJB, image collection No. 15 and 20. Photo No. 20 is reproduced here as figure 6.1.
\textsuperscript{83} It should be noted that, generally, the correspondence on the personnel in the DJB archives only goes back to 1923 (as documents in personnel files could be discarded after 30 years and DJB was dissolved in 1953), by which time Michielsen had already reached a respectable position in the company. The correspondence regarding his initial recruitment to the company has not survived.
tender age of 17 and after several years in the tobacco industry had entered the colonial civil service. Later he would go on to have a stellar career, but at the time of Karel’s birth in 1882, Michielsen Sr. was still an unimportant subordinate official on far-away Borneo. Michielsen Sr. was unmarried at the time, and Karel was the illegitimate son of a Chinese concubine named Kim Nio. This was anything but exceptional in the late nineteenth century, especially for civil servants in the Outer Provinces. What made Karel lucky, however, was that his father acknowledged him. Even though his father eventually married a respectable Dutch girl in 1896 and had several more legitimate children, Karel was legally recognized and fully accepted as the oldest son in the family. More importantly, he received a good education. Once his father had advanced in his career, Karel was sent to the Netherlands to study at the HBS and after that he visited a trade school, preparing him for a life in Indies business.

In short, a racially mixed background was a social disadvantage in the Netherlands Indies. A background of mixed ancestry and a lower-class environment were closely correlated. But the fate of K.W.J. Michielsen shows that ‘race’ alone did not need to be a stigma; it only became a stigma if class-markers coincided. Because Michielsen was fully acknowledged by his father, who was an important and well-respected man, and because he received a good education, he himself could also rise to the absolute economic elite of the Indies. It is therefore inaccurate to speak of racism in the Indies in terms of a ‘colour bar’ or even, to quote Paul van der Veur, a ‘shade bar’. Racist attitudes in the Indies were virulent and at times aggressive, but highly dependent on context.

Defining a group: Indisch vs. Indo

What Michielsen’s case also shows is that the terms ‘Indisch’, ‘Indo’ or ‘Chinese’ were not applied to a man of his stature, despite his family background. The widely accepted notion that ‘[c]oncubine children invariably counted among the ranks of the

84 Obituary in Het Vaderland, 3 March 1926; Het Nieuws van den Dag, 4 March 1926.
85 Registry of Marriages, Batavia, 1911, No. 60. A microfilm copy of this register rests with the family research centre of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Amsterdam.
86 Bosma, Indiëgangers, pp. 20-21.
87 For example, it was Karel who published the obituary notice on behalf of all his siblings at the time of his father’s death: Het Nieuws van den Dag, 4 March 1926.
88 K.W.J. Michielsen’, De Indische Courant, 30 July 1937.
European poor (Ann Stoler) is at least partly a consequence of taking colonial language for granted: people like Michielsen do not register in our research, because contemporaries did not mention that he was a concubine child.

As I have tried to show in the previous pages, both for DJB and the Sister Companies we can discern a tendency for racial discrimination in the realities of recruitment policy, but it was a tendency that was inflected by and partly based upon other considerations (such as education and employment assessments). Consequently, the hierarchies were fractured and gradual rather than neatly segregated into discrete groups (though more so in the Sister Companies than in the Javasche Bank). What remains to be explored more thoroughly is how these hierarchies and fractures were expressed in words. We have seen that people of mixed backgrounds who climbed high enough were unlikely be referred to as ‘Indo’, but what about the reverse? Was one called an ‘Indo’ because of one’s low social status—thus including under that racially inflected term the likes of the ‘full-blood’ veterans working as train inspectors? Such a query can show us whether the imagined differences, even when determined on the basis of class markers, were indeed racialized at the discursive level.

Of course, the usage within the Sister Companies (and likewise within DJB) is not uniform. Partly this can be the consequence of actors slipping in their usage (thus inadvertently revealing underlying prejudices), but partly it is also a reflection of different people having different conceptions. Nonetheless, a predominant tendency can be discerned. The principal differentiation among the European personnel was that between import and Indisch, or alternatively between uitgezonden (litt.: ‘sent out’) and hiergeboren (‘born here’).  

What these terms are generally meant to signify is the location in which an employee had been recruited: in the Netherlands or in the Indies. As a rule, someone appointed in the Netherlands would be offered a different contract than someone recruited in the Indies, supplied and signed by the board of directors in The Hague.

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90 Stoler, ‘Carnal knowledge’, p. 68.
91 See for some examples of import vs. Indisch: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920-II, Survey HIOC completed for SJS, 3 October 1929; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 704-III-b, Letter from the chief agent (G. Diephuis) to board of directors, 20 December 1928. Examples of uitgezonden vs. hiergeboren: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Letter from the chief agent (Caspersz) to the board of directors, 1 November 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Memorandum for the board of directors regarding furlough to the Netherlands, 26 November 1919.
rather than the agent in Semarang. But the terms were often given an additional connotation of birthplace or of the presumed location of one’s home (i.e. family and acquaintances, one’s milieu). Revealing is the usual opposition of uitgezonden with hiergeboren (‘born here’), rather than hieraangenomen (‘recruited here’). Sometimes it was also made more explicit, when the directors explained that a small number of the employees recruited in the Indies—namely those ‘who have their relations [betrekkingen] in Europe’—could and should actually be regarded as equal to the true uitgezonden. The latter remark shows that the opposition of import and Indisch had a hidden socio-cultural meaning.

The term ‘Indo’ or ‘Indo-European’, meanwhile, was much less commonly used in the sources from the Sister Companies. This is rather striking considering the importance that is attached to this term in much of the literature on constructions of race and class in the Indies. Yet the practice in the Sister Companies shows a much smaller importance of this category, and in the sporadic occasions where it does appear in the Sister Companies files, the context is telling. One instance was in 1913 when the management discussed the reform that would open up ambtenaren positions to Natives. The board were worried about the implications of this move:

The most difficult aspect of the issue at hand is, in our opinion, which stance we should take towards the less developed Europeans. Should we exclude them entirely from our employ or engage them as beambten? In the latter case they would end up in lower ranks than the native ambtenaren. We fear that this...
relationship will give cause to tensions between the Indo-European and the native personnel that will be harmful to our service.96

In this quotation, we see a sudden (and presumably inadvertent) shift from ‘less developed Europeans’ to ‘Indo-European’. It occurs in a context where the object of enquiry, the Europeans in the very lowest ‘European’ positions’, is rhetorically equated with (parts of) the ‘native’ personnel.

In a similar context in 1918 we see the same phenomenon. In this case, some native ambtenaren had petitioned for a housing allowance on the same footing as their European colleagues. The chief agent wrote in his recommendation to the board that this seemed no more than reasonable to him:

Indeed our native ambtenaren, all of whom obviously belong to the more developed members of their race and many of whom dress in a European style, certainly do not live in lesser circumstances than our lower Indo-European ambtenaren, especially as far as their homes are concerned.97

Once again we see the management using ‘Indo-European’ here in a context where the lower (or rather: lowest) administrative personnel is discursively placed on the same level as the (more advanced) Natives. This seems to be a strategy of ‘othering’ this group of the European personnel. Their full Europeanness is discursively revoked. Yet it should be kept in mind in this context—as can be induced from the entire dossier in which this particular document is stored—that, for example, the ‘full-blood’ train inspectors discussed previously were equally part of this group.98 These men would not individually be called an ‘Indo’, but on paper, as a member of a larger, abstract collective, they could quietly be subsumed under the ‘Indo-European’ heading. What it is, then, is a racially charged term used to connote a hierarchization based partly on class markers. The (elite European) management sometimes used the

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96 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920, Letter from the board of directors to the chief agent, 31 December 1913.
97 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 910, Letter from the chief agent to the board of directors, 18 March 1918. Similar slippage from hiergeboren to ‘Indo-European’: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Summary of the Minutes of a meeting of the committee of chairmen, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921.
98 See Dossier nos. 909-910: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90.
term ‘Indo-European’ as a way of racializing differences, when and where it felt the need to increase the social distance to a certain group of its personnel.

Nonetheless, ‘Indisch’ remained the preferred notion. The underdetermined nature of this term seems to have been the very feature that made it convenient. Indisch literally means ‘of the Indies’ and its primary connotations are social and cultural. But for those who so wished it could also be associated with ‘Indo-European’. Various aspects of race, wealth, social background, education, and performance on the job could all be subsumed under it. These aspects sometimes overlapped, were sometimes mutually amplifying, but sometimes also conflicting. ‘Indo-European’ as a notion had a much clearer racial inflection, and was only used in specific situations where the respective author wished to racialize differences. The Indisch notion meanwhile left the option open to choose whichever aspect was most convenient in a particular situation, making it more easily applicable to the complex and fractured realities of the Sister Companies’ workforce.

**Constructing an Indisch middle class: the trade unions**

What I have described in this chapter so far has been largely from the point of view of the company management. It consequently represents the view of a European elite. It is equally important to examine the agency of the objects of enquiry: those people who were alternately referred to as ‘lower-level administrative employees’, ‘less developed Europeans’, ‘Indische employees’, or ‘Indo-Europeans’. How did they refer to themselves, and where did they draw boundaries of inclusion and exclusion?

These actors often remain silent in the archives; most of them were not prolific writers. For the railways, however, the historian is fortunate to have the trade unions as an access to the voices of these actors, though most railway trade unions in the Indies—at least all the ones that we have documentation from—functioned as branch organizations rather than as unions for one specific company. The specific trade union

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that I study here, the *Spoorbond*, united employees from various private railway firms as well as from the State Railways. Therefore, the conclusions I present here should be interpreted as applying to the railway industry as a whole rather than only the Sister Companies or the private railway firms.

The first unions in the railway industry had sprung up in the 1900s and had started to attract a significant following in the 1910s. The most important union (and the only one studied at length by historians) was the *Vereniging voor Spoor- en Tramweg Personeel in Nederlandsch-Indië* (VSTP, Union of Rail- and Tramway Personnel in the Netherlands Indies). The VSTP had been founded in 1908 and in its first few years had predominantly been a union of and for European employees. By the mid-1910s, it had co-opted several Indonesians into its leadership and had started to recruit Indonesian workers in great numbers. Consequently, by the end of the decade, most (European) administrative and supervisory personnel had left the union: in 1920 there were only 236 European members left out of a total VSTP membership of 6,494. The VSTP met with several smaller successes in the late 1910s and early 1920s, but the great railway strike of 1923, while in some ways its finest hour, simultaneously meant its demise. Most of its leadership was arrested, and in the following years membership declined steeply whilst the VSTP lost most of its actual influence.

The leading historian on unions in colonial Indonesia, John Ingleson, has portrayed the mid-1910s, with particular reference to the VSTP, as a period in which a heated discussion raged over the respective merits for the unions of emphasizing class-consciousness over race-consciousness (or vice versa). According to Ingleson, the Indonesian union leadership ultimately tended to perceive its discontents against the management in racial terms rather than in class terms. In the words of VSTP leader Semaonen in 1918, one could not ignore the difference between the ‘middle class proletariat’ and the ‘real proletariat’; this difference existed in all societies but was particularly sharp in a colonial society where racial divisions were rigid. Simultaneously, Ingleson writes, ‘Europeans were becoming increasingly uneasy as their comfortable privileged world was being challenged, and they reacted by

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101 Ingleson, “‘Bound hand and foot’”, p. 55; Ingleson, *In search of justice*, pp. 78-79.
102 Ingleson, “‘Bound hand and foot’”; Ingleson, *In search of justice*, pp. 210-315.
becoming even more conscious of their “European-ness”.\footnote{Ingleson, \textit{In search of justice}, p. 82.} In his analysis, race-consciousness displaced class-consciousness as Europeans broke away from the VSTP and formed two new railway unions in 1920, the \textit{Algemene Spoorbond} (General Railway Union) and the \textit{S.S.-Bond} (State Railways Union).\footnote{Ingleson, \textit{In search of justice}, pp. 75, 84. Cf. L. Nagtetaal, ‘De spoorbond: een vakorganisatie van Indo-europeaanen’, in Willems, \textit{Sporen}, pp. 111-119. The latter, the \textit{S.S.-Bond}, actually had a predecessor that had meanwhile become defunct. It was re-established in 1920.} Both of these unions would merge in late-1923 into the \textit{Spoorbond}.

This contention is only part of the story. It is true that the mere fact that there were several unions for one industry is evidence of deep rifts among the personnel; and nor can it be denied that the VSTP had an overwhelmingly Indonesian membership whilst both other unions were predominantly European (although we do not have exact numbers for the latter).\footnote{Ingleson, \textit{In search of justice}, pp. 78-79; Nagtetaal, ‘De spoorbond’, pp. 114-115.} Nonetheless, the thinking about (and practice of) the role of race and class was somewhat more complicated. It is equally true, namely, that the ‘European’ unions were trapped in a constant split between on the one hand their \textit{raison d’être} as a union—defending their members’ interests against the establishment—and on the other hand the ‘colonial task’ that they felt they equally had to ‘fulfil’.\footnote{‘De oprichting van den Spoorbond’, \textit{De Locomotief}, 4 June 1920, filed in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 71, Dossier No. 743-II; ‘Het juiste standpunt van den Klassenstrijd voor Indië’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 3, No. 11, 1926, pp. 386-388; ‘De tijdelijke verbreking der betrekkingen met den Spoorbond’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 6, No. 13, 1929, pp. 421-424.} The ‘European’ trade union (or ‘union of Indo-Europeans’ as L. Nagtetaal calls it\footnote{Nagtetaal, ‘De spoorbond’. This is the only publication dealing with the \textit{Spoorbond} specifically. Nagtetaal’s article is rather concise and uses only scarce references, making it impossible to assess his use of sources.}) was actually, in its own perception, a union for ‘mid-level personnel’, making the predominant reasoning one of class, despite practices that betray the (additional) influence of underlying racial preconceptions.

The dilemma of a ‘race-criterion’ versus a ‘class-criterion’ was borne out from the very foundation of the union. The two constituting organizations, the \textit{S.S.-Bond} and the \textit{Algemene Spoorbond}, had differing membership regulations that illustrate precisely this tension. The \textit{S.S.-Bond} accepted all \textit{middelbaar} (mid-level) personnel, irrespective of their ‘race’ (viz. legal status), whilst excluding all lower-level employees as well as all executive personnel. The \textit{Algemene Spoorbond}, by contrast, officially restricted its membership to ‘Europeans and those equated with them’. ‘Natives’ and ‘Foreign Orientals’ could theoretically join, but only subject to a
ballotage by the members of their local branch. ‘Natives’ were thus explicitly outside
the primary target membership. This was reflected in the convoluted official name of
this union (Algemene Spoorbond was merely an abbreviation): Bond van het Europees
Personeel bij de Spoor- en Tramwegen in Nederlands-Indië en van de wat salariëring
betreft, daarmede gelijk gestelde Inlanders en vreemde Oosterlingen (‘Union of the
European Personnel with the Rail- and Tramways in the Netherlands Indies and of the
Natives and foreign Orientals who are equated with them as regards their salary’).109

After the two unions merged in 1923, the newly formed organization (known
simply as the Spoorbond) followed the regulations originally enforced by the S.S.-
bond. Membership was open to all non-graduate mid-level personnel, ‘without
discrimination based on sex, landaard, religion or political conviction’.110 They were,
it seems, successful in recruiting membership: immediately after the merger, some 70
per cent of the S.S. mid-level personnel were members.111 Over the following decades
the Spoorbond would continue to refer to its supporters as the middelbaar personeel
(the mid-level personnel) explicitly including in that category the Natives and Foreign
Orientals in mid-level positions. A number of Natives and Foreign Orientals did
indeed take the step of joining the Spoorbond. In 1928 for example, out of 568 new
members in the union, 134 were recognizably Indonesian and 6 were Chinese.112

Presumably these educated Indonesians felt that their interests were better defended in
the Spoorbond than in a ‘native’ union—which would be more concerned with the

109 ‘Algemeene vergadering van den Algemeene Spoorbond op Zondag den 23 April 1922’, De
Spoorbond, Vol. 2, No. 11, April 1922, pp. 1-9; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 71, Dossier No. 743-II,
Letter Van der Pant to chief agent of the Sister Companies; ‘De oprichting van den Spoorbond’, De
110 ‘Statuten van den Spoorbond’, De Spoorbond, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1923, pp. 8-10, art. 5. This particular
(original) version of the statutes actually reads ‘non-graduate Personnel 1st class’, because the newly
formed Spoorbond in the first two years of its existence only accepted S.S.-employees and no
employees from private railway firms. The S.S. differentiated between 1st and 2nd class personnel rather
than ‘ambtenaren’ and ‘beamten’. Employees from private firms were accepted as of 1925. ‘De
aansluiting der particuliere Spoor- en Trammannen’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 3, No. 8, 1926, pp. 282-
283.
111 Nagtegaal, ‘De spoorbond’, p. 115. We have no statistics on membership of employees in the
private railway firms.
112 Taken from the monthly list of new members. By ‘recognizably’ I mean that the name of the
member strongly suggests either an Indonesian or Chinese background. This method is of course not
entirely accurate, nor does it recognize whether these individuals were legally ‘equated’, but it does
suggests that a significant share of the union were non-European members: Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 5,

In any case, the native members were welcomed into the union, not shunned. Moreover, the \textit{Spoorbond} did not welcome them merely as an act of window dressing. It seriously propagated policies that were specifically put on the agenda by its native members. For example, in the late-1920s the issue of free travel for employees’ family members became an important cause. Every employee received a number of free train tickets for his direct family members, a policy that was more generous towards European \textit{ambtenaren} than towards their native colleagues (because managements feared that native employees in a polygamous family might abuse the entitlement). The \textit{Spoorbond} repeatedly pushed for reforms on this matter.\footnote{See for example Inzender, ‘De kwestie der vrijbiljetten voor familieleden van het S.S. personeel van inlandse landaard’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 4, No. 11, 1927, p. 581.} Similarly, the union propagated the reform of furlough regulations to better account for the interests of its native members.\footnote{‘Afdeeling Bandoeng’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 8, No. 15, 1931, pp. 507-508.} The \textit{Spoorbond} may have been a predominantly ‘European’ union, but it was not exclusively so, nor did it see its native members merely as an unimportant afterthought.

What the \textit{Spoorbond} expressed as its intention to represent, then, by referring to the \textit{middelbaar} personnel, was a class notion. However, it was not a class notion of the working proletariat versus the management, but rather a notion of a middle class, a layer of employees wedged between the common workers and the management ranks. Consequently, resentment in the \textit{Spoorbond} was generally much more vigorous towards the higher ranks than towards socially mobile educated Indonesians.

One of the constants of the union’s propaganda, throughout the last two decades of colonial rule, was the complaint that both the State Railways as well as the various private railway firms were decidedly and unnecessarily ‘top-heavy’. A recurrent theme was their fraternization as what they called \textit{benedenpeilers} (‘those below par’) in opposition to the \textit{bovenpeilers} (‘those above par’) of the higher ranks.\footnote{J.I. de Rochemont, ‘De décadentie bij den dienst der Staatsspoorwegen III’, \textit{De Spoorbond}, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1921, pp. 1-11; F.A. Kessler, ‘Het bloed kruipt waar het niet gaan kan’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 1, No. 14, 1924, pp. 522-523; Benedenpeiler, ‘De Salarisnota en het korps G.A.S.’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 1, No. 18, 1924, p. 719; ‘Er is een tijd van komen...’, \textit{Spoorbondsblad}, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1931, pp. 72-74;} The higher ranks in this context were accused of passing the good jobs
around in their own social circles at the expense of the ‘labouring classes’. The preferred scapegoat was the ‘outsider’: ‘There is only one sound antithesis, which is that of “insider” and “outsider”, and insiders are all those who, after coming to the SS, have started their career from below, outsiders are all others.’

Members and leaders of theSpoorbond sometimes disagreed on whether this antithesis should be understood as representing a competition between import and hiergeborenen, or as they sometimes called it: of ‘foreign’ (uitheemsche) versus ‘indigenous’ (inheemsche) Europeans. Some warned against making this equation. As the leadership explained in 1927, many of the ‘outsiders’ were actually also ‘born here’. Moreover, making such a distinction could produce dangerous tensions within theSpoorbond itself, as one member explained: ‘The juxtaposition of import and indigenous seems like an unfortunate choice to me. In our organizationDeSpoorbond I only know fellowSpoorbonders. In a union, one should not ask the question whether a member was born in Zaltbommel or in Gang Troentji.’ But many other members made the opposite argument in the periodical. One employee of the Sister Companies, for example, complained in 1929:

Why would it be necessary to obtain mid-level personnel from Holland; are there not enough clever young people here, who could qualify for those positions? [...] But the Company has a weak spot for sending out personnel and thinks that fresh blood can keep the quality of the personnel up to the mark or even raise the level. The recruitment of personnel in Holland is offensive towards the personnel already in service, especially to those born here.


To a certain extent, some Spoorbonders related to the abstract idea of being ‘indigenous’ Europeans with inalienable rights in their native country. But this did not mean they bore direct resentment against individual ‘foreign’ colleagues as long as these were of similar social status to them. Antipathy was expressed more towards the abstract idea of (excessive) immigration of higher class Europeans.

Opinions diverged acutely on whether this opposition should be interpreted in racial terms. Some members did feel a self-identification as ‘Indo-European’ was appropriate, and felt that the Spoorbond should primarily defend the interests of the ‘Indo’ society. This sentiment became particularly pertinent in discussions surrounding the income structure associated with the BBL and its equivalents in private firms. In 1926, following the recent implementation of the BBL, the union leadership proposed to introduce a regulation making retirement mandatory after 30 years of service, thus hoping to accelerate the flow of promotions for younger employees. Without delving into the details of this discussion, it will suffice to note that a subgroup within the Spoorbond called for action to block these plans. This group openly accused the union leadership of neglecting the interests of ‘Indo-Europeans’, or as they sometimes also called themselves, the ‘Indische children’. In 1931, when this discussion flared up anew, a small group of Spoorbond members even went as far as to threaten secession in order to found a ‘union for and of the Indo, which shall have the motto: ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE’. What the leadership was proposing would ‘make the economic, social and spiritual development of the Indo impossible’.

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The context in which these conflicts took place makes clear that the self-identification as ‘Indo-European’ became pertinent especially when the actors pushing this agenda felt threatened from two sides at once: by (educated) Indonesians infringing on their employment opportunities as well as by the company managements exposing them to this threat. They stressed the ‘Indo’ part in order to portray themselves as the rightful population of the land they were living in, with a certain right to consideration above new immigrants. Simultaneously, they added the ‘European’ part to emphasize their elevated position over Indonesians who were threatening their economic well-being. ‘Indo-ness’ was indeed a middleman position. But it was a position that was staked out only when a need was felt to erect boundaries in two directions simultaneously. If a juxtaposition was only desired in one direction—for example in the conflict over European ‘outsiders’ occupying high positions—an ‘Indo-European’ identity was less useful and often even felt to be pejorative.

The Spoorbond leadership, in any case, was very hesitant to invoke a racial identity at all, or even to use the term ‘Indo-European’. The preferred terms of self-description were middelbaar personeel or occasionally hiergeborenen. This stance was backed by many of the ordinary members. One E. Ellendt wrote to the journal to defend the leadership against the accusation of neglecting the interests of the ‘Indo-Europeans’. Ellendt identified himself as a ‘true-hearted Indo-European’, but then wrote: ‘In a trade union we only recognize members, no matter which colour was bestowed on them by birth.’ The mere fact that the Spoorbond could continue to practice its way of reasoning, based on a class-logic, throughout the last two decades of colonial rule in the Netherlands Indies, shows that this was not objectionable to the majority of members. Many of the poor(er) Europeans in the Indies preferred not to identify as ‘Indos’ but rather as ‘hiergeborenen Europeans’ or as the ‘working class’.

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128 One prominent exception is: ‘Notulen der 2e Algemeene Vergadering van den Spoorbond’, p. 296. Generally speaking, however, the term ‘Indo-European’ was absent from material written by the leadership of the union.
Nagtegaals characterization of the *Spoorbond* as a ‘union of Indo-Europeans’ is thus misleading, because it applies an essentialist notion, suggesting that lower-class Europeans were indeed ‘Indo-European’.\(^{130}\) In its self-image, however, the *Spoorbond* was a union of (hiergeboren) mid-level personnel. Nagtegaal’s assertion fits with a tendency in the historical literature to recognize the development of an ‘Indo’ (political and social) identity in the last decades of colonial rule and to conflate a notion of *Indisch*ness with an ‘Indo’ (i.e. Eurasian) identity.\(^{131}\) The overemphasis on the importance of an ‘Indo’ identity seems to originate from the role of the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* (IEV), a political party for ‘Indo-Europeans’ that attracted a large following in the 1920s.\(^{132}\) Indeed, as is evident from the name alone, the IEV did present itself proudly as an organization for ‘Indo-Europeans’,\(^{133}\) hence certainly contributing to the development of an ‘Indo’ identity in the late colonial Dutch East Indies.

