

Giving for girls. Reconsidering colonial civilizing missions in the Dutch East Indies through charitable girls' education

Abstract

In this article, two Protestant schools for elite indigenous girls in the Dutch East Indies are compared. While both schools were financially supported by the colonial government, they emerged from Christian organizations and were partly dependent on voluntary gifts from the Netherlands and the colony. The article proposes to look at such philanthropic initiatives as integral parts of a larger colonial civilizing mission which was not limited to the colonial state. On the contrary, discourses about the implementation of 'civilized' gender roles within indigenous families through girls' education first emerged among philanthropists, and eventually influenced state-driven educational policies for girls. It is argued that philanthropical initiatives for girls' education such as the two schools presented here are best understood as attempts to gain control over, and ultimately reform, the domestic lives of the indigenous population in the Dutch East Indies.

Key words: girls' education, Dutch East Indies, civilizing missions

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“What could Christianity contribute to civilization, development, elevation, if it would have to go without the help of sensible housewives, of well-trained mothers?”¹

Around the end of the 1870s, a committee connected to the Dutch Missionary Society [*Nederlandsch Zending Genootschap*, NZG] asked this rhetorical question in a fundraising leaflet for an all-girls' school in the Dutch East Indies. By 1881, the committee had raised enough funds in the Netherlands to open the Tomohon Girls' School [*Meisjesschool Tomohon*] school in the predominantly Protestant region of Minahasa, in North Sulawesi. In this one sentence, the core arguments for the establishment of the school are revealed: the central aim of the education that girls would receive at the school was to provide them with skills which, according to the standards of the NZG, would shape them into exemplary wives and mothers. In this fundraising rhetoric, notions of Christianity, civilization, and gendered domesticity were closely interlinked. More than fifty years later, this line of argumentation was still very much alive in fundraising materials for Christian girls' schools in the colony. Urging the readers of a Dutch Christian women's magazine to donate money for the Queen Wilhelmina School [*Koningin Wilhelmina School*] in Yogyakarta in Central Java, the writer Amanda van Hoogstraaten-Schoch argued in 1931: “Who wants to serve a people, needs to extend his hand to its young women who are still growing up. If the mothers have not learnt that it is God's will to live orderly and make the best out of our home lives, the civilization and progress of the people will come to naught.”² The Queen Wilhelmina School had opened

¹ Utrecht Archives (hereafter UA), Utrecht, collection 1102-1 Raad voor de Zending: Rechtsvoorgangers (hereafter RvdZR), inventory number 1254, ‘Een kost- en dagschool voor Minahassische Meisjes’, undated.

² A. v. H.-S. [Amanda van Hoogstraaten-Schoch], ‘Van schuld en gave’, *Christelijk Vrouwenleven* 15 (1931), 3.

in 1907, and exclusively admitted girls from *priyayi* families, nobles of the robe who had connections to the ruling classes of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. This made the school somewhat of an anomaly in the educational landscape of the Dutch East Indies, since it was a Christian school for girls who came from a Muslim family background.

Through an analysis of fundraising materials and published source material about the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School, this article argues that Christian charitable initiatives for girls' education in the Dutch East Indies such as these are best understood as colonial civilizing missions, aimed at gaining control over and reforming the domestic lives of indigenous elites. By highlighting the connections between the colonial state and the Christian charitable sector in the context of girls' education, it is furthermore argued that there were important entanglements between these two domains, which have often been overlooked in the historiography about civilizing missions in the Dutch East Indies. Ideas about the value of gender-specific education for girls in this colonial context first originated among Christian philanthropists, and ultimately shaped official educational policies for indigenous girls.

The Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School can serve as excellent examples of philanthropic Christian civilizing projects. The Tomohon Girls' School existed until the early 1930s, when it was converted into a coeducational institution; the Queen Wilhelmina School existed as a girls' school until at least 1937. Throughout this long period of time, the schools partly depended on voluntary gifts from the Netherlands, raised by committees in the metropole. In many respects, the schools were comparable. Both were elite schools with an outspokenly Protestant signature, adopted Dutch as their language of instruction, and took in day as well as boarding students. There were, however, important differences between their educational ideologies as well, and the initiative for both schools emerged from different social circles in the Netherlands. In this article, a detailed comparison

between the support networks of the schools, their metropolitan audiences and the arguments used in fundraising is used to illustrate the diversity of such colonial charitable initiatives for Indonesian girls' education. More importantly, this comparison shows the many ways in which Christian charitable initiatives were concerned with the reform of indigenous domestic lives.

After a brief historiographical review, the interplay between the Dutch East Indies colonial state and the Christian charitable sector is explored. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the respective support committees, their activities, and their conceptions of their civilizing missions. As the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School were defined by their elite Protestant outlook, the role of class and religion are highlighted in particular.