I do not contest that the ‘*Indisch*’ and ‘Indo-European’ terms are intimately related, and indeed strongly correlated. But I argue that it is significant which notion was used in which situation, because they sometimes implied different boundaries, and always invoked different connotations. The *Spoorbond* shows that the rise of an ‘Indo’ identity was not ubiquitous in the Indies. A majority of the members in this union, even if they identified as rooted in the Indies, refused identification as ‘Indo-European’, preferring to be perceived in terms of class: less educated, mid-level workers exploited by a higher-class management that reproduced itself through nepotism. Sometimes, this antipathy was related to a metropolitan-born versus colony-based dichotomy, but rarely was it associated with a racial boundary.

**Conclusions**

The difference between self-identifications as ‘Indo’ or as ‘mid-level’ (or even as ‘hiergeboren’) is significant. It makes it easier for us to go beyond the stereotype of

\(^{130}\) Nagtegaal, ‘De Spoorbond’ (see above).


\(^{132}\) This is particularly clear in Meijer, *In Indië geworteld*.

\(^{133}\) Even the IEV, however, interpreted this ‘Indo’ identity rather broadly, including in it all Indies-born ‘full-blood’ Europeans as well as the ‘import’ Europeans with children born in the Indies: ‘Indo-Europeanen: zijt gij ook Indo-Europeaan?’, *Onze Schakel Semarang*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1938, pp. 5-7.
the Indo—the poor European—as particularly resentful, narrow-minded and racist, and as guarding the boundary towards the native population even more jealously than his elite European brethren. Instead, these people lived with porous boundaries to both sides, which could be broken and re-arranged to adapt to the context. There was not a single boundary that could be drawn and guarded; there were only individuals, constantly imagining and re-imagining plural boundaries. The poor(er) Europeans had their own voice and agency in this process, and represented a broader spectrum of opinions than the IEV alone offered. Simultaneously, the employers in the Sister Companies, as well as in the Java Bank, equally found it more expedient to think of these employees in terms of Indisch or hiergeboren rather than with the explicitly racialized term ‘Indo’. The boundaries of segregation on the Indies labour market—which could certainly be vicious—were mostly represented in terms of class and culture rather than race differences.

What is more, if we look at the actual practice of recruitment in these businesses, we can likewise see the importance of class. This practice was at times extremely racially inflected (a ‘racial dividend’ surely applied in the Indies) and could sometimes also be discursively racialized. In this sense, class and race in the Indies were correlated and frequently in alignment. Nevertheless, some conspicuous outliers, people like Michielsen, Butteling, or Dijkman, show that this was not necessarily the case, and that racial logics alone cannot explain the functioning of the Indies labour market. In these cases, considerations of education and social background trumped the cursory glance at a person’s skin.

Consequently, ‘Eurasians’ could reach the highest positions and ‘full-bloods’ could be all the way down at the bottom. The point is that the sources have a tendency to confirm our own expectations about racial hierarchies, because the language conventions of the time partly align with ours. Indische boys became ‘Europeans’ in the (rare but not exceptional) cases where they ascended the social ladder sufficiently, while ‘full-blood’ Europeans could descend into ‘Indo’ spheres when they held precarious jobs.

The question remains why these practices of employment discrimination took the form that they did. Why is it that ‘racial’ imaginations were less present than is frequently assumed, or that they were at least frequently avoided on a discursive level? Part of the explanation lies in the self-affirmative logic of a development discourse. The decades around the turn of the century had witnessed the decisive shift
towards a new justification for colonialism—the ‘civilizing mission’. Even though beliefs and policies in the 1920s and 1930s saw a certain conservative backlash, the professed ideals of colonialism continued to rest on the ‘civilizing mission’. The examination of the Sister Companies shows that this discourse incidentally pushed the actors towards certain practices, in order to resolve the cognitive dissonance inherent in their own thinking.

Another part of the explanation lies in more structural factors. Firstly, the education system as well as other development efforts had been greatly extended in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Consequently the number of individuals challenging previous ideas on the alignment of race and class or culture increased rapidly, forcing the reconsideration of fundamental notions. Secondly, and more importantly, both the economy and demography of the European society in the Indies expanded considerably in the first half of the twentieth century—the European community increased from ca. 81,000 in 1895 to ca. 300,000 in 1940. As I elaborate in the following two chapters, one consequence was that Indisch society in the last decades of colonial rule increasingly sought a more autonomous position in the world, in connection with but not dependent upon the metropolitan Netherlands.

The focus on ‘race’ as the central analytical category to explain discrimination in the Dutch East Indies is somewhat anachronistic. It derives from an overly uniform conception of colonial rule, relying on the hindsight of decolonization. In reality, not all colonial rule was the same. Some colonies were different from others. It seems, for example, that many African colonial societies tended to rely on more clearly racialized boundaries. Even within the Indies, differences could be significant

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134 Cf. Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*. Locher-Scholten follows the concept of ‘ethical policy’ (the Dutch Indies’ version of the ‘civilizing mission’) across four decades, showing that actual policies may have become more conservative in the interwar years, but that the underlying discourse of ethical policy remained potent.

135 *Volksstelling 1930*, Vol. 6: p. 18, Vol. 8: p. 7; Gijs Beets et al., *De demografische geschiedenis van de Indische Nederlanders* (The Hague: NIDI, 2002), p. 107. Nevertheless, the European community still remained a very small minority, with a total population of the archipelago that increased in the same period from approximately 35 million to 65 million.

between, for example, the plantation belt on North Sumatra\(^{137}\) and the northern coast of Java, where the Sister Companies were active. And diachronic shifts changed the way colonial societies were constituted over time. The last decades of the colonial era in the Indies saw efforts at re-imagining the way colonial rule functioned. The possibility of shifting the discriminatory discourse from race-based to class-based was part of that re-imagining, although, of course, this change was relative rather than absolute.

Studying these efforts at alternative colonial constellations should not be interpreted as a way of downplaying or justifying colonialism. Discrimination was still brutal and the system could be equally repressive. Moreover, it soon became clear that these alternatives were ultimately untenable. But they were real nonetheless. From the retrospective of decolonization this sometimes becomes obscured. Not all colonialism was the same; we need to recognize that, in order to understand fully the specificities as well as the commonalities of all types of colonial rule.

\(^{137}\) See e.g. Stoler, *Capitalism and confrontation*. 

Chapter 7
Doing Europe: *Indisch* Europeans on furlough

**Prologue: Bondslid on holiday**

From the autumn of 1929 until the summer of 1930, a lone Indo-European was making his way through Western Europe. After decades of loyal service in the Indies railways, he had sufficient savings to supplement the furlough allowance that he was entitled to from his Indies employer. Starting out from The Hague—the central meeting place for all *Indisch* people in the Netherlands—he travelled to Brussels, Paris, Switzerland, the French Riviera (where he spent the winter), northern Italy, and Switzerland again, before returning to spend his last month in Belgium (Brussels and Antwerp). Throughout his travels, he kept his colleagues meticulously informed with regular reports that were published in the periodical of the *Spoorbond*, the trade union for mid-level personnel in the Indies railway industry.¹ (The letters were published anonymously, merely identifying the author as a ‘union member’. For reasons of convenience I refer to the author here as Bondslid—‘Union Member’.)

*Bondslid* thoroughly enjoyed all the marvels he beheld on this far-away continent: Europe, his presumed homeland, though not his place of birth. Europe was an exciting place, with beautiful old towns and magnificent museums with splendid collections. Most important of all, Europe offered the opportunity to soak up all the modern as well as classical culture that one could desire: a selection of plays, concerts and cinemas to choose from every night of the week; the Rallye automobile de Monte Carlo with contestants speaking all the languages of Europe; the annual fair in Milan; and the world exhibition in Antwerp where the entire world was on display. Our traveller was happy to find himself immersed in cosmopolitan circles. From Paris, he wrote: ‘To me it makes no difference whether I find myself among French or Dutch people. I feel perfectly *senang* in the modern Babylon.’²

To *Bondslid*, it was sometimes astonishing to see how little the Europeans actually knew about the outside world. He attended three ‘Oriental’ plays in Parisian

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² ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, p. 231. ‘Senang’ is a Malay/Indonesian word meaning ‘happy’ or ‘comfortable’. It was appropriated into Dutch, though primarily used by people with some Indies’ connection.
theatres (Lakmé, Si j’étais roi and Josephine), which were all charming, but not very lifelike: ‘[A]s an Oriental [Oosterling] I can see that these stories are very improbable. Moreover, with permission, the Orientals looked much too Western.’

Bondslid further noticed that the Alpine scenery in Switzerland, although beautiful, was less impressive to him—being ‘used to the mountains and natural beauty of the Indies’—than to many Dutch travellers. Luckily, there were many other Indisch people on furlough with whom he could meet at regular intervals and share such experiences. Moreover, throughout Europe the colonial collections and exhibitions exerted a particular draw on him: the pavilions of the Italian colonies and of South Africa at the Milan annual fair, the Oriental exhibition at the Bern historical museum, the French Indo-China pavilion and the ‘Congo-palace’ at the Antwerp World Fair.

He could quickly feel at home in any town in Europe, but ultimately it was in the tropics that he belonged. For his impending retirement, he would certainly settle in the Indies. In July 1930 he boarded an ocean steamer to return to his country of birth.

**Introduction: the colonial migration circuit**

This Indo-European traveller was not exceptional. He was one of hundreds or even thousands of employees and their families from the Indies who were on furlough in the Netherlands and in Europe at any given time during the interwar years. Many European employees in the Dutch Indies (and most other late colonial empires) both in government and in private employment had a right to paid leave to the metropole once every few years. Of the approximately 300,000 post-colonial migrants coming from the Indies to the Netherlands between 1945 and 1965, no fewer than 60 per cent had visited the metropole at least once before in their life. In 1929 alone, no fewer than 1,486 state employees boarded ocean steamers for their European furloughs; this significant number even excludes their families, as well as the employees in the private sector (for which no aggregate numbers are available).

Of course, everyone on furlough would have his or her own particular experiences. These people came from widely diverging backgrounds: some came home after only a few years of work in the colony, others came to Europe for the

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umpteenth time in a life punctuated by a regular toing and froing between metropole and colony, and some—like Bondslid—came to the ‘motherland’ for a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But for all of them, the chance to travel to the ‘motherland’ was highly significant: it was symbolic of the bond between metropole and colony. In the present chapter I examine this aspect of European employees’ work and life in more depth.

Surprisingly, considering the importance to colonial contemporaries, the historical literature has only touched upon the subject of the European furlough incidentally, or as a sidenote. Most important among the historians who have discussed this issue for the Dutch East Indies is Ulbe Bosma, in his work on the ‘colonial migration circuit’. As Bosma has argued, being able and allowed to travel to ‘Europe’ was the primary symbol of an individual’s connectedness with the metropole, and hence of his status as a member of the colonizing elite. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the development of ever-faster and -larger ocean steamers created opportunities for increasingly frequent and increasingly ‘democratized’ travel between metropole and colony. Bosma’s work on colonial statistics has also shown that contrary to expectations, this migration circuit remained for a significant part colony- rather than metropole-based. Until the First World War, approximately two thirds of the passengers travelling from Europe to the Indies were returning to their native land after visiting the metropole for education, business, or holiday. Although the number of newcomers from the metropole engaged by the growing Indies business world increased in the following decades, still in the last decades of colonial rule newcomers ‘probably did not exceed the annual number of people returning from the home country to their Indies country of birth’.

Consequently, Bosma’s data contradict the established view that increased travel opportunities caused European society in the Indies to resemble more closely an expatriate rather than a mestizo community. The latter interpretation presumes that increased travel and communication introduced a new ruling class into the Indies,

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7 Bosma, ‘Sailing through Suez’, p. 514.
‘born and educated in Holland’, thus creating ‘a modern colony that would efface its mestizo connection and culturally hybrid roots’. However, being ‘born’ and being ‘educated’ in Holland were not the same. For affluent and politically important ‘creole’ families, it sufficed to be strongly oriented toward the metropole. The European furlough was a central event in maintaining that bond. These people were not necessarily metropolitan-born, as we have seen, for example, in chapter 6 with G.P.J. Caspersz, the director of the Sister Companies.

Bosma’s analysis of the available statistical data is convincing, but it has a drawback. It precludes an appraisal of the importance of racial prejudices in the practice of European furloughs. Being ‘creole’, i.e. born in the Indies, was not necessarily tantamount to being ‘mestizo’—of ‘mixed-race’. Bosma does presume that, most probably, many members of the ‘creole’ migration circuit had one or more Asian ancestors in the female line, although his statistical sources make it difficult to substantiate that claim. Hence, class rather than race was more important in regulating access to the migration circuit. But to what extent were class identities and racial prejudices connected in the colonial mind?

I examine this question in the first part of this chapter through a study of the furlough regulations for employees in (private) railway companies. Who was granted this privilege, and on what grounds? As my research shows, these regulations were indeed essentially class-based. But a careful qualitative analysis of the surrounding discourse also demonstrates that in some specific circumstances, differences could be implicitly racialized. ‘Doing race’ and ‘speaking race’ could diverge, with consequences for the ways class was interpreted and applied.

The discrepancy between ‘doing’ and ‘speaking’ is reflective of an inherent, and unsolvable, paradox of late colonial thinking. In the wake of the ‘civilizing mission’ and the progressive movement of the early twentieth century, colonizers in the Indies had come to accept that the goal of bringing ‘civilization’ and ‘progress’ was the fundamental justification for their presence in the Indonesian archipelago. Hence, openly and bluntly racist arguments had become unappealing to late colonial

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8 Stoler, Race, p. 44; cf. Stoler, ‘A sentimental education’. Stoler locates the start of this development already in the mid-nineteenth century.
9 In his monograph Indiëgangers Bosma does draw from a wider variety of sources than in his article ‘Sailing through Suez’, but still his argument is based, by and large, on the statistical evidence of migration.
10 Bosma, Indiëgangers, p. 188; Bosma, ‘Sailing through Suez’, p. 512.
actors, as they were seeking alternative (meritocratic) constructions. Yet when push came to shove, most elite Europeans were unable and unwilling to abandon the belief in their own superiority, both over Indonesians and lower-class Europeans. The shifting and alternating use of class-language and race-language thus indicates an ultimately doomed attempt to reconcile two contradictory principles of the late colonial system.

The second part of this chapter deals with a number of accounts from common members of the Spoorbond in which they described their experience of travelling to the Netherlands (or ‘Europe’) and their confrontation with the metropole and its population. This section addresses a second drawback of Bosma’s approach, namely that his concept of the colonial migration circuit is overly homogenizing. Even though he notices a significant degree of ‘democratization’ in the migration circuit, his argument is mainly concerned with the elites, the ‘empire families’. Poorer employees like the Bondslid cited above—often based in the Indies and barely able to afford their trip to the metropole—are rarely considered.

Nonetheless, these people, the rank and file of administrative and supervisory personnel making up the core of the Western business world in the colony, can hardly be said to be of equal status with their richer compatriots. How did they interpret their visit to ‘Europe’? Was it a ‘home-coming’ or an adventure to a far-away land? And how did they locate themselves vis-à-vis the inhabitants of ‘Europe’ that they encountered? I argue that these individuals expressed a fragmented feeling of belonging, a sentiment that simultaneously referred to the Netherlands as the ‘motherland’, to ‘Europe’ in general as the cultural frame of reference, as well as to Indisch society as an autonomous social entity. People like Bondslid saw themselves as citizens of a modern cosmopolitan world, but remained aware and proud of their own specific, Indisch European background.

**Defining the homeland**

The regulations determining who had a right to European furlough were, naturally, closely related to the general employment structure (see chapter 6). None of the native beambten in the Sister Companies, for example, received this privilege. But neither were furlough rights indiscriminately bestowed on all ambtenaren. The situation was more complicated. For the purpose of this particular regulation, further differentiations were implemented, partly by resurrecting the European vs. Native
dichotomy based on legal status, but partly also by drawing additional boundaries within the European group. The management of the Sister Companies offered three kinds of explanation as to why certain groups of the personnel needed or deserved the European furlough, and why others did not.

The most common (but possibly also the most malleable) argument was based on the (expected) whereabouts of a candidate’s family and/or professional ‘relations’. In a reply to a group of native *ambtenaren* who had petitioned the management to preserve their right to European furlough (which the directors had recently repealed), the chief agent wrote in 1928:

The main goal of the European recreative furlough is to offer the *ambtenaren* who have their relations in Europe the opportunity to meet again those relations from time to time. The European furlough is hence primarily useful to those *ambtenaren*, who have family and relatives in Europe. [...] It is for that reason that the board has decided to abolish the European furlough for native *ambtenaren*. [...] That they would have family members or relatives in Europe, that could justify a European furlough, practically never occurs.11

The basic reasoning was that some employees should be given the opportunity to return to Europe at frequent intervals, because they had a need to reunite with their families as well as with their professional relations and former college friends.

The regulation on who should receive the privilege of the European furlough had been in place since the 1890s, though it was thoroughly reformed in the mid-1910s (in parallel with the introduction of the *ambtenaren* vs. *beamten* differentiation). It used the argument of relatives and relations in Europe as a ground to differentiate between employees who had been recruited in the Netherlands and those who had been recruited in the Indies.12 The former, it was assumed, had family

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11 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Letter from chief agent to *commies* P.R. Darma Brata c.s., 26 November 1928. Almost exactly the same phrasing in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Letter from chief agent to *commier* R. Mochamad Joesoef c.s., 6 December 1928. Also cf. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No.713a, Reaction by director Joekes to a question from director Gerligs, 11 July 1919; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 71, Dossier No. 743-I, Letter from the chief agent to the board of the SCS-union, 29 March 1922.

12 See the various versions of the *Verzameling Regelingen en Besluiten* in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 178; as well as the discussions on the regulations regarding European furloughs: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59.
and friends in Europe and should always have the right to European furlough. For the latter this could not be assumed, and they should hence be scrutinized more carefully. They should only be granted the right to furlough under certain circumstances, in which case they could be ‘equated’ with the uitgezonden (‘those-sent-out’) by letting them sign an additional contract.\(^\text{13}\)

The circumstances under which this was granted are revealing. The person required to make the assessment was the chief agent in the Indies, advised by his branch managers. The factors they took into account were chiefly education and upbringing; the whereabouts of ones ‘relations’ were presumed to follow accordingly. In one case, that of overseer L. Memper, the agent in the Indies wrote to the board of directors:

[...] [O]verseer L. Memper has requested that I close an agreement with him, with the express purpose of profiting from the more favourable furlough regulations for contracted employees [i.e. employees recruited in the Netherlands, BL]. His argument was that he had come to the Indies from South Africa at his own expense but that he otherwise should be put on par with the sent-out personnel. He enjoyed his upbringing in Europe, where his relations are also residing. For these reasons I would agree that Memper has more need for European furlough than ambtenaren with 20 years of service who have never before in their life left the Indies. The motives forwarded by Memper are the same as the basic principles taken by your board of directors for offering contracted employees more favourable furlough regulations.\(^\text{14}\)

In the same exchange of letters, similar arrangements were agreed upon for several other employees, who had all been recruited in the Indies, in some cases had also been born there, but who all received their (secondary or tertiary) education in Europe.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Letter from chief agent G.P.J. Casperz to the directors, 1 November 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Letter from chief agent van Alphen to board of directors, 9 March 1920; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Letter from chief agent to the directors, 1 November 1920; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 68, Dossier No. 731-III, Directors to the chief agent, 23 October 1917.

\(^{14}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Letter from chief agent to the directors, 1 November 1920.

\(^{15}\) Also cf. NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 78, Personnel file P.J. D’Artillact Brill; NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 141, Personnel file S.E. Serlé.
The Sister Companies made a further differentiation among the employees recruited in the Indies. People like Memper, who had a good ‘European’ upbringing but had made their own way to the Indies, were seen as the equals of the employees recruited in Europe, and had the same rights to European furlough, namely after a minimum of six years with a maximum of three times during their entire career. For some Indies-born and (more importantly) Indies-raised European employees, however, this was seen as an excessive arrangement. As one memorandum by director A. Joekes from 1919 explained, the main reason that ‘ambtenaren born and raised in the Indies’ had for aspiring to the European furlough was ‘to bring their children to the Netherlands for their further upbringing’. He proposed: ‘It is therefore advisable to differentiate in the furlough regulation between these two groups: Indiërs, and those sent-out or equated with them.’\footnote{NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Memorandum director A. Joekes for director Gerligs, 26 November 1919.} Indies-raised employees should only be allowed a fully remunerated European furlough after a minimum of ten years of service, and then only if they were sufficiently educated and wealthy. Joekes’ proposal was not adopted in its entirety, but the Sister Companies did in fact differentiate between employees who had a right to furlough fixed in their employment contract, i.e. the import employees and those equated with them, and the employees whose furlough requests were judged on a case-by-case basis, to be decided by the branch manager or chief agent.

As regards the group that Joekes referred to as Indiërs—the Indisch Europeans, the management of the Sister Companies found it increasingly difficult to justify differentiating them from the better-educated native employees. If a European born and based in the Indies had a right to a European furlough, then why would his native colleague not have the same right? It is precisely this argument that a group of native ambtenaren made in their aforementioned petition in 1928:

\begin{quote}
For most ambtenaren, the European furlough is after all a pleasure trip after accomplished services; other good motivations are not available. The case is different for imported ambtenaren, who for reasons of health and family relations prefer the European furlough to a leave in the Indies. However, these considerations are not valid for those European employees, who only use
\end{quote}
Europe as a means to [...] broaden their knowledge and satisfy their eagerness to learn, a circumstance that could further their development and that could just as well be granted to native ambtenaren, [...] 17

In this instance, the management declined the petition. The European furlough was anything but ‘a pleasure trip after accomplished services’, the chief agent claimed. As regards the group of ‘hiergeboren Indo-European ambtenaren’ he explained: ‘Among these ambtenaren it is increasingly common that they have blood relations (children, parents, etc.) in Europe, who justify their claim to European furlough.’ 18

These resolute words in response to the native ambtenaren hide the fact that the very same question was the subject of constant and heated debate among the management throughout the last decades of colonial rule. The comparison between the Indies-born European employees on the one hand and the native ambtenaren on the other was bound to make the directors and agents uncomfortable: it confronted them with the discrepancy in their own meritocratic ways of reasoning. The solution in the late-1910s had simply been to ignore the issue and accept that by the current regulations—which selected on the basis of wage level—a small number of native ambtenaren would be able to lay claim to a furlough. This avoided difficult discussions, and the number of eligible native employees was expected to remain very limited for some time in the future. 19 However, when in the 1920s the first few Natives started arriving on leave in Europe, the directors reconsidered and purposely excluded them from furlough (though leaving the possibility of an exception for those ‘who have enjoyed an entirely European upbringing’). 20

In the very same meeting in which this change of policy was decided, two of the branch agents immediately went on to ask why the ‘Indo-Europeans’ should still preserve the right to European furlough: ‘If one judges that Natives should not go to

17 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01., 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Letter from P.R. Darma Brata c.s. to the chief agent, 23 November 1928.
18 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01., 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Letter from the chief agent to P.R. Darma Brata c.s., 26 November 1928.
19 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01., 59, Dossier No. 713a, Memorandum A. Jokees for director Gerligs, 11 July 1919 (also see the marginal comment by Gerligs).
20 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01., 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Meeting for branch agents organized by director Caspersz in Bodjong, 3 March 1928. For lists of personnel granted furlough in the 1920s (including several Natives, i.e. commies Soedomo in April 1926), see: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01., 58, Dossier No. 713-II. In the State Railways the possibility for ‘Natives’ to go on furlough remained: Voorzitter der Commissie tot Herziening van het Verlofreglement, ‘Herziening Verlofsreglement’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1931, pp. 122-124.
Holland, because they have no need for it, why then not also take away that right from the *Indos*, who equally have no need for it? Natives nowadays feel equal to *Indos*.

The presiding director Caspersz, who himself was Indies-born (but Dutch-educated), waved the comment away by saying that this was not a practicable option:

> Because of European upbringing, marriage, etc. etc. we would encounter many difficulties in practice. The law has regulated who are Europeans, and it is to them that we need to grant the European furlough. [...] The board of directors is not willing to change the notion of ‘Europeans’.

This concise rejection by director Caspersz may sound determined, but it does not do justice to the disagreements and developing points of view within the board of directors. Only three years after Caspersz made his remark, in 1931, the directors changed the policy once again. In the wake of the great depression, they decided to restrict severely the number of European employees with furlough rights, excluding anyone earning less than 325 guilders per month. Although the immediate cause was a need for financial cutbacks, the board—again through Caspersz—explained that this step was no more than logical and desirable. It only targeted ‘*ambtenaren* [...] for whom a [European] furlough in fact makes no sense, because they have spent their entire lives in the Indies and have no bond with the Netherlands’.

In short, the management of the Sister Companies was divided over the question of whether ‘Europeans’ in lower-level positions, especially those born in the Indies, should have the right to a European furlough. The constant discussions on this topic and the frequently changing policy reflect the ambiguous view that the managers had of these people: as part of their in-group as fellow Europeans in the colony, but also as their subordinate, lower class employees.