As already became clear from the two quotes cited above, in the context of both the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School the Christian housewife was a central figure in the imagination of their supporters. In both instances, the presence of a woman who had received Western-style domestic training within indigenous families was directly linked to a higher degree of civilization. This role of the mother within the home was connected to Christianity and its positive influence on family life. Far from being specific to the Dutch East Indies, this line of reasoning was at the core of Christian girls' education in colonial spaces. As Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly have noted for Asia and the Pacific, "schools for girls were a [...] key platform for cultivating and propagating Christian domesticity".³ This approach to gender and civilization is exemplary of the education offered at the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School. By providing girls with gender-specific education, their teachers ultimately strived to transform and uplift wider indigenous society in the broadest sense.

³ Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly, 'Paradoxes of Domesticity: Missionary Encounters in the Making of Christian Homes in Asia and the Pacific', in *Divine Domesticities. Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 9.

Civilizing missions beyond the ethical policy

In the historiography about education and civilizing missions in the Dutch East Indies, the inclusion of private, Christian initiatives such as the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School does not speak for itself, as a state-centred approach is dominant in this field. In the last twenty years or so, historians of empire have increasingly realized that colonial civilizing missions were far from static, unified discourses that were imposed on indigenous populations by colonial governments alone.⁴ The older image of colonial civilizing missions as clear-cut sets of values has been adapted to reflect the fact that within colonial states, various groups with diverging interests were at work. Missionaries, social reformers, colonial officials and other groups, both European and indigenous, all had their own conceptions of their particular missions and worked in different ways to attain their moral and social goals. This pluriform nature of civilizing endeavours has been pointed out by scholars of the French and British empires in particular.⁵

Historians of the Dutch colonial empire in Southeast Asia have been relatively hesitant to enter this debate. While Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben have noted that different social groups, institutions and individuals in the Dutch East Indies had widely different conceptions of progress, and that it is thus impossible to speak of a homogenous push for civilization in this context, this argument has yet to find wide resonance in the field.⁶

⁴ One of the first works to draw attention to the unstable nature of civilizing missions was Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford University Press, 1997).

⁵ See for example Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, eds., *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem, 2004); J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Esther Möller, *Orte der Zivilisierungsmission. Französische Schulen im Libanon 1909-1943* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

⁶ Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben, 'Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890-1950', in *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief. Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890-1950*, ed. Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), 14.

One possible explanation for this is the prominence of the ethical policy in historical analyses of the late colonial period (1900-1942). This strand in colonial politics dominated Dutch colonial politics in from around the turn of the century to roughly the 1920s, while its ideological influence was visible through the end of de facto Dutch rule in Indonesia in 1942.⁷ The ethical policy was based on the conviction that the colonial government had a task in caring for the wellbeing and development of the Indonesian population. At its heyday, the colonial government increased its investments in different fields, including education, infrastructure and healthcare.⁸ The so-called ‘ethicists’ paired humanitarian considerations to economical pragmatism, as welfare and social stability were seen as prerequisites for the creation of a stable colonial labour force and new markets.⁹

Since state-initiated development projects loom so large in the historiography of late-colonial Indonesia, the idea of a civilizing mission in this context has come to be equated with the ethical policy. Actors which were not directly connected to the government, including charitable organizations, have attracted much less attention. This tendency is clearly visible in the historiography about education in the Dutch East Indies. Since education was one of the official pillars of the ethical policy, historians of education have almost exclusively focussed on the public education system.¹⁰ Gender historians are somewhat of an exception in this respect. They have tended to pay more attention to privately funded schools, notably those initiated by the various Christian missions.¹¹

⁷ Bloembergen and Raben, ‘Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië’, 16.

⁸ Bloembergen and Raben, ‘Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië’, 10. For an introduction to the ethical policy in English, see Suzanne Moon, *Technology and Ethical Idealism: A History of Development in the Netherlands East Indies* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2007).

⁹ M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, third edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 193.

¹⁰ S.L. Van der Wal, ed., *Het onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1900-1940. Een bronnenpublikatie* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1963); J.E.A.M. Lelyveld, ‘“...Waarlijk geen overdaad, doch een dringende eisch...”’: Koloniaal onderwijs en onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1893-1942’ (PhD thesis Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 1992); Francien van Anrooij, *Groeiend wantrouwen. Onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië onder gouverneur-generaal D. Fock (1921-1926)* (Amsterdam: Thela Thesis, 2000).

¹¹ Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies, 1900-1942* (Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 75–100; Rita Smith Kipp, ‘Emancipating Each Other: Dutch Colonial Missionaries’ Encounter with Karo Women in Sumatra, 1900-1942’, in *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville/London: The

While some work on charity in the Dutch East Indies has been published in the last few years, in this scholarship, too, a state-oriented approach has been prevalent. Historians have mainly turned to charitable projects to draw conclusions about the colonial state. Annelieke Dirks' pioneering PhD thesis about forced re-education programmes for Indonesian children, for example, mainly focused on the interaction between civil society and the modernizing colonial state.¹² John Ingleson, in his article on poor relief by Indonesian charitable organizations in 1930s, drew similar conclusions about charitable project as contributing to the growth of civil society.¹³ This article proposes to explore the category of charitable projects in a different way, and instead consider such projects as examples of the myriad civilizing missions which occupied a wide variety of people in the colony and the metropole.