In those instances where directors or managers proposed to exclude lower-level Europeans from the European furlough, they tended to underline this by discursively othering them. Firstly, as in the managerial discussion quoted above, an

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21 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Meeting for branch agents organized by director Caspersz in Bodjong, 3 March 1928.
22 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Meeting for branch agents organized by director Caspersz in Bodjong, 3 March 1928.
23 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Letter from director Caspersz to the chief agent, 30 March 1931.
explicit link was made to the position of educated Natives. One director in 1935 even went as far as to refer to Natives and lower-level Europeans collectively as ‘indigenous people in the widest sense’, namely those people ‘who are at home in the Indies and for whom Europe is a foreign country’. Furthermore, where normally lower-level European employees would be referred to as ‘recruited-here’ or sometimes as ‘born-here’ (see previous chapter), in this context of furloughs we suddenly see the managers changing to the usage of ‘Indo-European’ or ‘Indo’—a clearly racialized discourse, despite the fact that the selection criteria were on the basis of income rather than ancestry.

Nonetheless, such racialized usage was context-dependent. In other instances, it was clearly shunned, for example when director Gerlits in 1921 explained (to some fellow directors of other railway companies in the Indies) the ‘leading thought’ behind the furlough regulations in the Sister Companies: ‘European furlough only for people who have been imported from Europe. But in the Indies there are also people, who have acquired a certain degree of development and who should be given the opportunity to go and see elsewhere what has been accomplished there.’ In this meeting, the term ‘Indo-European’ (or even ‘born-here’) was meticulously avoided. The managers of the Sister Companies thus only applied racialized usage when it fitted with their objectives of justifying differentiation between higher- and lower-level Europeans, whilst it was shunned when it was deemed more expedient to stress inclusivity. In other words: the use of racialized language was a strategic choice. Race mattered in differentiating among Europeans, but more as a discursive tool than as a policy practice. It did not fit their professed and cherished beliefs about how a colonial society should function (namely on a principle of progress and merit), yet it remained part of their vocabulary when their beliefs became difficult to reconcile with their everyday practice of running a business in the necessarily unequal environment that was the colony.

European bodies and minds

This form of racializing was sometimes—though not very frequently—accompanied by an appeal to the consequences of a tropical climate for the constitution of

24 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Letter from the directors to the chief agent.
25 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Minutes of a meeting of managers, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921.
European bodies and minds. Once again, this argument was particularly forwarded in contexts where the speaker wished to differentiate between ‘imported’ Europeans and ‘Indos’. It was used much less when the differentiation between ‘European’ and ‘Native’ was at stake, in which case the argument of (family) relations was more emphatically stressed. Although the climate argument was not routinely employed, it was a line of reasoning that lurked in the background and could be invoked when deemed necessary. It shows that class arguments and race arguments were closely related in the minds of colonial businessmen, but also that both had their own purpose and context.

The idea of the tropical climate as hazardous to European bodies and minds has been widely commented upon in the literature on colonial categories of differentiation. For the Dutch East Indies, the importance of this trope has been noted by, among others, Ann Stoler, Frances Gouda, and Susie Protschky. Such references to the degenerating effect of the tropical climate are generally interpreted in the context of neo-Lamarckian notions that gained currency around the turn of the twentieth century and blossomed throughout the following decades. Cultural and climatic influences, in a Lamarckian conviction, could alter character traits and ultimately racial identities. For the European colonists to remain healthy, fresh, and vigorous, they had to return to their ‘natural’ climate at regular intervals.

This logic was indeed sometimes used in the discussions among the management of the Sister Companies. It was especially applied in a way that confirmed delineations between ‘imported’ and Indies-born Europeans. Typical is a 1922 memorandum to refute furlough rights to some lower-level European employees who did not at the time enjoy them. The chief agent of the Sister Companies wrote:

It should be kept in mind that it is desirable if not necessary for the health of people of European origins [afkomst], that they can alternate their activity in the tropics with a somewhat protracted stay in a European climate; [...] [It] can hardly be accepted that it would be necessary for the health of children of a

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tropical country that they would spend their leave in a country with climatic conditions that are unfamiliar to them.\(^{27}\)

The notion ‘of European origins’ in this quotation becomes disconnected from the official legal definition. In legal terms, any person of European ancestry in the male line could claim European \textit{afkomst} (‘origins’), but in this quotation it is tacitly assumed to mean birth or upbringing in Europe. Indies-born and -based Europeans were subsumed under the ‘children of a tropical country’. In this way, they were once again discursively equated with (educated) natives.

The fear of tropical degeneration of the European body was clearly gendered. If it was necessary for men to repose in a temperate climate, it most certainly was for European women (and children). Director Joekes, for example, in his previously cited proposal to differentiate between \textit{Indiërs} and imported employees as regards the furlough rights, explained that his proposal was particularly important for married employees:

\[\text{T}he\text{ health of their wives and children, which as a rule suffers much more from the Indies’ climate than the health of the husbands, makes it even more desirable for the married than for the unmarried \textit{ambtenaren} to spend some time in Holland after about six years. This does not apply to the \textit{ambtenaren} born and raised in the Indies.}\(^{28}\)

The spouses were called upon as an extra argument for the need to travel to Europe. Conversely, a reference to \textit{Indisch} spouses, who presumably ‘could not get used to the

\(^{27}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 71, Dossier No. 743-II, Letter from chief agent to the leadership of the SCS-union, 29 March 1922. Cf. with other references to health-related reasons for furlough rights: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Memorandum director A. Joekes for director Gerligs, 26 November 1919; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Minutes of a meeting of managers, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Minutes of a meeting of managers, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Memorandum director A. Joekes for director Gerligs, 26 November 1919.

\(^{28}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Memorandum director A. Joekes for director Gerligs, 26 November 1919.
so-called Motherland’, was occasionally used as an argument to discourage furlough for ‘ambtenaren [...] who would do much better staying in the Indies’. 29

I have found no evidence of employees attempting to use their furlough to travel ‘home’ with their pregnant wife, for their children to be born in the Netherlands. Apparently, this was not something worth pursuing. Some of the European-born employees, however, did travel to Europe to scour the marriage market. 30 Other pertinent reasons to request the European furlough included: accompanying children on their way to be enrolled in educational institutions, the (final) chance to meet an aging or unwell parent, or the opportunity to celebrate a wedding and honeymoon in the Netherlands. 31 These stated reasons corroborate the conclusion reached by Ulbe Bosma that metropolitan birth was less important than regular contact with and contacts in the metropole. It was education and relations that defined the ‘bond’ with the Netherlands.

What is more, the actual criteria deciding who could go on European furlough were much more mundane (and much less racially inflected) than these elaborate arguments and justifications suggest. Indeed, all ‘imported’ employees were granted furlough, but for all others, when push came to shove, the gauge that the management applied was one of income scale. In the mid-1910s, it was decided that anyone earning over a certain wage (depending on the number of children that the employee had to support) could lay claim to the European furlough. Although the income-boundary was regularly adjusted over the following years, especially in the early 1930s when the Sister Companies needed to cut spending and therefore severely restricted the number of furlough candidates, the basis of this rule remained intact. 32

29 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Minutes of a meeting of managers, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921.
30 E.g.: NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 6, Personnel file W. Biele, Biele to directors, 10 March 1914. Cf. De Graaf, ‘‘Iets van een tropische vrucht’’, pp. 67-73.
31 Respectively: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Memorandum director A. Joekes for director Gerligs, 26 November 1919; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 58, Dossier No. 713-I, Letter branch manager SCS to the directors, 28 August 1902; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 58, Dossier No. 713-II Letter from head of exploitation SCS to chief agent, 4 June 1930; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 58, Dossier No. 713-II, Letter from the administrator to the chief agent, 10 February 1927.
32 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a, Regulation from the board of directors regarding the passage and the European furlough for lower rank ambtenaren, 21 November 1912; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Minutes of the meeting of managers, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Letter from director Caspersz to the chief agent, 23 June 1931; ‘Personeele bepalingen en loonregelingen der particuliere spoor- en tramwegmaatschappijen’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 3, No. 14, 1926, pp. 508-513; cf. NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 3, Personnel file Ms. B. Apituleij. Cf. on the regulations enforced in
This arrangement shows an implicit association of ‘Indies-born’ or at least ‘Indies-bound’ with ‘lower-class’ or ‘of modest means’. It was simply assumed that by setting an income boundary, the employees lacking a ‘bond’ with the metropole would be automatically excluded. Of course, by denying them a European furlough this to some extent became a self-fulfilling prophecy. But it was a self-fulfilling prophecy that selected on a socio-economic rather than a racial criterion.

Correspondingly, the importance of the climatic argument as a justification for European furlough should not be exaggerated. While it can indeed be found in some of the Sister Companies’ documentation, and while it would likely be supported by many of the managers as an additional reason for the European furlough, it was a much less significant reason than the previously described argument of re-invigorating the bond with relatives and relations in the metropole. The trope of the degenerative influence of the climate as a central tenet of the colonial imagination may well have been over-emphasized in the historical literature, at least if we consider its importance for actual policies. Moreover, the climatic argument tended to be used primarily in internal discussions of the management and only very rarely in correspondence with outsiders.33 This openly racist argument was not deemed politically correct, at least not in the last decades of colonial rule.

The question remains why this argument was felt to be politically incorrect, even if it did inform the management’s thinking to some extent. Partly it seems they were afraid to contradict their own (heartfelt) political convictions. An openly racist position challenged the inclusivist tendency inherent to a belief in the Dutch Indies civilizing mission. As one of the branch managers, G.A. Wiemans, expressed it to his colleagues in 1928: ‘Politically we are living in an era of equalization [gelijkstelling].’ His colleague J.G. Spengler added: ‘We should take the mentality of [the] native

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33 Cf. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Memorandum director A. Joekes for director Gerligs, 26 November 1919; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Minutes of a meeting of managers, Weltevreden, 19 December 1921; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Marginal comment to letter from chief agent to commies R. Mochamad Joesoef c.s., 6 December 1928; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Meeting for branch agents organized by director Caspersz in Bodjong, 3 March 1928. An exception to this rule is: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 71, Dossier No. 743-II, Letter from chief agent to the leadership of the SCS-union, 29 March 1922.
As I have argued in previous chapters (see especially chapter 3), it is this ideology that helped the Dutch Indies late colonial state maintain social peace, by suggesting a notion of (theoretical) equality and a promise of potential social mobility (however remote in practice). But with increasing frequency it came into contradiction with ingrained racial prejudices. It is at these points that we can see the Sister Companies’ management struggling, and ultimately failing, to reconcile both.

**Travelling with appropriate class**

The furlough rights created a clear and significant boundary between two layers of the European personnel: those who could maintain regular contact with the metropole and those who could not. For example, out of 206 *ambtenaren* working for the SJS in 1927, 110 (including 8 Natives) had a right to furlough, the remaining 96 did not. But, naturally, neither of these two groups was homogenous in itself.

Beyond the fundamental split, more subtle differences were made among the employees with the right to furlough, among other things by means of the classification on board the ocean steamers transporting them back and forth between colony and metropole. Some people were compensated for crossing in first class, others in second or third. Though this may sound trivial, to the people involved it was an important matter. In the context of colonial mobility, the class of travel was not only about comfort, it was primarily about representing, in a very literal way, one’s class. As Bosma explains, the main difference between first and second class on board the large ocean steamers was not in the size or quality of the private cabins, but mainly in the conspicuousness of public rooms like the dining hall, the lounges, and the deck. What mattered was *showing* how one travelled, as well as, it could be added, the company with whom one travelled. The fellow passengers on board were each other’s only companionship for several weeks, offering excellent opportunities for mutual networking and increasing social capital.

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34 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Meeting for branch agents organized by director Caspersz in Bodjong, 3 March 1928. Cf. the comments by J.G. Spengler and J.W.G. Pels Rijcken in the same document.

35 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 907, Letter from directors to chief agent, 15 October 1927.

In the rules and regulations of the Sister Companies it was determined which employees (and their families) would be compensated for which class. For most of the period under consideration, the rule was simply one of income. During the 1910s and most of the 1920s, the arrangement was rather generous. Anyone earning over 300 guilders/month was allowed to travel first class, anyone earning over 150 guilders travelled second class, and anyone else had to make do with third. This meant that the overwhelming majority of common clerks and commiezen would travel second class, and that many hoofdcommiezen or station masters could even travel in first. This included the considerable number of employees in these ranks who were Indies-born, as we have seen in chapter 6. The late 1920s and early 1930s saw significant adjustments to this regulation, to cut costs. Firstly, in 1928, the income qualifying for first class travel was more than doubled, to 800 guilders/month. Then, in the wake of the economic crisis in the early 1930s, the system was overhauled entirely. The income criterion was abandoned and instead the professional rank was chosen as a benchmark. From 1934 onwards, only hoofdambtenaren, i.e. the branch managers as well as the section heads, were allowed to travel first class, deputy inspectors, as well as senior station masters travelled second class, and all others were in third.

Employees sometimes requested to travel in a lower class than they were entitled to; the difference in fare would then be paid out directly to them. In this way, they could save some money to cover the costs of their stay in the metropole and make their holiday a little more rewarding. The management was generally sympathetic to such requests as long as they came from mid- to lower-level employees, but they were adamantly opposed to it for personnel in the highest ranks. In 1926, for example, one P.J. Stienstra, an ambtenaar with a university degree, requested permission to travel in second class. The chief agent refused, and was backed in his decision by the board of directors. They explained:

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[38] Cf. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 56, Dossier No. 703, Staat van betrekkingen SJS [1913].


[40] See various requests in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 58, Dossier No. 713 I-III. Some examples: Vermaak, Reitsma and Westerlink (24 September 1925), Nasse (18 September 1926), Van Leeuwen (14 October 1926), Van Berckel Bik (15 January 1927).
Graduated *ambtenaren* do not belong in the 2nd class. [...] It would damage the prestige of our graduated and our other higher-level *ambtenaren*, if they would travel in 2nd class on the mail-steamers, not only in the eyes of the lower *ambtenaren* in our companies, but also in the eyes of outsiders. These *ambtenaren* have different social obligations than the non-graduated *ambtenaren*. It surprises us that mister Stienstra has not understood this himself and that he had to be reminded of it by your rejection.41

To the management it was a matter of prestige both for the individual and for the company that their higher-level employees keep up appearances by travelling with appropriate class.

The appropriate class of travel depended on the other passengers making use of the same class. Often the Sister Companies looked at the government regulations for inspiration; it would not do to let their employees travel in a lower class than civil servants in a comparable rank. Sometimes they also racialized the issue explicitly. In 1925, for example, after a complaint from their employee J.Ph. van Markesteijn (who was entitled to passage in second class), the directors reviewed part of their policy. Markesteijn had made the crossing from Java to the Netherlands in second class, but had requested to be upgraded to first class for the prior connecting transfer by K.P.M. ship from Semarang to Batavia, because, as he said, on this stretch ‘travelling in second class is not doable due to the many Chinese and Arabs’.42 The management agreed:

The passage in the 2nd class of the K.P.M. ships [...] turns out indeed to be less doable for European families, in view of the many less well-to-do Chinese and Arabs, who make use of this class. Our inquiry at the office of the K.P.M. has in

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41 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 907, Directors to the chief agent, 10 September 1926. Actually, only a decade later, graduated *ambtenaren* were no longer all allowed to travel first class. This cost-cutting measure infuriated many of the employees involved, especially because their colleagues working for the State Railways were not subjected to this demotion. The directors of the Sister Companies themselves were not pleased with the situation either, but explained that the financial situation was simply too strenuous. See: NL-HaNA ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 907, Chief agent to directors, 4 November 1938, and Directors to the chief agent, 17 November 1938.

42 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 907, Director Van Alphen to the chief agent, 14 November 1925. The K.P.M. (*Koninklijke Pakketvaart Maatschappij*) was the primary shipping company for intra-Indies travel.
fact revealed, that most private travellers who travel in second class on the ocean steamers choose first class with the K.P.M.\textsuperscript{43}

From that time onwards, the Sister Companies allowed their employees who would normally travel second class to upgrade to first on the connecting K.P.M. services. Third class passengers could travel in second class with K.P.M.\textsuperscript{44}

Although the argument provided here is clearly of a racist nature—‘European families’ should not be forced to travel in a class frequented by ‘Chinese and Arabs’—we can also see that the racial prejudice is inflected by class considerations. The problem was with the ‘less well-to-do Chinese and Arabs’, presumably referring to the established stereotype of small-scale traders. Presumably, it would be less problematic to travel with richer Chinese and Arabs. Moreover, this same regulation shows a decidedly gendered motivation. Both Markesteijn and the management of the Sister Companies agreed that it especially could not be asked of European families to travel in these circumstances. It was once again a concern for the well-being of women and children that convinced the management in its decisions. For the same reason, it was decided that all unmarried female employees should be allowed to travel at least in second class even on the ocean steamers, irrespective of their salary.\textsuperscript{45} No woman (let alone a single woman) should be subjected to the coarse surroundings of the lower classes—be it among mainly ‘Europeans’ in the third class of the ocean steamers, or among the Chinese and Arab petty traders on the K.P.M. ships. The conditions of women and children were held up as representative for respectability. Sometimes, this respectability was (implicitly) represented as genuinely ‘European’, at other times as a characteristic of the higher classes.

All in all, the classification of the Sister Companies’ employees on their passage to and from the Netherlands shows that the social hierarchy was subtly layered and adjusted regularly. There was not only a differentiation between those who could travel to the metropole and those who could not. The style and company in which one travelled was likewise indicative of one’s standing within ‘respectable’ society in the Indies. ‘Being European’ on board was not an unambiguous category.

\textsuperscript{43} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 907, Chief agent to the directors, 4 January 1926.
\textsuperscript{44} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 182, VRVP, 1 November 1929.
What was unbecoming for some European employees was perfectly respectable for others. For an accurate understanding of social hierarchy in the late colonial Dutch Indies society it cannot suffice to point out, merely, that ‘European family life and bourgeois respectability were conceived as the cultural bases for imperial patriotism and racial survival’. While it is true that ‘bourgeois respectability’ was of the utmost importance to colonial actors, the singularity of this term obfuscates the full range of different norms applying to different classes, races, and genders.

‘Historically entitled’

To illustrate this diversity of ‘European’ respectabilities, it is necessary also to study the voices of the people on lower rungs of this elaborately layered hierarchy. The furlough system stems from the minds of the elite Europeans in the management of the Sister Companies. But how were these arrangements appreciated and experienced by the people subject to them?

Once again, the publications of the Spoorbond, the trade union for mid-level railway personnel in the Indies, can shed some light. It will hardly come as a surprise that any proposal from the side of the railway company managements to curtail furlough rights for the lower-income employees was met with fierce resistance from the members and leadership of the Spoorbond. The authors of such comments routinely referred to the ‘injustice’ (onbillijkheid) of differentiating between ‘import’ and Indische employees, seeing as they performed the same tasks and worked in the same teams. Interestingly, the main reason that they gave for resisting reforms of the furlough regulation was that ‘historic entitlements’, ‘promises made’, and the legal security of the Indische employees were at stake. They generally abstained from more substantial reasoning.

Possibly, this emphasis on ‘historic entitlements’ rather than content-based arguments results from the fact that the members of the Spoorbond were faced with the same dilemma as the railway managements: how to justify differentiating between

46 Stoler, ‘Carnal knowledge’, p. 61.
47 As in chapter 6, a disadvantage of the Spoorbond remains that it encompassed employees from both the State Railways and the private companies. For many articles and most letters from readers published in the Spoorbond publications it is impossible to know whether they refer to or stem from private or government employees.
‘Natives’ and Indies-recruited Europeans. This dilemma was exacerbated for the *Spoorbond* because it also counted native *ambtenaren* among its members, even if they were a minority. Native employees themselves were increasingly vocal in claiming equal position on the basis of equal work and skills.\(^\text{49}\) As becomes evident in several instances, the leadership of the *Spoorbond* was not principally averse to furthering such demands from its native members, but it was worried that too strong a support could endanger the established rights of its European employees: ‘Several times already the speaker [union president P.H.W. Rooijackers] has urged for caution in regard to the furlough conditions for those born here, in order not to lose the previously granted rights by asking for an extension to native *ambtenaren*.\(^\text{50}\) The result was an uneasy reticence on the matter of Natives’ claims and a focus on ‘established rights’ regarding the European employees.

All the more energy was poured into preparing those union members who did have the right to European furlough for what awaited them in the ‘motherland’. Starting in 1925, the *Spoorbond* introduced a recurring feature in its journal entitled ‘Of and for furlough-goers’. To better provide their membership with information, the *Spoorbond* entered into cooperation with the Dutch-based Association of Indies Furlough-goers (*Vereniging van Indische Verlofgangers, V.v.I.V.*), which regularly supplied the latest information.\(^\text{51}\) The feature included tips for preparation, do’s and don’ts when in Europe, and warnings about potential threats and inconveniences for Indies employees on furlough. The *Spoorbondsblad* also regularly published letters that it received from individual members on furlough, who reported on their experiences and included pointers for their colleagues planning their own journey. The report from the *Bondslid* in the introduction to this chapter was among the more elaborate of this genre, running over a total of no fewer than fifteen instalments.

These reports evoked envy and resentment among some circles of the *Spoorbond* membership. The furlough was an important status symbol, and for those

\(^{49}\) See e.g. the previously cited petitions from native *ambtenaren* to the Sister Companies’ management: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a2, Letter from P.R. Darma Brata c.s. to the chief agent, 23 November 1928; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 59, Dossier No. 713a3, Letter from R. Mochamad Joesoef c.s. to the chief agent, 30 November 1928.


\(^{51}\) The first of these features appeared in *Spoorbondsblad*, Vol. 2, No. 13, 1925. The feature returned throughout the following years at irregular intervals.
unfortunate enough not to be entitled to it, the ostentatious stories from their colleagues were a constant reminder that they were on the wrong side of an important boundary. The Bondslid letters even provoked an official complaint, as the editor of the Spoorbondsblad reported:

From one of the branches we received notice that its members would prefer not to see in our union journal the letters from a member on furlough, of which we have published here the sixth episode. They were even so bold as to claim that these letters were occasionally hurtful to those born here.52

The furlough in this case was the cause of a rift between two factions among the mid-level European personnel, defined by being either bound to the colony or being able to travel to the metropole. But the defining markers of these groups were difficult to pin down beyond the harsh reality of their wages, as the following justification by the editors of the Spoorbondsblad makes clear:

With the best will in the world, we cannot agree with our readers in that branch. [...] On the contrary, we consider these letters to contain much that can be informative and deserving of notice in broader circles. We would go even further and claim that they are educational. Moreover, they are written by someone born here, someone who is an Indo in heart and soul and who always owns up to this, irrespective of where or in whose company he is.53

Despite this disclaimer by the editors, reading the letters from this union member (as well as others similar to it) one can hardly escape the impression that the employees on furlough revelled in their opportunity to immerse themselves in everything Europe had to offer—and then to tell everyone about it. The furlough was a divisive issue because it was a defining event in the lives of one group of Spoorbond members, and consequently a matter of envy for others.

52 ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, p. 417 (postscript by the editors).
53 ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, p. 417 (postscript by the editors).
Going ‘home’ on holiday

For those lucky enough to be entitled to this privilege, their journey to Europe was a great adventure. After all, for many (if not most) of the lower-middle class Europeans on furlough, their trip could scarcely be called a ‘return’ to their country of origin. What is more, a significant number were not particularly affluent. For example, out of the 1,486 government employees going on furlough in 1929, 379 earned under £400,– per month. These people received a furlough allowance between £185,– and £315,–. Compared to the average income of common labourers for the municipality of The Hague (where many furlough-goers went), around £40,– per week in the 1920s, this was hardly an excessive income. As we can gather from the columns of the Spoorbondsblad, the relation to Europe of such Indisch Europeans of modest means was rather more ambiguous than the theoretical policy discussions among the managerial ranks suggest.

Most of the advice that the Spoorbond gave to its members suggests that many of those members did not have a family or a well-maintained network on which they could fall back upon their arrival in the Netherlands. The feature ‘Of and for furlough-goers’ in the union periodical presumed, probably correctly, that many members were venturing into a world that was utterly foreign to them, of which they needed to learn the rules, tricks and trades. Many pages were devoted to, for example, advising the members on the tax laws and their fiscal obligations. Advice on matters of schooling for children coming from the Indies, to prevent them from falling behind, was another important topic. Information on where to find affordable housing as well as recommendations for trustworthy shops and businesses completed the list.

54 Cf. Bosma, ‘Sailing through Suez’ for the available statistics; these numbers are somewhat inconclusive, but suggest that roughly half of the travellers from the Indies to the Netherlands were Indies-born. Among the lower-middle class the share is likely much higher. For the Sister Companies (or other railway companies), conclusive numbers cannot be provided. On Indonesian visitors to the Netherlands (though not primarily on furlough), also see: Poeze, In het land van de overheerzer.
55 ‘De buitenlandsche verloven: nieuwe verslechtering’. This regards the income during active duty; the furlough allowance was somewhat lower.
56 De Graaf, “‘Iets van een tropische vrucht’”, pp. 33-34
Striking in all this advice provided to the Spoorbond members is its reference to an Indisch community in the Netherlands. Employees on furlough were advised to make contact with the Association of Indies Furlough-goers, which could send someone to collect them from the ocean steamer and help them get settled during their first few days. Figure 7.1 shows one such group of furlough-goers who had just been picked up by the representative of the Association and brought to the Ministry of the Colonies. The Spoorbondsblad also offered its pages to Th. van Kan, a teacher who had spent much of his career in the Indies and had decided in 1927 to open a school in The Hague based on the Indies’ curriculum. Kan explained his intentions:

58 See for more examples of this Indisch community-building (especially in The Hague) the M.A. thesis by Suzanne de Graaf, “Iets van een tropische vrucht”, pp. 26-33, 52-57.
Hundreds of parents with school age children, who have spent their furlough in Holland, shall be aware of the poor connection of the education in the Indies to that in Holland and vice versa. [...] Feeling the needs of the frustrated parents, in order to alleviate them, I have formed the idea of opening an Indische school in The Hague (Duinoord); that is a school cast in the same mould as here in the Indies. [...] First of all this school will, where possible, work through the curriculum of every school year within eleven months, so as to neutralize the time loss caused by the journey to the Indies. Secondly, the child will immediately feel at home in this school, because he returns in his own circle and receives the same education as in the Indies.59

The Spoorbond was very supportive of Kan’s plan, acknowledging the importance of creating an Indisch school community in The Hague.60

In the testimonies from members of the Spoorbond themselves, the same idea is reflected in the ambiguous perception they present of ‘Europe’. On the one hand, they designated Europe (and the Netherlands specifically) as their ‘home’, but on the other hand the official purpose of their visit (visiting family and relations) was generally overshadowed by more holiday-like experiences. They used their six months to a year in the ‘motherland’ to soak up all the culture they possibly could—or at least so they told their friends and colleagues back home in the Indies. The description of their trip is of arriving in a far-away and strange country, a country where they are treated like foreigners. The Bondslid quoted in the introduction to this chapter frequently emphasized that he did not find it hard to feel at home in various places around Europe.61 Yet at the same time his letters read like the account of an energetic tourist, frantically touring all the places of interest and visiting a new theatre or concert hall every night of the week.

The same tension is even clearer in an account given by his colleague Ms. Ch. Smits. Smits was a self-described ‘Indische woman’ who had just returned from the

59 ‘Van en voor verlofgangers’, 16 April 1927. My emphasis.
60 For unknown reasons, Kan’s plans were not realized. Only three years later, in 1930, the Association of Indies Furlough-goers (once again with the support of the Spoorbond) renewed the efforts, this time with success. The Indische lagere school in The Hague opened its doors in 1932 and taught more than a thousand students until it closed during the Second World War. ‘Van en voor verlofgangers: het onderwijs aan Indische kinderen in Den Haag’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1930, p. 52; De Graaf, “Iets van een tropische vrucht?”, p. 53.
61 ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, pp. 417, 564.
second European furlough in her career. In September 1929 she wrote to the
Spoorbond to recount some of her experiences, intending especially to warn her
fellow ‘Indische people’ about potential negative experiences with unwelcoming
‘Hollanders’. Paradoxically, Smits described her own letter as the ‘account of my
vicissitudes as a stranger [vreemdelinge] in Holland’, while she simultaneously
(within a two-page article) referred to the Netherlands as ‘the Motherland of us,
Indische people’. 62 She felt like a stranger in her own country.

The reasons why Smits would nonetheless urge all her colleagues to travel to
the Netherlands are equally telling. ‘Holland is most certainly worth a visit’, she
writes—but she will not miss its inhabitants. Her ‘homesickness’ (heimwee) for the
Netherlands principally concerned ‘[i]ts Vondelpark, its Artis, the Betuwe in spring,
its succulent meadows with magnificent cows, in the late summer the beautiful
blossoming heathland, and above all its blossoming bulb-growing fields’. 63 All of
these are stereotypical tourist destinations. What Smits describes is the itinerary of an
international visitor following well-worn tourist trails. Unsurprisingly, then, one of
her last activities in the Netherlands was to visit a cheese shop in The Hague to stock
up on this quintessentially Dutch commodity before returning to the Indies.

Smits’ opinion of the inhabitants of her ‘Motherland’, who she refers to as
‘full-blood Hollanders’, further illustrates her experience as a stranger in the
Netherlands, a member of an expatriate community. She reports a staggering lack of
knowledge among the Dutch about their colony and its inhabitants. She regularly felt
that ‘us Indisch people’ were treated with disdain and indifference, and she recounts
several incidents that happened both to herself and to other acquaintances from the
Indies. The only times she felt treated in a friendly and courteous manner was when
Dutch shopkeepers and businessmen were trying to take financial advantage of her:
‘Oh, towards those who are willing to grab their purse the Hollanders are sugary
sweet and oh so pliable.’ But meanwhile, they would think nothing of swindling
her just for being a foreigner: ‘An Indische woman will for example always have to pay
more for a bunch of flowers than her Dutch [Hollandse] sister.’ 64

642-644.
63 Smits, ‘Indrukken’, p. 643. The Vondelpark is a large park in Amsterdam; Artis is the Amsterdam
zoo; the Betuwe is a region famous for its orchards.
This feeling of estrangement in one’s own country, of not being fully accepted by the inhabitants of the Netherlands, recurs in the accounts of many furlough-goers. Moreover, this sentiment was not only prevalent among the lower middle class employees; it was shared by many members of the Indies’ elite—those who travelled to the Netherlands repeatedly rather than once or twice in a lifetime. Director K.W.J. Michielsen of the *Javasche Bank*, whose career we traced in the chapter 6, described the sentiment most lyrically. Upon leaving his job in 1937 he decided to move to the Netherlands and enjoy his well-earned years of retirement in the home country. Throughout his career he had spent prolonged periods in the Netherlands on at least five occasions. He had family there, and was well connected through his network of political and business contacts. Shortly after his retirement he self-published a collection of poems under the title *Indische reflexen*. His final, lengthy poem was called ‘Homeward-bound’ and dealt with his recent retirement to the Netherlands:

What lies behind me is the country that spawned me,
Where I found my social edification,
Where I gathered profound impressions
And bound myself to people and land.

[...]

Ahead on the Northern skies,
The dunes of the Western beach alight,
Before long I will stand in the swarming crowds,
As an uprooted man in the Fatherland.

Michielsen, as we know, had a family background in the Indies, giving him good reason to feel ‘uprooted’ upon his ‘repatriation’. But even for some of the

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65 DJB, 103, Minutes board meeting 7 april 1920; DJB, 108, Minutes board meeting 16 December 1925; DJB, 115, Minutes board meeting 22 June 1932; ‘Persstemmen: K.W.J. Michielsen’, *De Indische Courant*, 30 July 1937. His business connections in the Netherlands can be inferred from several honorary commissionerships that he held in the following decades: Clipping from an interview with K.W.J. Michielsen in an unknown newspaper, 21 June 1952, kept in CBG, Family Dossier Michielsen.

‘newcomers’, the employees (mostly in higher ranks) who had been recruited in the Netherlands and returned to their native country after several years of hard work, the metropole had lost some of its familiarity. It was often difficult to reconnect with family and old friends, whilst the fellow furlough-goers from the Indies understood each other’s predicament. As discussed by Suzanne de Graaf as well as by Ulbe Bosma in his *Indiëgangers*, the consequence was that the furlough-goers clustered around the urban centres in the West of the Netherlands, rather than returning permanently to their region of origin.\(^67\) Even these erstwhile ‘newcomers’ had become part of an *Indische* world and had, to some extent, lost touch with their Dutch ‘motherland’.

The Hague in particular was a centre for both the lower-middle class and the elite *Indisch* community in the Netherlands. Apart from the *Indisch* primary school, it provided a range of clubs and other facilities geared towards the visitors and retirees from overseas.\(^68\) The local population was relatively acquainted with the *Indisch* community, at least much more so than in other parts of the country. In The Hague, migrants and furlough-goers from the Indies could live comfortably in their own environment. A striking illustration is the party celebrating the fact that director G.P.J. Caspersz had been working for the Sister Companies for 25 years. Although by that time, in 1938, he had been working and living in The Hague for over 22 years already, the festivities were a decidedly *Indisch* gathering, assembling the ‘standard-bearers of the entire *Indisch* society’.\(^69\) After close to a quarter century in the metropole, Caspersz was still part of an *Indisch* society.

The position of The Hague as a sort of transitional zone between the metropole and the colony also made it an attractive place to look for a suitable spouse. Even for those men who were Dutch-born and had left for the Indies as bachelors at the start of their career, it could be difficult to connect with eligible ladies in the home country. But in The Hague they encountered a marriage market suited to their needs. Consequently, as Ulbe Bosma and Kees Mandemakers report, The Hague was the

only large town in the Netherlands that sent more women than men to the Indies during the interwar years.\textsuperscript{70} The women from The Hague were familiar with, or even already part of the \textit{Indisch} world. The fact that men from the Indies tended to search for a bride in this town illustrates that the \textit{Indisch} circles were connected with the metropolitan society in the Netherlands, but that they still remained a distinct entity.

The feeling of not belonging in the Netherlands, though also experienced by the relatively recent expatriates, was most pertinent for the lower-middle class \textit{Indische} Europeans, like the previously cited Ms. Smits. In this context, race (in the form of social meaning attached to skin colour and physical appearance) suddenly became pertinent for several authors. As I have discussed in this and the previous chapter, explicit invocations of such racial markers are mostly absent from discussion on all sides of Indies’ discourse. Yet when discussing their time in the Netherlands, they suddenly connected their experience of discrimination by the \textit{Hollander}s very explicitly with skin colour, in a way that they did not experience in the colony. As Smits states, for example, she felt that ‘[t]he full-blood \textit{Hollander} looks down with disdain on the otherwise tinted, the \textit{Indische} people’. She continues:

They impertinently laugh at you, right in your face. Especially the \textit{Indische} woman has this problem; and the more when she is alone. [...] I witnessed one case, in Scheveningen, where a fishing boy threw an empty box of matchsticks in the face of a rather dark lady, saying: ‘You should use some more soap’.\textsuperscript{71}

These experiences of racial discrimination are immediately played down again by explaining them with a class component. It is, Smits reports, especially the ‘unsurpassed street youth’ who are culpable of this type of behaviour, as well as other members of the lower (middle) classes: a shop-assistant in the cheese shop she visits, a flower-seller, the conductor on the tram in The Hague. In her eyes, these were the


kind of people that did not have the manners or worldliness to hide their curiosity or surprise.

Blaming ‘the common people’ or the ‘street youths’ for not accepting Indische people and for their lack of manners was a more widely spread practice. Ms. Smits letter was, in fact, a supportive response to an account by another Spoorbond member called Lefeber. This member likewise reported an incident of discriminatory treatment:

A party of Indies’ furlough-goers, some of whom stood out because of their darker hue, while admiring the Dom Church of Utrecht, was annoyingly troubled by the gazing public, including, of course, the unsurpassed Dutch street youths. It is known to the undersigned, that one member of the party in particular due to his Indische air suffered at the hands of John Public during his stay in the Netherlands.72

What exactly Lefeber means by ‘Indische air’ (Indische allures) he does not explain. The term suggests that he warns his readers against exacerbating their ‘otherness’ while in the Netherlands through maladjusted behaviour. Appropriate behaviour and manners, it seems, are advised to stake one’s social claim.

This brings us back to the obsession that many Europeans from the Indies had with good manners. We have seen the importance of this for a bourgeois self-understanding several times in previous chapters. It seems they carried this obsession with them on their furlough. For the Spoorbond members, it shows first of all in their implicit ways of discursively portraying themselves as superior to the Dutch ‘common people’, as in the above quotations.73 Moreover, all members recounting their experiences in the union periodical demonstrated a keen interest in issues relating to proper manners. Smits states that ‘as regards good manners [welgemanierdheid] I believe the average middle class Indischman can be an example to any full-blood from the same class’. Apart from her tirade against the rude manners of Dutch shop assistants, she also laments the inadequate ‘tidiness’ of many park benches she

72 Lefeber, ‘Indrukken’. This article itself was once again in reaction to an (unpublished) informative talk by the president of the Spoorbond (F.H.W. Rootjaackers).
73 Another clear example of such a denigrating tone towards ‘the people’ is to be found in Visser, “Zou ik naar Holland gaan”, pp. 396.
encountered in the Netherlands, and spends almost a full column on explaining Dutch tipping customs to her colleagues.\footnote{Smits, ‘Indrukken’, pp. 642-643.}

Another Spoorbond member on furlough, one Jan Visser, might be the most extreme example of this petty bourgeois obsession. Visser opens his account by describing his sea voyage. On the way to the Netherlands, he travelled third class with his wife and daughter, on the return journey they chose second class. He writes:

\[M\]any [will] wonder: ‘how is it to travel in third class, what kind of people will I have to deal with there, is the company advisable for ladies?’ […] I can conclude that the public on the outward voyage was certainly not lower in standing than on the way back. Of course it [the public in third class] was ‘mixed’, but those who expect to find a ‘selected’ public in second class will be mistaken. […] The core of the third-class public consisted of absolutely decent people […].\footnote{Visser, “Zou ik naar Holland gaan”, pp. 371.}

In further accounts of his stay in the Netherlands, he mentions all the guesthouses, restaurants, cafes and other establishments that he has visited and often gives their prices to the cent. The Guest House De Bruyn where he and his family stayed cost f 110,– per month, but provided ‘stout, decent rooms, of good standing, on the first floor’. The Bijenkorf warehouse in Amsterdam offered a good lunch for no more than half a guilder; so did Hema, but ‘the latter’s restaurant could hardly be called “chic”’.

In the coffee house Nieuwe Karseboom, Visser reports, one could enjoy constant music performances over refreshments for ‘very reasonable prices’—but the audience, unfortunately, is ‘not “all that”’. The appropriate clothing to wear to all these establishments could easily be bought before departure from the Indies: ‘In the larger towns, the tailors are adequately equipped for you to buy a suit in which you will not cut a bad figure upon arrival.’\footnote{Visser, “Zou ik naar Holland gaan”, pp. 372, 395-396.}

The information and recommendations that Visser gave his colleagues centred on two issues: what things cost and whether they were ‘proper’. He was constantly concerned with keeping up appearances and establishing his middle class credentials, while juggling a restricted budget that had to last the duration of his furlough. Such an
interest in outward appearances to stake one’s social position is, of course, a common concern of middle classes everywhere. Yet for the lower-middle class employees on furlough from the Indies, like Visser, Smits, Lefeber or the Bondslid from the introduction to this chapter, these concerns acquired a heightened urgency. As with Smits and Lefeber, a ‘darker hue’ could influence their perceived necessity to compensate through meticulous social manners. But even for Visser, who had once been a newcomer to the Indies, and had since spent 30 years of his life in the colony (the last 17 of which without interruption), the compulsion was imminent. All of them were struggling to assert their position as a legitimate, civilized European citizen.

**Travelling like an Oriental European**

In this endeavour, their primary allegiance was to the Netherlands, their ‘motherland’. But it is also striking to see that their frame of reference was ‘Europe’ more generally. The ‘European’ furlough was so named for a reason. At least three out of four of the mentioned travellers spent prolonged periods of their furlough in other European countries—Lefeber does not elaborate on his itinerary—and they report encountering Indisch communities in several places throughout the continent. Moreover, other features in the Spoorbondsblad provided information on the practicalities of travel on the continent and gave advice on the fiscal consequences of spending part or even all of one’s furlough in another European country. In short, Spoorbond members on furlough generally treated ‘Europe’ as their destination, and Holland, or at least its urban centres, as their port-of-entry and base of operations.

There are two places in Europe that attracted most attention from the furlough-goers of the Spoorbond (with the French Riviera running a close third): Belgium (especially Brussels) and Switzerland. The former was frequently proposed as an alternative base for the long term. Why Brussels was such a popular destination is not entirely clear, but the reporters in the Spoorbondsblad seem to have agreed that

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77 For examples from the latter, see especially: ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, pp. 160, 230-231, 267.
78 The fact that he travelled in third class suggests that he cannot have had an elevated professional and social position. He was lower middle class, but not Indo-European. Visser, “Zou ik naar Holland gaan?”, p. 371.
Belgians were more friendly and welcoming than *Hollanders*. What is more, Brussels was a more worldly and exciting town than The Hague. One member exclaimed: ‘There is a reason why they call Brussels little-Parist.’ Other reasons that the editors of the periodical offered for ringing the praises of Brussels were the laxer and more favourable tax regime, as well as the cheaper overall cost of living in Brussels compared to The Hague. Moreover, for those who felt uncomfortable with languages other than Dutch, it was possible to get by in Brussels, and there was even a Dutch school for the children. The anonymous traveller from the introduction even reported that the owner of the hotel where he stayed spoke a little Malay, which was a welcome surprise. It seems that Brussels was simply seen as a convenient alternative close to the ‘Motherland’, which simultaneously shows the remaining connection to Netherlands as well as the fact that the *Spoorbond* employees were not wedded to the idea of staying in Holland.

The case of Switzerland was somewhat different. As a well-known tourist destination, this choice may seem less surprising. Nonetheless, it is extraordinary how central a visit to Switzerland seems to have been for many *Indische* employees. As the previously quoted Jan Visser put it: ‘In my opinion, a visit to that country, at least in winter, belongs to a furlough to Holland like a dash of whisky to a glass of *ajer blanda*.’ Switzerland commanded a particular fascination from the Indies’ crowds mainly because of its dramatic mountainscapes, which reminded them of the Indies, as well as for its reputedly healthy and invigorating climate (which was, after all, one of the official purposes of their furlough). Moreover, the infrastructure in the Swiss tourist destinations was good, and in Montreux there was an opportunity to join a Dutch community with its own social club and a Dutch school for the children. A welcome bonus to Visser was that his guesthouse in Les Avants sur Montreux was a meeting point for *Indische* people, which made the memories of his stay all the more pleasant. The *Bondslid*, finally, had an additional personal reason for his fondness

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82 ‘*Bondslid met verlof in Europa*’, p. 564.
83 Visser, ‘‘Zou ik naar Holland gaan’’, p. 397. *Ajer blanda* was the Dutch Indies’ term for sodawater, a neologism formed from the Malay/Indonesian *ajer* (water) and *blanda* (Dutch-European).
84 Visser, ‘‘Zou ik naar Holland gaan’’. Other reports on (or from *Spoorbond* members in) Switzerland: ‘*Van en voor verlofgangers*’, 16 November 1926; ‘*Van en voor verlofgangers: ondanks
for Switzerland: ‘This is the second time I am visiting Switzerland. Perhaps this country has such a draw on me because my grandfather (from my mother’s side) is Swiss.’

Otherwise, the destinations that railway employees travelled to on their journey were more dispersed throughout Europe. Sometimes this was dependent on personal background. For example, the German engineer Wilhelm Biele who worked for the Sister Companies (see chapter 6), based himself in the German town of Dortmund, where he came from. More often, the itinerary was based on tourist considerations. The accounts provide excited descriptions of a holiday spent dashing across Europe, finally experiencing all the cultural highlights and seeing for oneself the sights that the old continent had to offer. The authors combine a sense of belonging with the recognition that, ultimately, ‘Europe’ is not their home. The Bondslid for example, says that ‘[l]ife in Europe suits me perfectly’, only to continue: ‘but I cannot stand the winter and because of that will be forced to return to warmer places’. After his grand tour, he will return to the Indies to live out his retirement there.

The questions remains how these travellers identified themselves during their sojourn through Europe. Were they, in their own eyes, Dutch, Indisch, European, or something else entirely? Naturally, such identities are not mutually exclusive nor are they clearly separated: they are complex, overlapping, and highly dependent on context. We have already seen in the introduction that Bondslid professed that he ‘felt perfectly senang in the modern Babylon’. The ‘modern Babylon’, in this context, was an overwhelmingly positive denotation, signalling national mixing and a common outlook on modern life. In various other instances Bondslid portrayed himself similarly as a modern citizen of the world, partaking in a cosmopolitan high society: when he goes to theatres and cinemas throughout Europe, when he visits the World Fair, when he attends the Monte Carlo rally, or when he joins the glamorous crowd in

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85 ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, p. 490. The author only makes passing reference to this fact, which suggests that such an ‘international’ background may not have been very surprising to many of his potential readers.
86 NL-HaNA, Personeelsdossiers ZSM, 2.20.15, 6, Personnel file W. Biele.
the casino of the same town. But while describing his exploits, the implied in-group frequently shifts. At the world fair (as well as the annual fair in Milan) he takes particular pains in describing the Dutch pavilion—as well as the various colonial expositions—no doubt expecting this to be of more interest to his readers. His review of a play called ‘Broadway’ (about ‘Jazz, liquor smugglers, love behind the scenes, and gun shots’) is disparaging: ‘You would need to be American to enjoy such a combination.’ And when invited to celebrate Christmas at an Italian restaurant that he regularly frequents, he respectfully declines saying: ‘I would be the only Indian [Indiër] amidst all the Italians’.89

The same back and forth in allegiances can be discerned in other contributions to the Spoorbondsblad. In an article offering information on the practicalities of travelling in Germany, for example, the author quickly and repeatedly shifts between referring to his in-group as ‘Dutch’ or as ‘Indisch’. Speaking of the food in Germany, he writes: ‘Vegetables and potatoes are served in very small portions and usually extra portions need to be ordered for our Dutch stomachs.’ Half a column below, in a discussion of countryside tours, the author establishes with approval: ‘Sportswear is used frequently for such tours (even on Sundays) and nobody will be bothered if someone boards the train with mucky shoes after a long walk; as in the Indies, people think this looks robust.’ The shifting and overlapping senses of community are confirmed once more in the last paragraph, with information on the town of Stuttgart: ‘In the Dutch social club [...] one can find plenty of Hollanders willing to help Indische people out with selfless advice. (There are also Indische people among them.)’90

Conclusion: shifting identities of the Oriental European

For these people on furlough from the Indies, identities were fluid, intertwined and context-dependent. They saw ‘Europe’ in general as their cultural heritage, but had a special bond with Holland. Still, they frequently differentiated themselves from the ‘Hollanders’. At other times, travelling abroad made them identify more as Dutch and

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89 ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, pp. 267, 294-295, 462, 564, 598.
90 ‘Eenige wenken voor den verlofganger die in Duitschland wil reizen’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 3, No. 2, 16 January 1926, pp. 48-49. This piece is a reprint from an article by one A.J.L. in the publication of the Association of Indies Furlough-goers.
assemble with their metropolitan countrymen in social clubs or Dutch schools. Being an ‘Indisch European’, then, to them meant being part of European civilization, but in a particular way. They hardly seem to have been inhibited by national boundaries in Europe, in an age presumably characterized by rising nationalization and conflict. Being ‘Indisch European’ to them entailed a broader, more cosmopolitan perspective, but also a particular view on the importance of some social norms (keeping up appearances) and the folly of others (no mucky boots on the train). Yes, they were ‘European’, and yes, they were Dutch, but of their own variety, forming a separate society respectable in its own right.

To return to our anonymous Bondslid from the introduction to this chapter: as an Indisch European he felt part of the ‘modern Babylon’. But at times, in these cosmopolitan circles, he was reminded of where he came from. In Monte Carlo the most exciting outing he had was to the Miss Monaco beauty pageant:

‘Dinner jacket’ [Smoking] was required, but I was allowed to appear in my suit jacket [Colbert] (mind you, made by ‘Baas Gemok’ in Bandoeng)! There I was, in my jacket [jasje] from Bandoeng, sat amongst the elite of the Riviera, and I felt—to be honest—not entirely at ease. Around me: millionaires and other such toean besar in black with their ladies, dressed in the most expensive dresses and decorated with millions in precious stones! [...] Never have I seen anything as ‘fancy’ as this!91

His Bandung jacket was good enough to allow him to participate in the European jet-set at the French Riviera. But ultimately his place was among his countrymen ‘in the shadow of the rubber trees’. ‘Holland’ was patria, ‘Europe’ was his playground and frame of reference. But wherever he went he remained an Indiërl—an Oriental European.

91 ‘Bondslid met verlof in Europa’, p. 330. Toean besar is an Indies’ term, meaning ‘boss’ or ‘important man’ (literally: ’big man/master’).
Chapter 8
Dancing to the Euro-beat: creating an *Indisch* modernity in colonial suburbia

**Prologue: party in the suburb**

On 20 December 1913, the little colonial town of Tegal on the North-Coast of Java witnessed a grand party. The Semarang-Cirebon Steamtram Company (SCS), the largest of the four Sister Companies, had recently completed its new headquarters (see figure 8.1). The building had been designed by the architect Henri Maclaine Pont, who would later become one of the most famous architects of the Dutch East Indies, renowned for combining Western building technology with principles from traditional Javanese architecture. But in this, one of his earliest works, his style was still more clearly influenced by metropolitan architectural examples of the time, although in the design of the galleries and balconies one finds echoes of Old Indies buildings, and concessions had been made to adapt the building to the local environmental conditions.¹

The opening of the office building simultaneously marked the inauguration of the newly designed station district of Tegal, called Slerok after a nearby *kampung*. Slerok had not yet been entirely completed but was starting to take shape. In the following years, Slerok was to gain a large hotel, several schools (both for Europeans and for Indonesian children), shops, a range of sporting facilities, a small library, as well as a social club for the less affluent railway employees (see figure 8.2).² The festivities began in the new headquarters, and were enlivened by the military band from Salatiga.³ A newspaper reporter described the new head office as ‘sober and solid, but stately’. The *hall*—for which the reporter used the English rather than the Dutch term—was impressively decorated. Its centrepiece was a large electrically

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² More on all of these elements below.

³ The following account is mainly based on: ‘Uit Tegal’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 29 December 1913.
powered fountain from which cologne water was flowing, to the amazement of the visitors. All of the officials from the SCS Company as well as the regional colonial administration were present. After the formal part of the ceremony was completed, the company moved on to the premises of the social club for railway employees, Het Gevleugeld Rad (The Winged Wheel). Here, as the same newspaper article reported, the festivities continued until the early hours: ‘To the notes of the music, many a dance was performed, while songs and speeches from dilettantes heightened the revelry. The animated ball lasted until early in the morning, bringing the Tegal festivities to a worthy close.’

For both the city of Tegal and the SCS company, this festive occasion ushered in a new era. The SCS was a major presence in Tegal. The city’s claim to fame (and the root of its economic existence) was its role at the heart of the sugar industry in central Java. Together with the nearby port of Pekalongan, Tegal was the main transport hub for the surrounding area that produced between 9 and 15 per cent of all sugar in the Dutch Indies. The SCS provided much of the overland transport capacity

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4 ‘Uit Tegal’, Het Nieuws van den Dag, 29 December 1913.
from the sugar factories to the harbours, as well as regional passenger transport. As a 1916 newspaper article reported, the Slerok neighbourhood surrounding the new SCS headquarters was already starting to grow into a new bustling social centre for the European population of Tegal, rivalling the old centre. In the following decades, it became an even more popular residential area and a service centre for SCS employees and other Europeans alike.6

**Introduction: a ‘tropical Netherlands’?**

The Slerok neighbourhood could be seen as an example of the increasing ‘enclavement’ of the Indies’ Europeans in their own little domain: separated and demarcated from the surrounding ‘Oriental’ world. A long-standing interpretation of Dutch Indies history has it that the first half of the twentieth century saw an increasing ‘Westernization’ of the colony’s European community, marked by a growing orientation on the metropole and accompanied by practices of residential and social segregation. New quiet suburbs for the freshly arrived *totoks* attempted to create a ‘tropical Netherlands’, transplanting metropolitan living arrangements into the colony.7 Although, naturally, this was impossible in its entirety, a common understanding still has it that the ‘Westernization’—or in another incarnation: ‘totokization’—was the significant trait of Dutch Indies’ social and cultural developments in the first half of the twentieth century.

In this chapter I argue for an amendment of this view in two significant ways. First, the image of a ‘tropical Netherlands’ focuses on a presumed obsession with maintaining strict and impenetrable social boundaries that is not borne out by the facts of social interaction among the SCS employees. Neighbourhoods like Slerok had a more varied make-up and more porous boundaries—and deliberately so—than the metaphor of ‘enclavement’ can accurately describe. Second, the point of reference for the ideals of ‘Westernizing’ the Indies was not necessarily the Netherlands. Thus, the

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term ‘tropical Netherlands’ is misleading. Colonial actors (both Europeans as well as some Indonesians) were striving for an idea of ‘modernity’. They took their cues not only from the Netherlands but also from other European countries, as well as North America. In doing so, they created an idea of a colonial, Dutch-Indies modernity, which was related to, but independent from metropolitan modernity.

Historian G. Roger Knight has voiced similar criticisms of the ‘enclavement’ trope in his article ‘A sugar factory and its swimming pool’. Focusing on a residential compound for the European employees of the Comal sugar factory near Pekalongan (ca. 50 km east of Tegal), Knight explains that this compound was indeed designed ‘to re-create a little piece of Western Europe in the tropics’. But he goes on to dismantle that assertion. Even though ‘Enclavement’ was the desired modus for newly arrived totoks, they were confronted with a reality that was markedly more hybrid: ‘the nominal exclusiveness of the totok was tempered by a complex history of inclusivity which stretched back for over two centuries’. Moreover, Knight observes, the ideal of ‘totokization’ should ‘not be mistaken for the creation of a Netherlands in the Indies’. Rather, inspiration was drawn from international examples (sometimes also North American) as much as from the Netherlands. ‘The upshot’, Knight concludes, ‘was distinctively colonial’. 8

I concur with Knight in rejecting the myth of a ‘tropical Netherlands’. However, I partly disagree with the image he conjures to replace that myth. First, Knight’s approach focuses on the social mixing of elites: the Comal compound was a tiny neighbourhood for only ‘sixteen or so European managers and technical personnel’. 9 The principal event around which he constructs his article is the official opening of the ‘European’ swimming pool at Comal. This was not a racially exclusive affair, as local indigenous dignitaries also attended. The image that Knight’s description evokes harks back to the classic (partly imaginary) view of elite racial relations in the Dutch colonial state of the nineteenth century, which is one of parallel cooperating (rather than mixing) elites. 10 Knight thus concludes that late colonial practices of inclusivity displayed continuity from older forms.

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10 Cf. for an insightful analysis of this concept of parallel elites (for the case of Macassar, South Sulawesi): Heather Sutherland, ‘Mestizos as Middlemen? Ethnicity and access in colonial Makasser’, in Historiography of Indonesia and the Middleman.
My research into the professional and social life in the SCS housing projects reveals a different type of setting. Suburban neighbourhoods like Slerok were not only occupied by ‘managers’ and ‘technical personnel’ but also by mid- and lower-level employees (largely ‘Europeans’ but also some Indonesians). The interactions of the inhabitants demonstrate a novel form of social mixing, based on shared ideas of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’ rather than cultural exchange between parallel elites. The small contingent of (educated) ‘native’ employees who we encounter in these contexts aggressively styled themselves as equally developed and living a similar lifestyle to their European colleagues. The management responding to their claims (as well as their subalterm European colleagues who encountered them), while not always sympathetic to their concerns, at least recognized that they were acting in the same discursive space. ‘Europeans’, ‘Indo-Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ were interacting on the basis of mutually comprehensible concepts of ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’.11

Secondly, despite repudiating the idea of a ‘tropical Netherlands’ as a myth, Knight does seem to accept that an integral transplantation of metropolitan norms into the colony was what Europeans in the Indies were striving for. The ‘distinctively colonial’ result, in his interpretation, was merely an unintended consequence. But as I indicated in chapter 7 and argue further in this chapter, colonial actors in the Indies themselves were already more ambiguous in their intentions. To the European employees of the SCS—especially the subaltem Indisch Europeans but also to some extent the elite totoks—metropolitan examples were no more than that: examples. SCS employees took pride in such neighbourhoods as Slerok not as a sample of a ‘tropical Netherlands’, but rather as a model of the ‘modern’ achievements that the Indisch-European business world was capable of. What they created and intended to create, then, was a modern society on their own terms. ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies was defined not only in demarcation to the surrounding ‘Oriental’ world, but also as distinct from metropolitan ‘Dutchness’.

Many of the changes in cultural orientation and social arrangements described in this chapter were decidedly shaped in the 1910s. This was a decade in which the Indies experienced some major social and political changes that would influence the outlook of society for the decades to come. Hence, in this chapter, I focus largely on

11 Cf. on ‘native’ appropriation of ideas of ‘modernity’: Nordholt, ‘Onafhankelijkheid of moderniteit? ’; Cooper, Colonialism in question, pp. 113-149.
the new course that was set in the 1910s, while occasionally indicating how these changes had become part of normal life in the Indies by the 1920s and 1930s. The Indies in the interwar years had entered a new era that was moulded by developments in the 1910s, and that could not be reversed even if some colonial actors may have wanted to do so.

I concentrate here on the housing arrangements, as well as the social life, of employees with the Sister Companies (especially the SCS), supplemented with sources from the publications of the Spoorbond, the union for mid-level (European) railway personnel in the Indies. The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, I analyse the housing projects provided by the SCS for its employees: who was eligible to live in which houses, in which neighbourhoods were these located, and (how) did the architecture reflect ideas about the place of the SCS and its employees in the world? Subsequently, I explore some of the everyday realities of domestic life for SCS employees: how did the inhabitants appropriate their houses, with whom did they live, and what were their family arrangements? The third part of this chapter deals with the employees’ social life, looking at their sports, music, and especially their social clubs. What identity did they (intend to) express through these cultural activities?

**Housing the railway employees**

The Slerok suburb of Tegal was one of many similar projects built by the SCS Company and its fellow Sister Companies for their employees throughout the major cities on the North coast of Java. The Sister Companies were not alone in providing this service to their staff. The State Railways, as well as other private railway companies also established their own corporate neighbourhoods. Slerok and its equivalents were, in many ways, typical examples of company suburbs built in the Indies between the 1910s and the 1930s. Who actually lived in these neighbourhoods and on what basis were the houses offered to them?

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12 The archives on the SCS company housing are split over the SCS archives (NL-HaNA, 2.20.17, especially inv.nr. 97) and the Sister Companies shared archives (NL-HaNA, 2.20.14.01, especially inv.nr. 90, 93, 116). The former mainly contain (discussions of and budgets for) very concrete plans for building and renting out new houses, the latter focus on more general matters of housing policy.

13 Cf. comparisons discussed in the SCS archives: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 29 October 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 5 May 1916.
The reason the SCS invested in company housing was a perceived housing shortage in the main towns along the routes it served, and consequent skyrocketing rent prices for its employees.\textsuperscript{14} The housing projects developed by the SCS and its Sister Companies differentiated between houses for various groups of its personnel. As one of the managers noted as early as 1907 (when the first housing projects were being considered), employees ‘owe[d] it to society to present themselves more or less favourably, depending on their income’.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, the management worried primarily about shortages in the higher sectors of the market. The common ‘native’ workers were left to their own devices. Only if they were stationed at remote locations along the railway-line, where there were no nearby settlements, could they expect to be offered company housing of a very basic design.\textsuperscript{16} In the larger towns, presumably, native workers would have no difficulty in finding affordable housing suitable to their (low) standards.\textsuperscript{17}

Other ranks of the personnel were in a more favourable position. For the managerial staff as well as for the mid-level personnel—principally the ‘Europeans’ but also in some cases the ‘native ambtenaren’—the company perceived a pressing shortage of affordable and healthy housing fit for their social standing. According to the Sister Companies’ management, the ambtenaren were often forced to live in substandard housing, especially in urban areas like Semarang, Cirebon, and Tegal. As the Head of Exploitation of the SJS claimed in 1915: ‘Under fl. 50 a month, no decent home is to be had in Semarang […]. By decent home we understand here a house, situated in a reasonably healthy neighbourhood, which fulfils minimal standards from a perspective of health precautions.’\textsuperscript{18} The fear was not that the ambtenaren would end up homeless, but rather that they might be forced to live in an unhealthy slum

\textsuperscript{14} See e.g. the extensive discussions (especially in the mid-1910s, at the inception of these plans) in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I.
\textsuperscript{15} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 909, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the Directors, 26 April 1907.
\textsuperscript{16} NL-HaNA, Semarang-Cheribon Stoomtram Maatschappij, 1893-1946 (henceforth: NL-HaNA, SCS), 2.20.17, 97, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 3 July 1919.
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. on the standards of hygiene and building method that the Natives presumably required: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 5 May 1916. The result was a relative number of ‘European’ vs. ‘native’ homes of ca. 3:1 (as of 1923). Relative expenditures for ‘native’ homes were a fraction of that number. See: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, head of exploitation SJS to chief agent, 20 September 1923.
\textsuperscript{18} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 29 October 1915.
dwelling.' Hence, most of the money flowing into housing projects or rent-support went towards the (European) ambtenaren of the Sister Companies, in order to save them from ‘ending up in the kampung’ (native urban settlement).

The Sister Companies thus participated in establishing and strengthening residential segregation in the cities of Northern Java. But on what basis was this spatial segregation predicated, on class or on race? Freek Colombijn and Martine Barwegen have recently addressed that question for several cities in the late colonial Dutch East Indies. They conclude that residential segregation was a consequence of diverging house prices, and was thus predicated primarily on social class (income disparity). As class and race were closely correlated in the Dutch Indies, segregation also roughly followed race lines, but only as a secondary consequence. Neighbourhoods were formed and defined by income levels and house prices rather than ethnic denominators. The (relatively rare but nonetheless significant) deviant cases make this clear: poor Indonesians and Europeans often shared the same neighbourhood, as did their wealthier counterparts.

The evidence from the Sister Companies’ archives confirms Colombijn and Barwegen’s conclusion. However, Colombijn and Barwegen largely neglect the question of intent versus practice. The company management did in fact conceive of different types of company houses in terms of different cultural needs, which were identified in racial(ized) terms. The cheapest residences for the common workers were known as ‘houses for native beambten’ and were explicitly intended to reflect ‘native architectural style’. In one proposal in 1916 for such a housing project, the head of exploitation of the SJS explained:

Open front- and back-verandas can be forgone; they are not used. The Native simply feels at ease only in a closed-off, semi-dark interior. [...] A good guiding principle can be found in what the Native builds for himself, both in form and appearance as well as regarding the use of building materials. [...] The Native,
after all, still partly has to get used to better and more hygienic houses and still has to learn to reserve some money for this. We accommodate him best by following the indigenous style.  

The residences for the more affluent employees, conversely, were originally known as ‘houses for European ambtenaren’. There was a tendency, then, to regard certain houses as suited to ‘European’ needs and others as fit for ‘Natives’.

Around the turn of the decade these perceptions started to shift. The perception in racialized terms was confronted with more complicated practices. For one, even though the Sister Companies repeatedly lamented severe housing shortages for Europeans in such towns as Semarang, Cirebon and Tegal, many of their cheapest houses for European ambtenaren remained empty or had to be rented out to non-employees. It turned out that the company’s employees did not appreciate these homes as much as the management had expected. In 1918, for example, five years after the first houses in the Slerok neighbourhood of Tegal had been built, the Head of Exploitation of the SCS took stock (cf. figure 8.2):

All homes of type H [the cheapest available in Slerok, BL] except for one, which has been rented out in combination with the adjacent G-type home, have remained unoccupied over the last two years. [...] So far it has become evident, that the smaller [European] purses tend not to be interested in the residential opportunities in the station quarters and prefer to settle in houses of native manufacture along the kampung roads leading into the SCS quarters [...].  

21 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 5 May 1916.

22 This is poignantly illustrated in the title given to the relevant file, Dossier No. 1537. The first part, which ran from 1913–1917, was entitled: ‘Service- and rental houses for European ambtenaren. Types of service-houses. Houses for native beambten’. The subsequent parts had exactly the same title except that the ‘European’ was dropped—consequently juxtaposing ‘houses for ambtenaren’ with ‘houses for native beambten’. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537.

23 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-III, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 4 January 1918.
Similar reports came from other towns along the SCS lines.\textsuperscript{24} Many of the European train conductors—mostly veterans from the colonial army (see chapter 7)—as well as some minor station clerks consciously chose to live ‘in the kampung’, even though they were offered ‘respectable’ European housing at an affordable price. Clearly they preferred not to spend too much of their income on rent; financial considerations were more important to them than the idea of living among their fellow Europeans.

The challenge to racialized perceptions equally worked in the other direction. Residential boundaries were also porous for the upwardly mobile. From the late 1910s, the advent of native employees into the ambtenaren ranks meant that they started to petition the local representatives of the company management for better housing on a par with their colleagues. These local agents often felt compelled to relay and support such claims towards the directors in the Netherlands, to uphold peace in the company and to live up to earlier promises.

Especially in the late 1910s, after the First World War, such recommendations from the local management carried significant weight. The directors around this time had little direct experience of the situation in the colony, having to depend heavily upon their agents on the ground. Consequently, the directorship in the Netherlands was confronted with the effects of a practice that they had themselves initiated several years earlier, in a situation that was in some respects very different. As the chief agent ad interim for the Sister Companies explained to the directors in 1919:

We are in a transitional period in which Natives receive better and more general education than about a decade ago, and which has caused many positions, previously only occupied by Europeans, now to be assigned to Natives. [...] Until now, we have almost exclusively provided proper housing to the European ambtenaren [...]. It was assumed that no special provisions were necessary for the Native beambten. Also in this aspect changes are now underway.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} On Surabaya: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 909, Letter from the head of exploitation OJS to the chief agent, 8 December 1914; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-III, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the Directors, 27 January 1917; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, Letter from chief agent G. Diephuis to the directors, 15 August 1925.

\textsuperscript{25} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 919, Memorandum deputy chief agent Th. Vreede, 17 January 1919.
As a consequence, the company slowly adopted the practice of class-based rather than race-based residential segregation, as Colombijn and Barwegen also noted. If we study the lists of occupants that were drawn up annually—although not all have survived in the archives—we can see that several native ambtenaren managed to secure one of the company houses originally built for Europeans.

In Slerok, for example, in a survey drawn up over the year 1925, out of 26 homes, two were rented out to employees whose name suggests a ‘native’ background: H.L. Sopakuwa and A. Latoeperissa. By 1930, they had been joined by one further countryman, N. Soemarlan. All of these men served in elevated administrative ranks. Latoeperissa had been ‘equated’ with Europeans and was thus at least legally considered European, but no evidence exists of an ‘equation’ for the other two men. What is more, both Sopakuwa and Latoeperissa were not even living in the cheapest available houses in Slerok but rather in comfortable middle class residences. Records from the other Sister Companies confirm this picture: in 1930, for example, the SJS rented out four of its 34 homes for ambtenaren to recognizably ‘native’ employees. Although the relative numbers are not enormous, the presence of these Indonesian employees in the supposedly ‘European’ station quarters still demonstrates that the selection criterion for residency had become income or rank rather than race, forcing the company management to reconsider its original perceptions.

Because these educated Indonesians had penetrated ranks in the company that were formerly the preserve of ‘Europeans’, they also managed to enter a European social environment. They became increasingly vocal in their demands for equal treatment, and began to contest discriminatory policies. They assertively styled themselves as equally developed and a part of the same social space as their European colleagues. Even if the management sometimes refused to heed their claims—often for financial reasons—at least it accepted them as subjects with independent agency.

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26 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, Dossier No. 1537-II, Survey of company houses as of 31 December 1925; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, Dossier No. 1537-III, Survey of company houses as of 31 December 1930. Their professional rank can be found in NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 164-165.

27 Recently two genealogists (Dennis de Calonne and Tjaart Schillhorn van Veen) published a database of all Indies’ residents who were either naturalized or ‘equated’, based on the Dutch Indies law gazette. This database includes Latoeperissa but not the other two men, though there is a slight possibility that Sopakuwa was the son of an ‘equated’ father (and hence himself also legally European). URL: http://naturalisaties.decalonne.nl, (accessed 3 March 2014).

28 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, Dossier No. 1537-III, Survey of company houses as of 31 December 1930. The employees were: R. Soenoto, Lawalata, Latumahina, and Syjahailatuwu.
The management conceded that these ‘developed’ Natives were valid discussion partners, acting in a common discursive space.

A good example is the discussion surrounding the so-called ‘family allowance’. The Sister Companies provided an allowance on top of the regular income to employees with a family living in the more expensive towns, to cover their extra expenses. For the lower-income *ambtenaren* this allowance could be as much as thirty per cent of their monthly income. Originally, the allowance had only been intended for European employees, because the assumption was that native workers had less trouble finding an affordable home suitable to their standards. The first challenge to this policy came in 1913 when R. Mochammad Joesoef, who had recently been promoted to the rank of 2nd class clerk, requested to be granted the same privilege of the family allowance as his European colleagues. This sparked a controversial debate among the managers. The management on the ground in the colony, the head of exploitation of the SJS-company W. Oltmans (Joesoef’s direct superior) as well as chief agent Caspersz, were sympathetic to Joesoef’s request. But the directors in The Hague were divided on the subject. In an internal memo, one of the directors proclaimed:

> When a more developed Native wishes to express his more-European attitude by giving his domestic married life a different *cachet* (it cannot even be ruled out that he would marry a more or less European woman) he could not unjustifiably feel wronged, if he is obstructed by being denied the allowance.

His colleagues disagreed. One of them noted in the margin next to this remark: ‘This is in the future—we should not run ahead of the evolution.’ Eventually, the directors

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29 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 919, Letter from the chief agent to the directors, 26 June 1919; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 919, Letter from the chief agent to the directors, 5 May 1920. The regulation was known as a ‘rent allowance’ before 1919. After 1919 this was changed into a ‘family allowance’, although the practicalities of the arrangement changed little. Cf. the discussions in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 909.

30 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 910, Letter from the head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 9 December 1913; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 910, Letter from the chief agent to the directors, 18 December 1913.

31 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 910, Memorandum 2 February 1914 (name of author illegible).

32 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 910, Memorandum 2 February 1914 (name of author illegible), see the marginal comment there (unknown author).
agreed to leave things as they were, for the time being. They informed the representatives in the Indies:

There are differences between the life circumstances of Europeans and Natives that cannot be separated from the difference in race and religion; [...]. An allowance towards the rent is only provided to married ambtenaren. When this arrangement was drafted the thought was of a marriage according to Dutch law and based on Dutch customs; the reason for the allowance in that case is that such a marriage is inevitably followed by the move into a home suitable for a European, for which rent prices in the Indies are relatively high. We do not appreciate the value of marriage to the Javanese any less than to the European, but in our opinion it is clear that the financial consequences as explained above are much less likely to result.33

Within five years, the same issue returned to the agenda. In the meantime, the Indies had become increasingly isolated from the Netherlands as a consequence of the First World War (even though neither the Netherlands nor its colonies were directly involved).34 As the isolation had made the colony temporarily more autonomous and more reliant on local human capital, some of the social developments of the early 1910s, which the Sister Companies management had anticipated to unfold fully only in the mid- to long-term future, had been accelerated.

In this environment, a group of native ambtenaren in early 1918 once again requested to be granted the family allowance. In forwarding the request to the directors in The Hague, chief agent Van Alphen recounted the arguments delivered to him in person by the petitioners. They had asserted that ‘many European ambtenaren receive the rent allowance, who live under the exact same circumstances as they do’. Van Alphen continued:

The petitioners readily admitted that a difference remains for the time being between the life circumstances of the full-blood Europeans and the better-
situated Indo-Europeans on the one hand and their own life circumstances on
the other. But they drew a comparison with the lower Indo-European
*ambtenaren*, who like them live in the *kampung*, pay the same rent, are mostly
married to a native woman or have such a woman as a housekeeper, in other
words who live in exactly the same circumstances as they do.35

Van Alphen told the directors that he simply had to agree that ‘our native *ambtenaren*,
who all belong to the more developed among their congeneres [*rasgenooten*], and
many of whom are clothed in a European style,’ could not be said to be living any
differently from ‘our lower Indo-European *ambtenaren*, in particular as regards their
homes’.36 This time, the directors followed the advice of their chief agent. In a
different discussion regarding the pension rights of widows and children of their
native employees, they had recently granted that the marriages of their native
*ambtenaren* would henceforth be recognized by the company on an equal basis as
European marriages. As they had conceded this, they felt they could no longer deny
the validity of the argument put forth by their native *ambtenaren*.37 Their hand was
forced by a combination of the constraints of the First World War and the inherent
logic of the meritocratic arguments they themselves had advanced only a few years
earlier, and which they felt obliged to honour.

This episode shows that the educated ‘native’ employees and their ‘European’
superiors by this time were engaged in a discussion that was conducted in mutually
comprehensible terms. This is not to say that racial discrimination disappeared from
the workplace. Indonesians still found it very difficult to penetrate the higher ranks of
the SCS and they still had to fight for every small advancement of their position. But
it does mean that ‘Native’ employees and ‘European’ superiors alike no longer
thought in terms of two separate and incompatible worlds. They accepted each other’s
agency, and accepted that they lived in one world—a strongly hierarchical world, but
a single world nonetheless.

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35 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 910, Letter from the chief agent to the directors, 18
March 1918. I have not been able to find the original request by the Indonesian employees. This
quotation is taken from a paraphrase in the letter by the chief agent.
36 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 910, Letter from the chief agent to the directors, 18
March 1918.
37 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 910, Letter from the directors to the chief agent, 28
June 1918. Cf. on the pensions discussion: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 920.
Equally noteworthy about these discussions is the role played by the figure of the ‘lower Indo-European employee’. As I discussed in chapters 6 and 7, ‘Indo-European’ was a term that the management of the Sister Companies tended to avoid, and yet in the citations above we see it occupying a vital position. The quotations from 1913 speak exclusively of ‘Europeans’ who presumably have certain needs, as opposed to ‘Natives’ who have different needs. This language obviously fits the argument that the directors were trying to sustain at the time. The quotations from 1918, by contrast, introduce a new figure: the ‘lower Indo-European ambtenaar’. In this way, an in-between character was created, which makes the imagined hierarchy less binary and more gradual. For the Indonesian employees this facilitates their claim for equal rights, on the basis that they are equivalent to at least some classes of Europeans. Conversely, for the company managers the framing of these ranks as ‘lower Indo-European’ makes it possible to concede to (some of) the wishes of their native ambtenaren and thus create some opportunity for social mobility, whilst upholding the idea of their own superiority: as better-situated and ‘fully’ European.

In this dynamic we can once again see a subtle interplay between class and race. The practical basis of differentiations was primarily one of rank and income: in which house one lived (dependent on rent), or which professional rank one had (‘lower’ or ‘higher’ officials). The perception, however, was racialized: lower class Europeans were automatically identified with the term ‘Indo-European’, even though—as I have argued in chapter 6—the lower-level employees who were the subject of discussion were not necessarily of a mixed racial background. Both elite Europeans and socially mobile Indonesians racialized the difference between lower- and upper-class Europeans, because it suited their respective arguments. ‘Speaking’ race and ‘doing’ race were thus not always in accord.

A similar mechanism defines the very trope of ‘living in the kampung’. This notion is central to the debates on housing policy in the Indies, because it was used to denote (and essentialize) the difference between a neat and orderly ‘European’ residential neighbourhood like Slerok on the one hand, and unhygienic, disorderly native quarters on the other. The term ‘kampung’ carried with it a clearly negative association, with connotations of cultural degeneration and loss of the social and
cultural links with the (European) elite. But if we draw out more closely the realities that this phrase was supposed to reflect, we can see that the level of social destitution was highly relative. In one case, one of the local managers decried the situation in Surabaya in a memorandum to his superiors. He lamented that many train conductors purposely chose to live in the *kampung*; ‘in a house of fl. 15,— to fl. 20,— rental value’. Considering that the cheapest urban houses at the time went for as little as 1 or 2 guilders, and that the income of an unskilled Indonesian day labourer in Surabaya was no more than 50 cents a day, a house of fl. 15,— rent can hardly be said to constitute an urban slum. The term ‘*kampung*’ in this context, then, signals that these employees were living in homes that the management considered unworthy of a ‘proper’ European—and by referring to these employees as ‘Indo-Europeans’ their ‘Europeanness’ was further called into question. In a way, all that the phrase ‘living in the *kampung*’ really meant, was a standard of living slightly below the level that one was accustomed to for oneself.

This is poignantly illustrated in a letter to the editor in the *Spoorbondsblad*, the membership journal for the railway union for mid-level personnel. In this letter, a self-identified ‘Indo’ railed against a *hoofdcommies* (senior clerk) who he had overheard complaining about the size of his old-age pension:

> Well excuse me, but when I hear a *hoofdcommies* say that his pension will force him to move to the *kampung*, then I seriously wonder how someone like that dares to make such assertions. I am only a simple Indo and I do not even have the pension of a *hoofdcommies* as my ordinary wage. Nevertheless, I have a rather large family to support and I have long since abandoned the chance at a promotion. But still I do not live in the *kampung* and I hope never to end up there.

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39 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 909, Letter from the head of exploitation OJS to the chief agent, 8 December 1914. Cf. NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from the acting head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 29 October 1915.
40 Colombijn and Barwegen, ‘Racial segregation’, p. 844.
41 Ingleson, *In search of justice*, p. 34-35.
42 F.S., ‘Heb je naasten lief...’.

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This is not to say that *Spoorbond* members themselves did not use the trope of ‘living in the kampung’. But it was always others—those who were one step down on the social ladder—who were so unfortunate. In other words: the notion of ‘descending into the kampung’ reflected a fear of downward social mobility or a general contempt for those less fortunate, but this fear and contempt was highly dependent on the personal context of the respective author.

What this analysis of the housing policy of the Sister Companies has shown is twofold. First, it demonstrates that the practices of residential segregation as promoted and stimulated by the Sister Companies were in effect class-based rather than race-based. The factors that decided in which neighbourhood one lived were rank and financial possibilities rather than race or legal status. But it is also clear that various neighbourhoods and different types of houses were nonetheless perceived and discussed in ethnic terms, at least at the planning stage and sometimes even years after it had become obvious the practices on the ground did not match the theory. Still, this racialized characterization of domestic environments was not necessarily indicative of a dualistic hierarchy. It was often a way of asserting superiority over those just a few steps lower down on the social ladder, used by actors from various walks of life.

Second, we have seen that these housing policy discussions and their underlying racial and cultural assumptions were occasionally challenged (indeed, successfully) by educated socially mobile Indonesians. Because the Sister Companies had committed themselves to social rather than (openly) racial criteria, they had opened up opportunities that were eagerly seized by the ‘native’ employees, who turned professed imperial ideology into a claim on the ruling class itself. Over the course of these debates between the management and the native ambtenaren, the latter were increasingly treated as equal to their European colleagues of the same rank. At the very least, they were engaged in a dialogue that presumed a shared worldview.

**Architecture for a modern Indies**

Neighbourhoods like Slerok were thus not rigidly barred enclaves. Boundaries existed, of course, but were of a socio-economic nature and hence porous to people

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44 Cf. Cooper, *Colonialism in question*, pp. 11-12.
from various backgrounds. That leaves the question unanswered, however, of whether these colonial suburbs can in fact be compared to the rustic Dutch ‘garden suburbs’ of the time. Did they look like their metropolitan equivalents, and, more importantly, did the designers and inhabitants perceive their neighbourhood as a ‘tropical Netherlands’? A closer scrutiny of the implementation of the SCS housing projects shows that this was in fact not what the SCS management—let alone its subaltern employees—were striving for. Rather, they had in mind an abstract notion of ‘modernity’ based on ideas of progress and technological prowess.

Possibly the best illustration of this can be found in the scene at the beginning of this chapter: the opening festivities for the new company headquarters of the SCS. The newspaper report on these events nowhere alludes to a supposedly ‘Dutch’ style of the office building or the surrounding Slerok neighbourhood, nor does it emphasize the metropolitan credentials of the architect. It does mention that the Slerok neighbourhood is due to become a ‘free-standing European district’, but what really interests the author is that all facilities in Slerok will be ‘entirely furnished according to the requirements of our age’. The electrical fountain spewing cologne water in the hall of the SCS office building attracted great admiration, and the author devoted a large part of the article to discussing the materials used in the building’s construction. These included such Indies’ classics as teak wood and, ‘for the first time ever’, sandstone from the Cirebon region. The article went on to mention the companies supplying these materials by name, all of them reputable Indies’ firms.45 In short, Slerok was *modern* and it was a product of the Indies; that is what counted, not whether it was Dutch.

Slerok and its equivalent neighbourhoods around the Indies were actually part of a global movement. Starting in Britain shortly before the turn of the century, a ‘garden city’ movement had originated that strived for rustic urban or suburban environments for the industrious middle classes, connected to the world through modern transport facilities, and equipped with all modern conveniences. The influence of these ideas on town planning had quickly spread to other countries throughout the European continent and the Americas, as well as, in specific incarnations, in the colonies. The Indies’ housing projects were not an imitation of

45 ‘Uit Tegal’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 29 December 1913.
characteristically Dutch examples but rather an expression of a global current.\textsuperscript{46} The central individuals in Indies town planning of the 1910s and afterwards were all educated in the Netherlands at a time when the international ‘progressive’ debates about architecture and ‘rational’ town planning were raging. Henri Maclaine Pont, the architect of the SCS headquarters and a planning advisor to the company, had this background, as did Thomas Karsten, the single most influential figure in Indies’ town planning debates throughout the interwar years. The latter even moved to the city of Berlin for a year, in 1910, to study the city’s recent developments, before he decided to migrate to the Indies. Neither of these two men ever commented extensively on their direct theoretical influences, but it seems presumptuous to think they would not have looked outside of the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{47}

We can see such international influences explicitly in a book published in 1913 by a member of the Semarang city council, H.F. Tillema. Tillema was a pharmacist by trade who had made a fortune selling mineral water in the Indies, allowing him to become an influential philanthropist.\textsuperscript{48} In his self-published treatise, which was circulated to policy makers throughout the colony and constituted his programme as a candidate for the city council, he argued that rational town planning on the basis of ‘modern tropical hygiene’ (p. 153) should lead to a healthier and more pleasant city. Among his many references were respected international experts (German, British and American) and his practical examples stemmed from around the globe. He pointed out, for instance, that in British garden cities such as Bournville and Letchworth, infant mortality rates were significantly lower than elsewhere. He also

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
praised the efforts to apply the same principles in various colonial cities around the world. Tillema’s special admiration was reserved for the ‘typically practical American’ approach in the Philippines: ‘The Americans gained experience in these matters in only around 10 years, whilst in over 300 years we did not! Is that not embarrassing?’

In short, Tillema saw his project of rustic garden suburbs for the European middle class (coupled with a more sanitary inner city for the native masses) as part of a global movement towards more rational, modern city planning.

Neighbourhoods like Slerok, then, in the minds of their designers and inhabitants, exemplified a modernity inspired by global styles rather than just by the Netherlands. Moreover, they were an incarnation of these principles in their own peculiar context: as both decidedly colonial and genuinely Indisch. This confrontation plays out in the physical form of the SCS housing projects. If we examine the blueprints for the SCS projects closely, we see that the reality of the ‘modern’ Indies house was more hybrid than its description as a ‘Dutch villa’ can capture.

If the house fronts and the tree-lined streets may have been faintly suggestive of suburbia in the motherland, they were also designed for a very different climate. The high-thatched roofs and the high outside wall skirting reminded one that these houses were placed in an environment where one had to be prepared for tropical downpours. What is more, in designing the houses, it was taken into account that the everyday life in the Indies was different from that in the metropole. Extreme importance was attached to the provision of adequately spacious roofed front- and rear-verandas, even for the smallest company houses. These verandas were necessary, as the engineer of one of these houses pointed out, because they ‘offered the opportunity, as is usual here in the Indies, to enjoy meals in fresh open air’.

49 H.F. Tillema, Van wonen en bewonen, van bouwen, huis en erf (Semarang: self-published, 1913); the various quotes and claims on, respectively: pp. 17, 22-27, 29, 82-89, 153-154.

50 Cf. also: F.H. van de Wetering, ‘Zoneering als sociaal-stedebouwkundige maatregel’, Koloniale studiën, Vol. 23, No. 6, 1939, pp. 588-609. Van de Wetering discusses the importance of ‘city zoning’ for ‘modern city planning’ (p. 591, italics in original); his primary references are American and German. Also cf. Coté on Karsten: Coté, ‘Thomas Karsten’s Indonesia’.

51 The dossiers on house designs, with extensive blueprints and design discussions, are: NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537. For more on architectural styles in the Indies, see the work by Helen Jessup (who refers to this style as ‘Dutch colonial’): Helen Jessup, ‘Netherlands architecture in Indonesia, 1900-1942’ (PhD thesis, University of London, 1988); Jessup, ‘Dutch architectural visions’: Jessup, ‘The Dutch colonial villa, Indonesia’, MIMAR: Architecture in development, No. 13, July-September 1984, pp. 35-42.

52 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-III, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 4 January 1918.
Important parts of daily domestic life in the Indies took place outside, rather than in the enclosed space of the private home.\textsuperscript{53}

This last point is important, because it implies a clear difference to the ideal of middle-class life in the Netherlands. In one particular design from 1915, which laid out the standard houses to be built along the railway lines for years to come, a roofed structure in the yard was referred to by the designing engineer (chief agent Van Alphen) as a ‘pendopo’. This structure, Van Alphen explained, would ‘prove to be very useful for the conduct of various domestic activities such as ironing, sewing, etc.’\textsuperscript{54} The *pendopo* is a central element of traditional Javanese architecture, a type of high-roofed pavilion that functioned as the centre of social and domestic life in Javanese courts and wealthy homes.\textsuperscript{55} The engineers of the Sister Companies chose this term for their design, rather than the viable Dutch alternatives *paviljoen*, *tuinhuis* or *prieel*. The appropriation of the Javanese concept not only points to a form of architectural hybridity, but it is also evidence of a use of such outside spaces that was regarded as typical to the Indies. Outside areas like this *pendopo* or the verandas (often in full view from the street) were used for everyday domestic life. In the Dutch metropole, on the other hand, garden pavilions were a place for recreation and representation, used to entertain guests—not to attend to domestic chores. These houses, then, were adapted to an *Indisch* lifestyle, which was not identical to a Javanese way of life, but neither to genuinely Dutch ways.

Moreover, any resemblance to metropolitan architecture, where it did exist, was seldom emphasized by the engineers and managers of the Sister Companies. Except for such statements that the homes should be ‘decent but plain’,\textsuperscript{56} little was said at all about matters of style. Nowhere did any of the managers require designs for a ‘Dutch’ garden suburb. Rather, what people were interested in was whether the


\textsuperscript{54} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from chief agent Van Alphen to the directors, 15 August 1916.


\textsuperscript{56} NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from the directors to chief agent, 26 August 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from chief agent Van Alphen to the directors, 15 August 1916.
projects were adapted to the ‘requirements of this age’—or, in the words of journalist H.C. Zentgraaff reviewing a similar project, whether the houses took into account ‘modern notions’. Such ‘requirements of the age’ included the ‘increasing demands placed on roads, sewage, street lighting, etc.’ as well as the ‘requirements posed by the climate and way of life’ in the Indies. Much space was dedicated in the correspondence between the engineers and the management on matters such as the most appropriate (and cost-effective) building materials or on sanitary arrangements. Another recurring matter of discussion was the need for (and demands on) annexes fit for the Indies’ lifestyle, mainly intended for the lodging of domestic servants. Dutch contemporary notions may have been an inspiration for the SCS engineers, but they certainly did not constitute a blueprint for their housing projects. Being progressive (in a tropical environment) was what they really cared about.

These issues of style and function in the thinking of the SCS management converge in the designs for a new home for the SCS branch manager in Tegal. The first plans for this home were drawn in 1920. Because this was to be the home for the highest-ranking SCS employee in Tegal, it would be more luxurious than the ordinary houses, and it would have an important representative function. The designs located the house in a conspicuous location, on the corner of the central square of Slerok. In the commentary to his original design, SCS manager Banens explained that this house should not be modelled on what he called ‘old Indisch homes’. He was particularly adamant that the bedrooms and the living quarters needed to be clearly separated: ‘I do not know of a more distasteful image than the carrying of bedroom necessities through the dining or living room, something that occurs in practically all Indisch homes.’ Instead, Banens wanted to build a house fulfilling the requirements of representation for an Indisch manager in twentieth-century colonial society.

57 ‘Uit Tegal’, Het Nieuws van den Dag, 29 December 1913; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 93, Dossier No. 919, Memorandum deputy chief agent Th. Vreede, 17 January 1919. Cf. NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Letter from the chief agent G. Diephuis to the directors, 28 May 1930.
58 H.C. Zentgraaff, Van Westersch grootbedrijf, Reprint from an article in Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 1927, p. 34. Zentgraaff is reporting on the compound of a sugar factory near Jember (East Java).
59 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from head of exploitation SJS to the chief agent, 29 October 1915; NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from the directors to chief agent, 26 August 1915.
60 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-III, Letter from head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 16 July 1921. This letter was a follow-up defending his original design after the directors had posed several critical questions.
61 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-III, Letter from head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 16 December 1920.
Nevertheless, the design had various features that show an adjustment to typical Indisch ways of life. First of all, the engineer had planned a sizeable independent guesthouse, labelled as a paviljoen, to accommodate houseguests who could stay for extended periods of time without interrupting normal domestic life. Secondly, both the main house and the guesthouse had extensive verandas, partly in full view from the street, partly private, where one might feel ‘adequately free to sit and drink a cup of coffee in your négligée’ (perhaps not quite the appropriate behaviour for a contemporaneous middle class lady in the Netherlands!). Finally, the design included no less than two roofed spaces in the open air suited for conducting the daily business of housekeeping: one ‘small covered space next to the garage, because it appeared from building all our newer company houses that the housewives appreciate such a space’ (Banens did not clarify for what purpose), as well as a landing at the back of the house ‘for small domestic occupations—I’m thinking of the djaid [seamstress] or the baboe [maid] with her darning basket’.62

What Banens had in mind therefore was not an ‘old Indisch home’. But neither was his alternative a ‘Dutch home’. He wanted to build a comfortable house, representative of the manager’s standing in Indisch society, and fitted with all modern conveniences (with no less than three indoor bathrooms connected to septic tanks in the yard!). The examples he cites as an inspiration in his design, consequently, were not from the Netherlands but rather from other towns in the Indies.63 His alternative to the ‘old Indisch home’, then, was a modern Indisch home.

Living in a modern Indisch home: servants and concubines

The discussions on the design of company houses can also enlighten us about the expected and accepted forms of domestic arrangements. For this purpose, it is equally interesting to consider what is not explicitly discussed, but only seems to crop up incidentally. The debates about architecture and about housing policy in the Sister

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62 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-V, Letter from head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 16 December 1920. Further correspondence on this project in the same file. The plans were eventually abandoned when a house was bought on the private market, which was subsequently renovated and modernized. NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-II, Letter from head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 6 August 1927; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-VII, Letter from head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 4 October 1927.

63 Cf. NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-V, Letter from head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 16 December 1920; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-V, Letter from chief agent to the directors, 22 January 1921.
Companies were built on notions of the normal or the proper household that did not require extensive discussion, because they were taken for granted. For the historian, these notions are all the more interesting when they inadvertently shine through in the sources.

One such self-evident aspect of Indies’ domestic life is the ubiquity of domestic servants. As historians have noted before, domestic staff remained a central feature of colonial culture, at a time in which household service in metropolitan middle-class homes had started to dwindle. Moreover, domestic service in the Indies was much less clearly gendered, with both male and female staff in regular employ. The degree to which the practice of employing domestic servants was taken for granted can be gauged from the fact that it was rarely, if ever, discussed whether houses needed to include servants’ quarters. Outhouses with rooms for the servants and separate sanitary facilities were incorporated in the design as a matter of course, even in the houses for the lowest paid European employees. Only in one case, in a 1915 design for the smallest company houses, did an engineer draft a blueprint that lacked a servant’s room. The directors of the company immediately corrected the design, insisting that even for this category of employees the opportunity to keep an in-house domestic servant should be maintained. At no point in the following decades was this view reversed.

The ubiquity and self-evidence of servants in the houses of even the poorer classes of ‘European’ railway employees is corroborated in the pages of the Spoorbondsblad. The Spoorbond members who wrote in this publication, and who often identified as among the lower ranks of the European staff, seem to have considered domestic servants as part of their normal household inventory. In 1927, for example, an engine driver with the State Railways (a position one rung above train conductor, but requiring hardly any previous education) shared some of his experiences at work with his colleagues. He reported on an occasion when he was

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65 See various design in NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I/III; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 116, Dossier No. 1537-IV, Letter from chief agent to head of exploitation SCS, 7 May 1920; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier No. 1537-III, Extract from the annual inspection by the chief agent (Van Alphen), 9 January 1918.
transferred to a new post and had to relocate. He had been promised accommodation in one of the company houses, but upon arrival found that they were all occupied: ‘[T]here I stood on the platform, foreign to all my surroundings, with my barang [luggage], my dogs, and my servants.’\(^\text{67}\) In another instance, in 1924, the editors of the _Spoorbondsblad_ reported on the ‘atrocious circumstances’ that another member found himself in. With his family of eight he was lodged in a house of just over 60 m\(^2\) (including verandas). But what most enraged the _Spoorbond_ representatives was that the house did not include a separate bathroom for servants.\(^\text{68}\) Apparently even this less than affluent man, with a large family to support, regarded it as no more than reasonable to employ servants (note the plural!) and felt entitled to have segregated sanitation facilities provided by the company.

The ubiquity and standing of domestic servants set apart society in the Indies from its contemporary Dutch counterpart. But its manifestation was also characteristic of _European_ society in the Indies. For middle-class ‘Natives’, even if many of them did in fact have domestic servants, employing servants was deemed less self-evident—at least to the company management—than for their European counterparts. More highly educated and affluent ‘Natives’ could mimic European behaviour, but it was not their natural or default state. Ample domestic service, hence, was considered an _Indisch_-European predicament.

In one case, for example, several years after the first ‘European’ homes had been erected, the Sister Companies also considered building company houses for their native _ambtenaren_. The deputy chief agent in the Indies, Th. Vreede, made the case to the directors that these houses should stand the test of comparison with the European homes:

> The development of the native society has created a rather strict distinction in the lifestyle of the educated _geletterde_ Javanese—our station masters, clerks, native overseers, etc.—and the working man, the _tukang_; a distinction that finds very clear expression in the demands that either of these groups make for their homes. [...] [W]e will have to take care that the homes for the educated

\(^{67}\) Vlampijp, ‘De ervaringen van een tractie-man’.

Javanese, though modest in its execution, offer sufficient space and comfort to bear the comparison to our European company homes, some of which [...] have actually already been assigned to [native employees].

Continuing on the practicalities of building houses for native employees, Vreede noted:

You [i.e. the directors] have made the remark that you deemed a servant’s room unnecessary. In my current design I have nonetheless thought it wise to include such a room because [...] many native families have a family member living with them, who does the work of a domestic servant.69

Whether the people discussed here actually were close family members is open to question. In any case, the directors concurred with Vreede’s proposal.70 This discussion demonstrates, firstly, that the educated native employees were increasingly measured and treated according to European standards. But secondly, it shows that these standards were still identified as ‘European’, and that their mimicking behaviour was still subject to close scrutiny. Hence, the people doing domestic work for native employees were initially identified as ‘family members’ rather than ‘servants’ and only re-evaluated on second consideration. Maintaining a household staff, after all, was a European privilege. Europeans in the Indies were thought to have their own typical form of running their household.

Nevertheless, the imagined European community in the Indies was only occasionally seen in such a monolithic fashion—principally, when claims from ‘native’ employees were involved. At other times, efforts for differentiation within the European group were equally vigorous. Just because ‘European’ train conductors, station masters and the like were distinguished from their ‘native’ colleagues did not mean that they could work and socialize on an equal level with the ‘Europeans’ in higher ranks. We have seen that some of these employees, namely those living in less

69 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, Chief agent Vreede to the directors, 20 April 1918. In the appended design it is mentioned that these native families ‘usually have a person in the house, who does servant’s work, either a soedara [litt. sibling], an anak mas [litt. older child], or a similar person’.
70 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-II, Directors to the chief agent, 13 August 1918.
affluent neighbourhoods, were othered by way of the disparaging and racialized use of the term *kampung*. But even within the confines of the small company neighbourhoods we can find examples of subtle discrimination among employees.

In one design for a company neighbourhood to be built in Surabaya, the local manager explained to the higher management that he would prefer to cluster the houses in groups with some distance between them:

> We should consider placing the houses of the 4th and 5th category not too close to the others. The personnel that will occupy these houses [train conductors and station clerks, BL] prefers not to be constantly in view of their superiors, whereas the employees inhabiting the houses of the first three categories will conversely be less appreciative of the concerts of gramophones with worn-out records or of other noisy entertainment.\(^{71}\)

The map of the Slerok neighbourhood (see figure 8.2) reveals the same concern. Even though this neighbourhood only encompasses a handful of streets, a clear segregation is observable. The most luxurious houses (type A) and the smallest homes (type H) were located at opposite ends. The tennis courts—tennis being the preferred pastime of the more affluent Europeans—were located on a plot adjacent to the elite houses, whereas the cheapest houses were tucked away in a corner next to the projected social club, which was explicitly intended for the common employees who could not afford membership of the more elite club in downtown Tegal. Even in a small biotope like Slerok, subtle spatial and social segregation established and confirmed a multi-layered rather than a binary hierarchy.

Another issue where we can discern different standards for higher- and lower-ranked Europeans is that of cohabitation and miscegenation. An accepted view of European society in the Indies has it that the twentieth century saw an ‘impulse [...] away from miscegenation toward white endogamy; away from concubinage toward family formation and legal marriage’.\(^{72}\) Miscegenation was, supposedly, increasingly

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\(^{71}\) NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 116, Dossier No. 1537-I, Letter from the head of exploitation OJS to the chief agent, 25 October 1913.

Figure 8.2: Map of the Sterok neighbourhood, 1918. Source: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 97, Dossier no. 1537-III.
frowned upon and became an impediment to social acceptance within European ‘bourgeois civility’. But this view is only partly accurate.

To be sure, I have not found any examples among the top-level management in the 1920s and 1930s who were married to a non-European woman. For this class, itself almost exclusively educated in the Netherlands, European endogamy was indeed the rule. However, these same managers had no objection to their lower-ranking European personnel marrying or even living in cohabitation with ‘native’ or ‘Chinese’ women. Among the rank and file of Europeans in the employment of the Sister Companies, miscegenation and cohabitation remained widespread practices right up until the end of colonial rule. Especially amidst the train conductors and common clerks we find numerous examples of interracial marriage. Evidence of employees living in cohabitation is less consistent, because by their very nature these relationships were not documented. Nonetheless, various examples of unmarried men with legally recognized children, or of men with children born many years before they married a (native) woman, are a clear indication that this arrangement remained common well into the 1920s and 1930s.

Historian Van Marle has calculated that the number of interracial marriages increased in the twentieth century, which he explained with a probable decrease in unmarried concubinage. Others have concluded from this statistical evidence that concubinage had come to be viewed as uncivilized and unacceptable, practiced only secretly, or by marginal types placing themselves outside of respectable society. Such an interpretation postulates too monolithic a notion of ‘bourgeois civility’, that

74 Unfortunately, the archive is not entirely conclusive. The personnel cards in the Sister Companies’ archives do include an entry for the spouse of an employee, but these entries seem not to have been kept up-to-date very consistently. See: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 164-167.
75 Again the archives are not complete, prohibiting an exhaustive survey or a statistical analysis, yet even a quick look in the personnel cards shows that racial intermarriage remained a very common phenomenon, i.e. see the cards for W.H. Berkhemer, J.J. Bigler, J.E. Chömpff, H.W. Dias, A.G.C. Kaver, P. Kamp, W.T. Louis, P.S. Muus, J.J. van Schenk Brill, J. Schmidt, W.A. Schmit, A.A. Westenberg, J.H. Westerkamp, W.F. de Witte, C. Woudenberg; NL-HaNA, 2.20.15, 164.
is not reflective of relations in Sister Companies. Miscegenation and cohabitation of lower-class ‘European’ men with ‘native’ concubines cannot be dismissed as a case of ‘disjuncture between prescription and practice’, of lower-class Europeans defying norms set by their elite counterparts. Concubinage for these men was not seen as a disreputable or ‘un-European’ practice—not even by the higher classes. At no point was a campaign initiated by the company to root concubinage altogether. On the contrary: it was facilitated. The ‘family allowance’ introduced to support European families in the payment of their rent and other fixed costs was, for example, knowingly and purposely extended to all *ambtenaren* with legally recognized children, irrespective of marital status.

This equal status of married and unmarried families was maintained until the abolition of the family allowance in 1934, only to return when a ‘children’s allowance’ was introduced in 1939. For the ranks affected by these policies, it remained an accepted practice to support a family in an unmarried relationship with a native concubine.

There was a clear discrepancy, then, in the proliferation and acceptance of miscegenation among the various ranks of the European personnel. One can of course wonder whether and to what extent race and class prejudices overlapped in the marital preferences of the highest ranks. After all, would a university graduate in the Netherlands have been likely to marry a girl from a working class neighbourhood? In this context, it is expedient also to consider the employees in the middling ranks; ranks that I described in chapter 6 as providing respectable and well-paid positions occupied by a mix of highly educated recent arrivals from the Netherlands and career-employees from less privileged backgrounds who had worked their way up through the company. Among the latter, there are various men who made a good career despite marrying a ‘native’ wife, some even with legitimised children predating their marriage. Even for such (decidedly middle-class) lower-management positions, miscegenation was clearly not a debilitating impediment.

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80 NL-HaNA, ZSM, 2.20.14.01, 90, Dossier No. 909, Letter from the directors to the heads of exploitation, 1 December 1911.
A revision is warranted of the still prevalent assessment that Indies European society in the twentieth century abandoned the tolerance of miscegenation and concubinage in favour of a norm of white endogamy and legal marriage. Such an interpretation imposes a black-and-white view on Indies society that does not do justice to the multifaceted hierarchy of the time. Contemporaries saw different classes of Europeans as having their own norms, but each was still ‘European’. For the highest echelons of European society in the Indies, it seems, endogamy was indeed highly desired—as, according to Ulbe Bosma, it had in fact already been in the nineteenth century, the only difference being that these classes had grown in proportion by the twentieth century. But the lower we look on the social and economic ladder, the more common miscegenation remained, throughout the colonial era. These people were not necessarily jeopardizing their ‘Europeanness’ by marrying an Indonesian wife, but rather were living according to the norms of their social class.

Slerok social life: ‘Being Indisch’ in a European neighbourhood

We have seen that the image of Indies society as consisting of monolithic categories of ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ is far too schematic. It distorts the social categorizations that contemporaries themselves used. On the one hand, the boundary between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ was very fluid, a characteristic that the contemporaries largely (if not always happily) accepted. On the other hand, their perspectives on internal group hierarchy—the differences between various classes of ‘Europeans’ or ‘Natives’—were more diverse than we might expect. Colonial actors in the Indies were comfortable with differentiating between higher and lower class Europeans, without necessarily questioning the very ‘Europeanness’ of the latter.

Among the employees of the Sister Companies, for example in the Slerok neighbourhood, such fine-grained differentiations took shape not only in the spatial form of subtle residential segregation, but also through the intricacies of everyday social life in and around the workplace. We have already touched upon this in the realm of sports. Tennis was a relatively segregated sport, both in terms of class and race. The more affluent tennis players could go to the tennis courts in the Slerok

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83 Bosma, Indiëgangers, pp. 20-23.
84 Cf. Knight, ‘A sugar factory’, p. 463; Bosma, ‘The Indo’, p. 89; Bosma and Raben, ‘Being Dutch’, p. 342. It is an accepted truism about the Indies (and colonial societies more generally) that tennis was a ‘whites-only’ diversion. This seems exaggerated: some of the Kartini schoolgirls also joined or
neighbourhood or to the Slamet club in downtown Tegal. The Chinese inhabitants of Tegal had their own tennis federation, as did the ‘Indonesian intellectuals’ who founded a separate club in 1927 using the grounds of the local Taman Siswa school. Finally, the R.E.A. club was founded in 1929 under the guidance of an Indonesian engineer named Soerratin, intended for ‘anyone who is not among the wealthy’. Although we do not have the membership data of any of these clubs and hence could not say to what extent they really were mixed, their denominators at least show what the intended clientele was.

Football was a different story. The SCS had its own football team, playing matches on the Slerok football field against other teams from the North Java region. The players for this team were recruited from all branches of the company, bringing together common Indonesian workers and Indonesian clerks with their European overseers. Football, in Slerok as in other places around the Indies, was an activity where racial and class boundaries were more muddled.

Even more illustrative of the intricacies of negotiating race and class boundaries in Slerok is the story of the Tegal social clubs. The institution of the sociëteit or soos was at the centre of social life for Europeans in the Indies, especially in smaller towns like Tegal. The club was where one went to repose, to read a newspaper, to meet with friends, and to celebrate major holidays. Even the smallest

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founded tennis clubs (see chapter 4). In the work of journalist Willem Walraven there are references to Chinese boys playing tennis: Willem Walraven, ‘Van het nijvere Toeban 2’, in Walraven, Modjokerto in de motregen: reizen over Java en Madura, eds. Frank Okker and Gerard Termorshuizen (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), pp. 39-42. In the famous Indonesian novel Salah Asuhan by Abdool Moeis (see chapter 5 here), the protagonist Hanafi (an educated man from West-Sumatra) meets his ill-fated love, the Indo-European Corrie du Bussée, on the tennis court: Moeis, Never the twain. Nonetheless, it does seem that tennis was a relatively segregated sport, especially by comparison to football.

86 ‘Tennis te Tegal: tennisclub opgericht’, Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 10 January 1929.
87 As a comparison, Knight reports that the tennis club at the Comal sugar factory compound had a simple membership criterion based on income: Knight, ‘A sugar factory’, p. 463.
European communities in the Indies had their own soos. Nonetheless, the Indies’ social clubs have only received perfunctory attention from historians, quite unlike their equivalents in other colonial empires—especially in the British sphere where the importance of sports and ‘clubbability’ for social standing has been duly noted. The lack of research on the soos in the Indies is most likely caused by the fact that none of the clubs (to my knowledge) has left behind extensive archival material. Still, the club had a distinctive role in Indies’ society, and one that set it apart from social clubs in the metropole. The SCS archives do offer some limited opportunity to study them, making it worthwhile to take a somewhat closer look at what club life entailed.

Tegal had one social club with a long tradition, called De Slamat, which had been founded in 1879 and was located in the old part of town. The spacious building on the Tegal beach front was open at all times for its members to relax, play a game of billiards or meet with their friends for a drink. It hosted bridge tournaments, concerts, and amateur theatre performances. The Slamat also frequently organized parties with plenty of drinks and dance music, open to outside guests from Tegal and its environs for a small fee. Finally, the Slamat clubhouse was where representatives from the local authorities, the business elites and the wider European community in Tegal habitually gathered for all the festivities in the annual cycle of events: royal birthdays, jubilees of local businesses, and the wildly popular horse races that were organized during the dry season.

De Slamat was the undisputed meeting ground of Tegal high society. But for many of the common European employees working for the SCS, the membership fees as well as the prices for refreshments were beyond their budget. To meet their needs,
a separate club was established specifically for the subaltern European personnel of the SCS company: Het Gevleugeld Rad. The initiative to found this club had been taken in 1910 by a group of employees under the leadership of warehouse manager J.J. Granpré Molière, with the purpose of ‘furthering the harmony, the sociable intercourse [...] and the material interests’ of its members.\(^95\) The SCS company was very supportive of this project and provided a substantial interest-free loan as starting capital for the club, as well as paying the rent on the clubhouse (a modified private residence in the vicinity of Slerok).\(^96\)

Within a few years, the SCS club became both the go-to bar for the employees as well as the preferred location for all kinds of company-related events. The Gevleugeld Rad enjoyed its first moment of wider fame when it hosted the evening festivities for the opening of the new SCS headquarters in 1913, with all local dignitaries present (see the introduction to this chapter). In the following years, the club gained a pivotal position in company life, organizing parties, sports and games, and fancy fairs.\(^97\) It also opened a small shop to provide its members with basic necessities, such as groceries, at a reduced rate, and it housed the small library of the SCS company reading club.\(^98\) Even though the Gevleugeld Rad as an independent association actually went bankrupt in 1920 due to mismanagement and fraud perpetrated by its president (Granpré Molière), the SCS appropriated the club’s assets and continued many of its activities as before, under direct company supervision. For many SCS employees and their families, the club remained the centre of their social and leisure activities.\(^99\)

\(^{95}\) NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Statuten en huishoudelijk reglement voor de vereeniging ‘Het Gevleugeld Rad’ [January 1910].

\(^{96}\) All available archival information on the Gevleugeld Rad can be found in NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37 and 38. On the club’s founding, see especially: Letter from the head of exploitation SCS (F. James) to the directors, 16 August 1909.


\(^{98}\) On the shop, see various documents in NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38. On the reading club and its library, see: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 42.

\(^{99}\) On the fraud case, the bankruptcy of the club and the subsequent take-over by the company, see: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the directors, 27 July 1917; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 12 March 1920. The club activities after 1920 are more difficult to trace than those in the 1910s, because the archival paper trail (mainly in the form of annual reports) dies out after the bankruptcy. Some newspaper articles, as well as the fact that the club was re-founded for a short period in the late 1920s, do however
But for whom exactly was this club intended? The regulations for the club, drafted in 1910, stated that only ‘European beambten’ of the SCS could be full members (non-employees could be non-voting extraordinary members).\textsuperscript{100} Natives were apparently excluded; beambten in this context should be read to mean those employees in subaltern positions rather than the highest ranks (see chapter 6). This intended membership was approved by the company management, which elaborated that under ‘subaltern personnel’ one should understand those men who were unable to afford the more substantial membership fees for the Slamat club.\textsuperscript{101} The founding documents of the club thus stressed both a racial and a class marker: members were European employees, and they were employed in the lower ranks. This suggests that the Gevleugeld Rad symbolizes a rather rigid form of social segregation, in two separate ways: firstly the club excluded non-European employees, but secondly the Gevleugeld Rad itself was the consequence of lower-middle class Europeans having experienced exclusionary treatment by their more affluent colleagues.

Such a clear division, however, only holds true in the stated intentions of the founders. The reality of club life that manifested itself in the subsequent decade was more complicated. First of all, the segregation between the social sphere of the Gevleugeld Rad and that of the Slamat should not be exaggerated. Although the respective core audiences originated from different social classes, these classes often intermingled and they cooperated cordially. For example, for several years in the 1910s the two clubs in Tegal shared the same Jazz band (consisting of Indonesian musicians), which was hired to play once a week at either club, as well as on special occasions. Sometimes the two clubs also jointly organized charity fancy fairs.\textsuperscript{102} In addition, both clubs were tolerant to visitors from different backgrounds than their core audience. The Gevleugeld Rad was sometimes visited by the higher-ranking

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\textsuperscript{100} NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 16 February 1928.
\textsuperscript{101} NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Statuten en huishoudelijk reglement voor de vereeniging ‘Het Gevleugeld Rad’ [January 1910].
\textsuperscript{102} NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1910; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1913; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1914; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1915.
\end{flushright}
employees of the SCS company, who mingled amicably with their subordinates. Conversely, many of the parties in De Slamat were open to outside visitors for a small fee, and the club regularly opened its doors to other organizations to hold parties or meetings on its premises, among them associations with members from a less privileged background. Hence, while the various classes of Europeans in Tegal may have had separate clubs, they still mixed and interacted on a regular basis.

What is more, the Gevleugeld Rad was also not rigidly closed along race lines. Even though the 1910 statutes limited its membership to ‘European’ SCS employees, the following decade saw an influx of several native colleagues. When exactly this shift took place—or whether theory and practice in fact diverged from the very start—cannot be confirmed because no membership data have survived. It is likely that this development was more or less concurrent with the rise of native employees in the company in the years before and during World War I. In any case, by the time the club went bankrupt in 1920, ‘native’ members were a common sight in the clubhouse.

During the bankruptcy proceedings, a list of defective debtors was drafted, which largely consisted of (former) club members with outstanding bills. 19 out of 121 of these members (16 per cent) had recognizably ‘native’ names. Information is once again lacking for the following years (when the club was under company supervision), but it seems likely that a similar situation continued. At least a newspaper article from 1927 suggests this, as it reports on a lecture in the Gevleugeld Rad on native involvement in Dutch Indies politics, which was directed towards the native patrons of the club. In other words, the Gevleugeld Rad, though predominantly ‘European’, was open to a limited number of socially upward

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103 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1914; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad 1915.
104 See e.g. the newspaper stories on one such party in 1931 (which was reported upon because it ended in a sensational brawl with legal implications). These events brought together people from different walks of life: ‘De jaloersche man’, Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 3 December 1931; ‘Het schot in de soos’, De Indische Courant, 3 December 1931; ‘De jaloersche man’, Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 4 December 1931; ‘Het schot in de soos’, De Indische Courant, 4 December 1931.
105 E.g. on 30 August 1915 the Gevleugeld Rad was allowed to throw a fancy dress party in the clubhouse of De Slamat, and in November 1929 the Tegal branch of the Indo-Europese Verbond celebrated its 10-year anniversary at the Slamat club grounds: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1915; ‘Het I.E.V. te Tegal’, De Indische Courant, 8 November 1929.
106 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 22 November 1919; appendix II; cf. NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Letter from the head of exploitation SCS to the chief agent, 12 March 1920. A similar list of 193 debtors from 1918 shows 27 recognizable ‘native’ names (14 per cent), though it is less clear whether all these debtors were in fact club members: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, Trade balance Het Gevleugeld Rad, 31 August 1918.
107 ‘Lezing Stokvis’, De Indische Courant, 12 October 1927.
‘Natives’, as long as they adopted habits of ‘European’ sociability. The European and native mid-level employees in the SCS were not just working in the same ranks, they were, indeed, really working ‘together’.

Social life in neighbourhoods like Slerok was thus highly correlated with the professional environment. The Gevleugeld Rad shows that several native ambtenaren socialized with their fellow mid-level employees, rather than retreating into a racially segregated world after working hours. Furthermore, club life in Tegal as a whole demonstrates that rather than creating parallel societies of distinct social and/or racial groups, they produced a perpetually shifting dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, of suggesting sameness or difference between races and classes. Depending on context and purpose, various groups could overlap and interact, creating a gradual and fractured hierarchy.

It is significant that even in the clubs, the ‘heart of social life’\footnote{Locher-Scholten, ‘Summer dresses’, p. 125.} in the Indies, exclusionary practices were so fraught with contradictions. This impacts upon the image that the Indies in the twentieth century was in the process of creating a ‘tropical Netherlands’. In the sense that expatriate Dutchmen retreated in a social and residential enclavement, this notion is tenuous at best. That makes it all the more important to investigate the cultural orientation of the club’s visitors. What was the cultural reference point of all those visitors to the Gevleugeld Rad? Were they trying to recreate a Dutch suburb, or was their cultural horizon somewhere else?

At a superficial level, the Tegal clubs did indeed display cultural influences from the Netherlands. Dutch influences can be spotted, for example, in the inventory of the club’s toko, the shop where club members could buy their daily groceries at reduced prices. The selection included many products that remind one that this was a shop aimed at a ‘Dutch’ rather than a native Indonesian audience. Among many other things, it sold five different kinds of jenever (Dutch gin), nine different kinds of beer, potatoes, smoked bacon, asparagus, Dutch rusk, cauliflower, and several brands of powdered milk.\footnote{This inventory was drawn up when the club went bankrupt and the stock of the toko was sold off to cover the debts: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Inventory per 31 August 1918. Cf. NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Provisional price-list of toko supplies, 1910.} Social life in the Gevleugeld Rad also was reminiscent of small-town life in the Netherlands. The mainstay of everyday leisure activities in the club—billiards, whist and other card games, and a Dutch incarnation of bowling called...
—would not have been out of place in a Dutch community centre. Of course, among the main events of the year were the festivities held on the birthdays of the Dutch royal family. And another fixed event on the calendar was the quintessentially Dutch family holiday of Sinterklaas (St. Nicholas’ Day on 5 December), when children would receive gifts, and the adults played the tombola at the club, ate poffertjes (little pancakes), or tried their luck at the carnival shooting gallery.\footnote{NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1910; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1911; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1913; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1914; NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Annual report Het Gevleugeld Rad, 1915.}

These superficial reminders of Dutch social and domestic culture should not fool us into believing that the Gevleugeld Rad was essentially a ‘Dutch’ club. The position of the social club in a town like Tegal was very much out of the ordinary compared to Dutch customs. The institution of the sociëteit in itself, as the centre of a town’s social life, was a specific colonial phenomenon without a direct metropolitan equivalent. At least by the interwar years, social clubs in the Netherlands were mostly exclusive affairs for affluent, upper-middle-class men. Reports of daily occurrences in the Tegal clubs might be more readily compared to British colonial clubs (portrayed so masterfully in George Orwell’s Burmese Days), which were equally understood to be far from a mirror image of metropolitan British institutions.\footnote{George Orwell, Burmese Days [1934], Complete works Vol. 2, ed. Peter Davison (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986). Cf. Sinha, ‘Britishness’.
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Colonial actors and observers in the Indies were keenly aware of this difference to the metropole, and they were proud of it. In a 1926 article, for example, an old Indies inhabitant used the space he was given in the feuilleton pages of a Dutch Sunday newspaper to elucidate the metropolitan population on some of the peculiarities of Indisch society. Almost half of his article was dedicated to the sociëteit, and the Gevleugeld Rad was one of the examples he mentioned by name:

The sociability [gezelligheid] in the Indies is concentrated in the sociëteit, or ‘soos’ as one says in the Indies, [...] Imagine: a primitive building, often still using petroleum lamps for illumination, a front veranda, and an indoor veranda with the billiard table. Usually a bowling alley [kegelbaan], and often a small theatre stage. The most important piece of furniture is the famous bitter table:
very large, round, with a copper bar under it to place your feet on, and in the middle of the table top a large hole where the servant coming to pour drinks can stand. [...] One day someone should write the history of these Indische clubs, of the Indisch society-life in the soos. It would make for an entertaining, instructive read. 

The social club was a central and peculiar tenet of colonial life, and one of which people were proud. It was quite clearly not a vehicle to create a ‘Netherlands in the tropics’—because this was not what the Netherlands looked like. Rather, it was an ‘Indisch’ affair.

We can also see this in the specific colonial form that the clubs took. The differences to metropolitan sociëteiten were significant, despite the superficial ‘Dutchness’. For one thing, women and girls were always allowed to visit the premises and participate in all major events and festivities. This would have been unthinkable in a Dutch club. Not only were the wives of club members recruited to plan the fancy fairs and carnivals, but women could also be regular guests at alcohol-soaked weekend parties, where they participated in the dancing and general merriment. What is more, as we can gather from reports on various parties for the mid-level railway personnel around the Indies, the practices at such parties in Indies’ sociëteiten are often more reminiscent of interwar American establishments than of small-town Dutch festivities. Jazz music and ‘modern dancing’ was ubiquitous at these parties—as was the assertion in reports that the dancing lasted ‘into the early hours of the morning’.

The main protagonist of the report on one such party at the

\[\text{113 On the planning of festivities, see the annual reports in NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38. On club accessibility for women also see the statutes: NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Statuten en huishoudelijk reglement voor de vereeniging ‘Het Gevleugeld Rad’, January 1910. For an example of a dance party and women’s participation therein (in this case at the Slamat club): ‘De jaloersche man’, Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 3 December 1931; ‘De jaloersche man’, Soerabaiasch Handelsblad, 4 December 1931. For a wonderful literary take on club life in the Indies (though in the notoriously more licentious as well as more racist city of Medan), which caused a scandal in the Netherlands: Madelon Székely-Lulofs, Rubber (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1931).}
Slamat club in 1931 chose to attend a fancy dress party as Johnnie Walker. Similarly, the SCS reading club in its collection of periodicals offered its members several American as well as British, German and French publications, such as *Harper’s Weekly*, *Scientific American*, and *Simplicissimus*. And when the Slamat club decided to open a cinema for the citizens of Tegal in 1939, it ensured the cinema-viewing public that it planned to screen an ‘abundant supply of excellent American, German and French films’.

The fascination with America and other European countries as models of ‘modern’ societies is likewise attested by many advertisements in the *Spoorbondsblad*. Products were often recommended through international (Western) references, not only as exclusively ‘Dutch’. One tailor, for example, tried to attract customers by extolling ‘Swiss lingerie’ and ‘Parisian evening-dress’ for ‘low European prices’, others offered ‘English fabrics’ or ‘English and American men’s fashion’. What also stands out in many of the advertisements is their emphasis on the technologically advanced nature of the recommended product. One producer recommended his bread by claiming that it came from the ‘first mechanical bread factory’ in the Indies; one of his competitors, the *Boulangerie Parissienne*, offered ‘Dutch, French and Viennese baking’ from the ‘first and only modern facility in the Netherlands Indies’.

Many adverts in the *Spoorbondsblad* were devoted to the iconic technological products of the age: radios, gramophone players, bicycles, and motorbikes. Again,
the desirability of these products could be increased by reference to America or other European countries. One gramophone retailer prized its ware as ‘a fine English travel gramophone’. One of the more prolific advertisers in the mid-1920s was the Toko Amerika, a retailer of car and motorcycle parts based in Bandung. This business was not owned by an American nor did it exclusively sell American brands, but presumably the owner expected to do better business by stressing the association with the country that represented the pinnacle and model of technological prowess: America. Advertising in the Spoorbondsblad offered the Indies’ railway men an opportunity to buy their way into the technological age and into the global community of modernized nations.

The idea that colonizers in the Indies were striving for of a ‘tropical Netherlands’, hence, is tenuous at best, because the references were more widely international than just Dutch. But this impression is misguided for a second reason, namely that certain groups of colonial actors—at least in the railway companies that I have studied—were increasingly asserting their own Indisch society, as an independently valuable entity. What they were proud of was not necessarily their ‘Dutchness’, but rather their Indies homeland. A good illustration is a short article in the Spoorbondsblad in which the editors commented on one of the advertisements in their magazine. They did this every so often as a special service to loyal advertisers. In this particular case, the editors had visited the Janco bicycle factory and praised the bikes in no uncertain terms:

First of all we need to make the remark that we are dealing here with independent manufacture, that is to say, with Dutch-Indies industry. [...] We were struck by the fact that we only saw bicycle parts carrying resounding names. We were shown, successively: Sturmey and Archer 3-gear naves; Brampton Bros pedals, crankshaft fittings, cups etc.; Coventry and Perry chains

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and freewheels; Philips handlebars; etc. etc. [...] We thus recommend ‘Janco’ bicycles in every respect.\textsuperscript{125}

Intriguing in this quotation is that the Janco bicycles were lauded for being a product of genuine Indisch industry, but that one of the best features of the product was the exclusive use of parts coming from esteemed international suppliers. In this way, the Indies were proudly imagined as an autonomous actor in the modern global world.

The interest in an autonomous Indisch culture can similarly be seen in the culinary culture of the railway men. Much has been written in historical literature about the so-called rijsttafel (lit.: ‘rice table’). The rijsttafel is a large buffet based on rice surrounded by a selection of ‘Indonesian’ dishes. It is an authentically colonial product in the sense that it originates from an appropriation and adaptation of genuine Indonesian dishes into a new form, a form that came to epitomize Indisch (colonial) cuisine. Although the rijsttafel survived until the end of the colonial era, there seems to be a consensus in the literature that its standing as a luxurious and respectable meal dwindled in the last decades of colonial rule. Allegedly, ‘Europeans’ seeking to solidify their identity came to see the rijsttafel as too hybrid a food practice, and hence it was increasingly replaced by more genuinely ‘Dutch’ food: steak, potatoes and vegetables.\textsuperscript{126}

Yet the advertisements in the Spoorbondsblad as well as the inventory of the SCS shop tell a different story. Although, as we have seen, ‘Dutch’ food products were available in the toko, the rijsttafel as well as individual ‘Indische’ ingredients likewise remained popular. The shift to ‘Dutch’ food practices should not be overestimated. Adverts for restaurants published in the Spoorbondsblad sometimes stressed that they employed a ‘European cook’;\textsuperscript{127} many restaurants made clear that they offered both rijsttafel and European dishes on their menus.\textsuperscript{128} More frequently, restaurants and hotels boasted, explicitly, about the quality of their rice table and other Indische dishes. In one advert, the Pension Virginie in Bandung actually used font

\begin{footnotes}
\item[125] ‘Onze adverteerders: “Janco”’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 8, No. 20, 1931, p. 643.
\item[127] ‘Grand Hotel Du Pavillion’, Spoorbondsblad, Vol. 8, No. 18, 1931, p. 590.
\end{footnotes}
that was double the size of that used to mention the ‘Dutch’ food to highlight their exceptional rijsttafel. Another establishment from the same city, the Hotel Victoria, exclaimed: ‘Do you enjoy a really delicious Indische rijsttafel? . . . . . Yes!!! So stay in Hotel Victoria when you come to Bandung.’

Equally, the shop connected to the Gevleugeld Rad sold a range of the staples necessary for genuine Indische cuisine: kecap, krupuk, palm oil, trasi (shrimp paste), and various spices. The preference for the rijsttafel and for Indisch food in general, then, cannot be said to have disappeared among the readers of the Spoorbondsblad and members of the Gevleugeld Rad. The fact that a good rice table was still something for restaurants to vaunt in advertisements (and more vigorously so than good European cuisine) suggests that for many Europeans in the Indies the rijsttafel remained an important part of their cultural identity into the 1920s and 1930s.

This practice partly reflects a class differentiation among Europeans: the lower middle class enjoyed its rijsttafel, whilst the upper classes did in fact change their habits, in order to fortify social boundaries. A comparative glance at the Maandblad van de Vereeniging van Hoogere Ambtenaren (‘Monthly Journal of the Association for Higher Officials’—an organization which counted several railway managers among its members) for example shows no restaurants advertising their rijsttafel. But this difference in cultural outlook should not be overstated. Even among higher class Europeans in the Indies, we can discern some sense of connectedness to the country in which they lived. We have already seen this in the form and role that the Slamat club took, which was very similar to that of the Gevleugeld Rad for the lower classes, and hence more genuinely Indisch than it was Dutch. We have also seen it with the company housing project, which was inspired by other examples in the Indies. And the same sentiment is also evoked in an advertisement in the Maandblad, which recommends MacGillavry cigarettes (a popular Javanese brand) with the

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130 NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 37, Inventory per 31 August 1918. Interestingly, many of these ingredients had not originally been sold when the shop opened in 1910. This suggests that they were introduced at the request of customers and thus genuinely in demand: cf. NL-HaNA, SCS, 2.20.17, 38, Provisional price-list of toko supplies, 1910.

131 Maandblad van de Vereeniging van Hoogere Ambtenaren. I have consulted Vols. 6-11, 1927-1932.
slogan: ‘A real *Indisch* product with a European finish’. Pride in an autonomous European society in the Indies was thus not exclusively felt among lower class Europeans.

Nevertheless, the identification with an *Indisch* European home was significantly more pronounced among the less privileged classes in the Indies. What this chapter has shown is that they were not denied their ‘Europeanness’ as a consequence. They were still respectable ‘European’ members of a society that knew many social layers, based both on race and on class, and in which various layers often interacted cordially. A quiet colonial suburb like Slerok was not entirely restricted to a segregated class of ‘Dutch’ Europeans. It was a small space in which elite Europeans, lower-middle class Europeans, and middle-class Indonesians met and lived together whilst upholding certain differences; and all three were striving for ‘modern’ ways in their lifestyles, albeit in slightly different ways.

The special brand of *Indisch* Europeanness—an alternative *Indisch*-European modernity—that was lived in places like the *Gevleugeld Rad* or the gatherings of *Spoorbond* members cannot be dismissed as a degenerate hybrid of a marginalized class, as ‘almost European, but not quite’. It was an integrative element of what ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies meant. Colonial actors, such as the members of the *Gevleugeld Rad* or the *Bondslid* in chapter 7, expressed pride in their *Indisch* form of modernity, even looking down on the metropolitan Netherlands. Especially in bustling colonial towns like Batavia or Bandung, but even in a small-town transport hub like Tegal, the concerns of many ordinary European towns would have appeared decidedly provincial. These lower-middle class railway men wore their self-conscious cosmopolitanism as a badge of honour.

**Conclusion: an *Indisch*-European modernity**

The Slerok neighbourhood and the social life on its streets, its sports fields and in its club may have exhibited some superficial similarities to a Dutch ‘garden suburb’. It would be wrong, however, to take these outside appearances at face value and see Slerok as an example of a ‘tropical Netherlands’ in creation. For the lower-middle class European employees of the SCS, as well as for a select group of Indonesian

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mid-level personnel who associated with their European colleagues, their sense of identity had a wider frame of reference than just the Netherlands. Cultural expressions were a mix of European and American influences, with a simultaneous interest in staking out an authentically *Indisch* position. Colonial actors in the Netherlands Indies did feel a bond with ‘Europe’ in general and the Netherlands in particular. But they often also felt different from their metropolitan countrymen, and they asserted their own place in the modern world.

That is not to say that these people pined for an imaginary ‘old *Indisch* world’, supposedly marked by more widespread cultural and racial hybridity. But what they proposed to replace this old world with was not a poor imitation of the metropolitan Netherlands. Rather, they presented their society—largely consisting of the ‘European’ population with a number of selected ‘Natives’ included—as modern and part of a community of European civilizations. This view of *Indisch* European society started to take shape in the 1910s and was lived as an everyday reality in the 1920s and 1930s. It was European but not in Europe; Dutch but not metropolitan Dutch; and comfortably in the Western world while at home in the Indonesian archipelago. In short, it was an *Indisch*-European modernity.
Epilogue
Europeanness, empires, and the appeal of modernity

Europeanness and colonial history
In the search for manifestations of what it meant to be ‘European’ in the colonial context, this thesis has demonstrated the malleability and volatility of the concept, as well as, paradoxically, its stability. Each of the chapters has approached the topic from several perspectives, contrasting diverging constructions used by bureaucrats, non-governmental elites, less-privileged (Indo-)Europeans, and various groups of Indonesian actors. What stands out, above all, is that there was not one single notion of ‘Europeanness’ in colonial Indonesia. Many different actors had their own version, or understood and juggled several context-dependent constructions.

What unites these myriad constructions is that, in almost all, ‘Europeanness’ is invariably given a pivotal position in the social structure and power-relations of the colony. Naturally, ‘Europeanness’ cannot be studied in isolation. It needs to be analysed in relation to alternative concepts, above all ‘Whiteness’, but also ‘Westernness’, ‘Dutchness’, ‘Indischness’, and the ‘bourgeois’. It is clear, however, that ‘European’ remained the central category that various actors in late colonial Indonesia engaged with, whether as a contested category of (self-)description, as an ideal to strive for, or as the embodiment of an abstract suppressor and adversary. Moreover, the term ‘European’ and its connotations were central to all in their competition to define and appropriate ‘modernity’ in the late colonial space.

Colonial historians have frequently applied the contending category of ‘Whiteness’ indiscriminately, instead of ‘Europeanness’.\(^1\) When used as an analytical category this is generally unproblematic, but in some cases this anachronistic usage can encourage distortions. This is exactly what we find in the case of late colonial Indonesia. Words matter. ‘Europeanness’ as the central category of colonial hierarchy had a less entrenched racial connotation than ‘Whiteness’, thus leaving more room for

\(^1\) For instance, Stoler in *Along the archival grain*, ch. 4-5, discusses the so-called ‘European Pauperism Commission’ of 1901, but in her own authorial voice frequently employs the terms ‘white paupers’ or ‘poor whites’. The same slippage occurs occasionally in Bosma and Raben, *Being Dutch* (p. 309), although the translator may have played a role in this case. Consider also the popularity of ‘critical Whiteness studies’ in empire, whilst the contemporary term of preference was ‘European’: Coté, *Education*; Gouda, *Dutch culture overseas*, p. 163. With a more cautious approach: Buettner, ‘Problematic spaces’; Locher-Scholten, ‘By way of prologue’, pp. 30-31.
conceptual manoeuvring. By starting our analysis from the contemporary category of ‘Europeanness’, we can move away from an interpretation that sees colonial hierarchy as necessarily predicated on racial forms of discrimination. In some situations it was defined in terms of class or cultural affinities instead. This does not mean that racial interpretations of ‘Europeanness’ were absent. But it is to say that such interpretations were contingent and not omnipresent. This realization, in turn, allows us to see that colonial practices of hierarchization were purposely multi-layered with porous and slippery transitions. The agents of empire were not constantly obsessed with rigid dichotomies. Rather, people were placed on a sliding scale, eligible for ‘European’ status and its privileges in some situations but excluded in other settings. Thus ‘Europeanness’ was a relative rather than an absolute attribute.

In other words, defining and negotiating ‘Europeanness’ in the Indies was often as much about who to include, when, and for what purposes, as it was about who to exclude. The result was a situation in which many people—‘poor Europeans’, ‘Indos’, ‘modern’ Indonesians—could hope and strive for slight and gradual social improvement by aspiring to approach ‘Europeanness’, either by adapting their ways to ‘European’ templates or by promoting their own customs as equally ‘European’. The continuous hierarchy engendered what I have called the ‘Indisch dream’: promises of inclusivity and social opportunity (however elusive and hard-won in practice) that ensured that people felt invested in the system. This helps explain the surprising solidity of the late colonial regime in the first half of the twentieth century.

The ‘European’ was thus a central figure of colonial history. Attempts to either bolster or challenge the established hierarchy were always interwoven with assertions about what it meant or should mean to be ‘European’ in the colony. This should also serve as a warning against the established Eurocentricity of European history. As much as we can only understand colonial history by taking into account the ‘European’, we can only understand European history if we have an eye for the fact that the genesis of an idea of ‘European’ identity has for a large part occurred in, or with reference to, the outside world. Contrary to popular notions that a ‘European’ identification only really gained political importance (beyond small elite circles) in the second half of the twentieth century, the ‘European’ has a longer and much less flattering history.

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V.G. Kiernan already made this same point in an agenda-setting article in 1980, which has found surprisingly little following: ‘[W]hatever Europe is, it owes in part to its imperial adventures’. But Kiernan also appreciated that the ‘colonial mirror’ does not present the historian with a clear, unequivocal reflection of the ‘European’, but rather a ‘swirl of dissolving pictures, fleeting shapes, such as the clairvoyant may be supposed to see when peering into his crystal or his magic bowl’. The multiplicity and relativity of ‘Europeanness’ has equally come to the fore in this thesis. Many people in the Dutch Indies constructed their own notion of the ‘European’, depending on their background as well as their interests. Peter Burke—in an article that appeared in the same issue as Kiernan’s contribution—has aptly described this phenomenon as ‘historical synecdoche’: every actor tends to define the whole of ‘Europe’ through characteristics of a (sub-)group of which they can safely consider themself a part. It is precisely because of this reliance on perspective that ‘Europeanness’ could become a hotly contested focal point of colonial practices of difference. In the negotiation over inclusion or exclusion in the Indies, various actors entered with diverging and often conflicting common sense notions of what it meant to be ‘European’.

The Indisch dream and modernity in colonial society

To properly understand how the ‘Indisch dream’ came in to being and how it functioned, we need to appreciate the importance that notions of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’ had come to occupy in twentieth-century colonial Indonesia. Late colonial Indonesia was a society in flux, or it was at least perceived as such by many of its inhabitants. There was a fascination with all things ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’. Interestingly, the self-representation as ‘modern’ was frequently posited as relatively autonomous from the (Dutch) metropole. This trope of an ‘Indisch European’ form of modernity was most strongly advocated by representatives of the European lower middle class—‘mixed-race’ and ‘full-blood’ alike but in either case with strong roots in the colony—but it also found supporters among the colonizing elite. ‘Modernity’ still had strong ‘European’ connotations because it was seen to have originated on the European continent, but ‘Europe’ was no longer regarded its sole proprietor. Cultural references pointed to a wider world, with the United States increasingly becoming an

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object of admiration and imitation after the First World War. Moreover, there was keen interest in ‘modern’ practices in other colonial dependencies. What was imagined was an autonomous and genuinely colonial modernity, part of a global development and not merely a weak reflection of the Dutch metropolitan example. The colonial world was thus imagined as an integrative and esteemed part of a wider modern project.

The notions of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’ (kemajuan) held a similar fascination for many Indonesians, but sometimes in a rather contradictory fashion. The old elites and their ways, often implicated in the Dutch system of indirect colonial rule, were losing some (though certainly not all) of their prestige and authority. Although they happily enjoyed modern conveniences such as the automobile, their definition of social hierarchies held on to more traditional notions. From the 1910s onwards, however, and increasingly so as the number of Indonesians receiving substantial education rose over the next decade, many in the ‘new’ Indonesian elite and middle classes were actively styling themselves as ‘modern’.

There were some who constructed their idea of ‘modernity’ in opposition to the colonial model, rejecting the notion that modernity was necessarily ‘European’ in origin. They posited instead an authentic ‘Indonesian’ modernity that was obviously influenced by ‘Western’ (not ‘European’) technology and know-how, but which also had deep roots in Indonesian tradition. Such constructions, however, were only attractive to a minority; a vocal minority, but a minority nonetheless. Instead, most Indonesians with a decent education chose to enter into the negotiation over ‘colonial modernity’ and their (potential) place in it. In late colonial Indonesia, the promise of ‘modernity’ and its spoils—in terms of social and economic advancement—was for the time being best embodied by the ‘colonial European’ model. The Indisch dream thus helped to confine fundamental rejection of the colonial state to a relatively small minority.

**Waking from the dream**

The late colonial state, despite its surprising stability, did carry within itself the frictions that would ultimately prove its undoing. The implicit promise of universality connected to the Indisch dream, if carried to its ultimate logical conclusion, stood in

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5 Cf. on Indonesian notions of ‘modernity’ in the mid-twentieth century also: Mrázek, A certain age.
awkward relation to the inherent colonial requisite that some people (the ‘colonizers’) were automatically fit to rule whilst others had to prove their worthiness. The eventual downfall of the late colonial state was by no means inevitable. Many societies manage to survive for a long time despite a host of fundamental tensions. But it would be equally disingenuous not to see the late colonial state in relation to what came after.

In recent years, it has become more common to view decolonization not as a ‘light-switch’ moment, but rather as a protracted period of reorientation. This is true for the political process, which often had long roots in the final decades of colonial rule. But it is even more true regarding the various processes of social change that accompanied it—urbanization, administrative institutionalization, political mobilization, increasing education—each of which can be seen in its own timeframe, overlapping but not identical. From such a perspective, developments in the late colonial state betray significant continuity with developments in the early independent state. Likewise, the story recounted in this thesis cannot and indeed should not be seen as separate from later developments. Tensions were already created within the late colonial state that came to a head in the confrontation that was the war of decolonization between 1945 and 1949. They would frequently continue to figure in the early Republic of Indonesia.

Nevertheless, this long-term view of the late colonial state and decolonization has a risk of sounding overly teleological. It can often leave unanswered the question of why tensions did not escalate into a major fundamental crisis in the 1920s or 1930s, but did in the late 1940s. The obvious answer of course lies in the intervention of the Second World War, in which the Dutch Indies were occupied by the Japanese armies, who removed ‘Europeans’ from all positions of influence and detained many of them in internment camps. During the Second World War, mentalities shifted

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6 The term ‘light-switch view’ regarding decolonization comes from Cooper, Colonialism in question, p. 19.
7 The authors in Bogaerts and Raben, Beyond empire, for example, see ‘decolonization’ in various Asian and African countries as a process that started in the 1920s or 1930s and lasted at least until the 1960s or 1970s. This volume was published in the framework of the research programme ‘Indonesia across orders’, which studies Indonesia in the period 1930-1960. Cf. also Shipway, Decolonization, who starts out with a lengthy discussion of the late colonial state as an integrative part of his comparative analysis of decolonization.
8 Luttikhuis and Moses, Colonial counterinsurgency. For the most recent encompassing survey of (political) decolonization of Indonesia: H.W. van den Doel, Afscheid van Indië: de val van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2000).
dramatically. The supposed inevitability of Dutch colonial rule was irreversibly exposed, and Indonesians and Europeans alike experienced a period in which the archipelago was governed without interference from the Dutch. Moreover, the Second World War was important because it accelerated the global shift in (political and social) power away from the traditional European imperial states to the United States and the Soviet Union, both of which propagated (at least nominally) an anti-colonial course, with an egalitarian promise. As a consequence, the realization dawned, on both sides of the colonial divide, that decolonization could happen—though not that it necessarily would.\(^9\)

After the Second World War, the *Indisch* dream and the promise of colonial modernity had faded. Many more Indonesians refused to continue to negotiate ‘modernity’ on European or colonial terms. Hopes were increasingly put in other forms of modernity, whether a secular Indonesian version as represented by the nascent Indonesian Republic, or alternative (communist or Islamist) incarnations as proposed by various oppositional movements.\(^10\) ‘Colonial modernity’, in any case, was no longer the most promising form. The years of Japanese occupation as well as the following years of political and military decolonization were important because they formed the transition period in which many people made the mental switch from dreaming the *Indisch* dream to dreaming an Indonesian dream.

Even so, the transfer from an *Indisch* dream to an Indonesian dream was neither an abrupt nor a radical change. Indonesian intellectuals and middle classes started to place their hopes in an Indonesian state rather than in the colonial state, but the hopes that they put in these states were very similar. After all, the cultural notions and the lifestyles that were seen to embody ‘modernity’ had been introduced under colonialism and were not adapted overnight. As Bogaerts and Raben rightly point out, for many in the cultural and intellectual elites in recently independent states, it took a long time to ‘untie’ their notions of ‘modernity’ entirely from what they had learned in the colonial state. Almost everyone among the small minority of well-educated

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people in the fledgling Indonesian state had been taught in Dutch. They were consequently steeped in Dutch/Indisch cultural notions. Even though most did indeed shift their political loyalty, it took a much longer time to ‘expunge the intellectual and cultural legacy of colonialism’.\textsuperscript{11} ‘Modernity’, then, was only slowly decoupled from ‘Europe’.

For many colonial Europeans the adjustment of their mentality was even more fraught with difficulty. Their identity and sense of national self-worth was intimately interwoven with the retention of empire. As the revealing saying of the time went: without the Indies the Netherlands would sink ‘to the rank of a country like Denmark’.\textsuperscript{12} The Dutch state and its colonial representatives therefore attempted with all their might to reinstate the status quo ante, unleashing a protracted and at times brutal military effort. These events of the late 1940s, incidentally, make it abundantly clear—if it was not already—that the story of this thesis is certainly not a harmless or benevolent one. Vicious violence simmered just below the surface. If the colonial hierarchy as described here was based on a rhetoric of theoretical universality of opportunity, it is also clear that inclusivity in practice could only reach a certain level before it became uncomfortable and threatening—at which point the colonial state and its agents did not hesitate to use extreme force. Just because the colonial hierarchy was continuous and slightly malleable, then, does not mean it could and would not be protected with force in case someone attempted to uproot it more fundamentally.

That the violence escalated to the degree that it did can partly be explained as a consequence of the intellectual inertia of the political decision-makers in the Dutch metropole. They took (even) longer than their colonial representatives in Batavia to grasp the extent to which the mentality among their colonial subjects had changed, as their frame of reference in imperial matters was still more thoroughly influenced by a pre-war imperial mindset.\textsuperscript{13} At least some of the leading figures in the colony, by

\textsuperscript{11} Bogaerts and Raben, ‘Beyond empire’, pp. 8-10. Cf. Bogaerts, ‘“Whither Indonesian culture?”’; Lindsay, ‘Heirs to world culture’, pp. 12-15; Mrázek, Engineers, pp. 193-233. Also see the interviews conducted by Rudolf Mrázek with many Dutch-educated Indonesians who became part of the post-independence cultural and political elite: Mrázek, A certain age.


contrast, were more acutely aware (and at an earlier point in time) of the precariousness of the situation. Hence they were more willing to discourse with Indonesian representatives over a further progression towards political ‘association’ and considerable autonomy. Colonial administrators for example (chief among them lieutenant-Governor-General Hubertus van Mook) initiated negotiations over a formally independent United States of Indonesia, which would remain part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Yet any (undoubtedly far-fetched) promise these plans might have had, at least in an early phase of the conflict, were thwarted by obstruction and stalling tactics on the Dutch metropolitan side.\textsuperscript{14}

Still, even for these European elites in the colonies (or perhaps, precisely for them), a complete termination of the colonial relationship was unthinkable. If and when their Indonesian counterparts pushed further than they were willing or able to imagine, their reaction could be at least as brutal. These elites, living with one foot in the metropole and one in the colony, had come to assume a hybrid, ‘imperial’ identity and now saw their worldview crumble before their very eyes. Their allegiance to a notion of a cosmopolitan \textit{Indisch} modernity, resting on a presumably harmonious but still rigidly hierarchical ‘multi-cultural’ society, turned out to be obsolete and untenable.

What stands out in the rhetoric of this time, both in the metropole and in the colony, is that a developmental discourse had become even more prominent as the primary justification for continued colonization (or rather re-colonization). The military effort was presented as a necessity because ultimately Dutch colonial presence in the archipelago was indispensable for the maintenance of ‘peace and order’ and the ‘development’ of the people.\textsuperscript{15} The difference compared to earlier times was that the promise of inclusivity had become stale and was failing to exert much appeal. This realisation was not an easy one to accept for many elite colonial Europeans, amongst them the leading politicians setting the course in the colony. But


the many *Indisch* Europeans—as well as those Indonesians who were most loyal to the colonial regime—frequently found it even harder to adjust. Not only did they see their world disappear, but they also lost their home and native country. The identification as some sort of ‘Oriental European’ became an impossibility, because the category itself disappeared. After ‘repatriating’ to the Netherlands in the late 1940s or in the 1950s, they could or would no longer be ‘Oriental’. But, for all the brandished Dutch tolerance, it also took a long time still before they were entirely accepted in metropolitan society as fully ‘European’ or ‘Dutch’.

‘Colonial modernity’ as an autonomous form—regarded as an integral part of the wider modern project—after this time became an ever less viable perspective. What changed less was the connection between ‘modernity’ and ‘Europeanness’—or now increasingly often ‘Westernness’. The neat and almost seamless transition from colonialism to the early days of development aid programmes demonstrates that this link was not easily severed in the minds of Western governments, policy makers and activists, as well as, in fact, many newly ascending post-colonial leaders. It has become a truism that the advent of ‘developmental’ policies in the 1950s and 1960s was in many ways a logical sequel of established colonial thinking. But my research suggests that we might also reverse that interpretation: late colonial debates, in the early twentieth century, had already departed from older forms and moved more towards ‘post-war’ configurations than we may have appreciated. The notion of a ‘Third World’ that was ‘backward’ and in need of ‘modernization’ relied (and relies) heavily on early twentieth-century beliefs that progress in the direction of ‘modernity’ could only be achieved by copying the ‘Western’/‘European’ model. Thus the close link between ‘Europeanness’ and ‘modernity’ became possibly even more entrenched.

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16 Much has been written in recent years about the fate of *Indisch* Europeans during and after repatriation. See: Willems, *De uittocht*; Ulbe Bosma, Jan Lucassen and Gert Oostindie (eds.), *Postcolonial migrants and identity politics: Europe, Russia, Japan and the United States in comparison* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012). With additional special attention for *Indisch* Europeans who migrated to Australia rather than the Netherlands: Coté and Westerbeek, *Recalling the Indies*.

as the concept of an alternative ‘tropical’ or ‘colonial’ modernity lost ground. In many ways it has remained so to this day.

After the defeat of fascism in the Second World War and the advent of the Cold War shortly afterwards, the support for a model of ‘modernity’ that did not pay lip service to an idea of ‘liberal democracy’ waned and gradually became unthinkable. Yet such alternative conceptions of modernity, often unpleasant to present-day eyes, were an integral part of the appeal throughout the twentieth century of notions of ‘modernity’ and of ‘Europeanness’. The established Eurocentric narratives of European history tend to overlook the fact that we can only properly understand Europeanness, and ‘Westernness’ for that matter, if we appreciate that it is as much about the wider world as it is about the continent itself. The demise of the envisaged project of a ‘colonial modernity’ has meant that the overseas dimension of ‘Europeanness’ was quickly marginalized and has hardly entered into political and historical debates. In fact, the colonial encounters and confrontations have been of central significance in shaping the meaning of ‘Europeanness’ not only then, but also for the second half of the twentieth century and beyond.
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