Interactions between the charitable sector and the state

Indigenous girls' education lends itself particularly well to the project of decentralizing the colonial state in the context of civilizing missions in the Dutch East Indies. There was an important interplay between charitable initiatives for girls' education and the colonial government, which eventually shaped official educational policy to a great extent. In the case of girls' education, it is thus particularly clear that civilizing discourses were not simply designed in the offices of colonial officials in Batavia, but rather often emerged from the ground up.

University Press of Virginia, 1998), 211–35; Maaïke Derksen, “‘On their Javanese sprout we need to graft the European civilization.’ Fashioning local intermediaries in the Dutch Catholic mission, 1900-1942”, *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 19, 1 (2017): 29–55.

¹² Annelieke Dirks, ‘For the Youth: Juvenile Delinquency, Colonial Civil Society and the Late Colonial State in the Netherlands Indies, 1872-1942’ (PhD thesis Leiden University, 2011).

¹³ John Ingleson, ‘Race, Class and the Deserving Poor: Charities and the 1930s Depression in Java’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 46, 2 (2015): 226.

It is important to note that the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School made gender-specific girls' education available to a limited number of indigenous girls before the colonial government did so. Initially, all schools in the public education system for indigenous children, which had been slowly built up from around 1870 onwards, were coeducational. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were around 15.000 Indonesian girls in the colonial school system. Girls made up one-sixth of the Indonesian school population, whose 90.000 pupils formed a very small elite among the 30 million indigenous inhabitants of the colony.¹⁴ One of the main reasons for girls' low school participation was that parents objected to coeducational teaching. In upper class Javanese circles it was considered inappropriate to let girls share a classroom with male peers. As girls were considered marriageable from around the age of then onwards, this was an important factor for girls' absence from school.¹⁵ The first public primary girls' schools, which girls could enter after completing their first three years of schooling in a coeducational public school, were opened in 1922. Four years later, the government introduced three-year village schools especially for girls in areas where their school participation was below the average.¹⁶

At the opening of the first public girls' schools in the early 1920s, the colonial government announced that the primary goal of such school was to provide "simple, practical education for the raising of practical and civilized wives and mothers", given that "the entire uplifting of the people remains inadequate as long as Native family life is not brought on a higher level."¹⁷ These remarks are reminiscent of the arguments for girls' education which

¹⁴ Sita van Bemmelen, "Enkele aspecten van het onderwijs aan Indonesische meisjes, 1900-1940" (MA thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht, 1982). For a detailed analysis of Indonesian girls' school participation throughout the late colonial period, see *ibid.*, 184-189.

¹⁵ Van Bemmelen, "Enkele aspecten", 40-44. For a chapter on Indonesian girls' education in the late colonial period and beyond, see Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33-56.

¹⁶ Van Bemmelen, "Enkele aspecten", 96-101.

¹⁷ Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta (hereafter ANRI), Collection Algemene Secretarie Serie Grote Bundel Ter Zijde Gelegde Agenda (hereafter AS GB TZGA) inv. no. 7578, Director of Education Creutzberg to Governor General, 16 May 1917. Published in: Van der Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, 312-23.

had since long been put forward by actors involved with charitable organizations. Ideas about the effectiveness of girls' education as a civilizing tool for indigenous family life had been circulating within charitable organizations for decades. Starting from the earliest fundraising efforts for the Tomohon Girls' School in the late 1870s, for example, domestic education along Western lines was propagated as a way to ultimately improve indigenous family life and raise moral standards in society. In one of the first leaflets about this school, its support committee warned that all the civilizing work by missionaries in Minahasa would amount to nothing without properly educated mothers. The training of girls into practical housewives was presented as a prerequisite for the moral advancement of the Minahasan people.¹⁸

By the early twentieth century, ideas about educated girls as a driving force of civilization started to gain popularity among Indonesians as well. Upper-class Javanese women started to let their voices heard in the emerging debate about girls' education. The best known of these commentators was Raden Adjeng Kartini (1874-1904), a member of the lower Javanese nobility who published extensively about the social position of women.¹⁹ In her 1903 memorandum to the colonial government, *Educate the Javanese! [Geef den Javaan opvoeding!]*, Kartini argued that educational policy neglectful of women was destined to fail since women were the most important moral educators of their children.²⁰

It was due to the activities of charitable organizations, and the activism of publicists like Kartini, that the question of girls' education started to spark the interest of the colonial government. The colonial Director of Education J.H. Abendanon, a close acquaintance of Kartini, was one of the first ethical officials to become engaged with the topic. Following a by

¹⁸ UA RvdZR 1102-1, inv. no. 1254, 'Een kost- en dagschool voor Minahassische meisjes', undated.

¹⁹ The essential English edition of Kartini's writings is Joost Coté, trans./ed., *Kartini: The Complete Writings 1898-1904* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2014).

²⁰ R.A. Kartini, 'Geef den Javaan opvoeding!', in *Door duisternis tot licht. Gedachten voor en over het Javaansche volk van wijlen Raden Adjeng Kartini*, second edition, ed. J.H. Abendanon, (The Hague: Luctor et Emergo, 1912), 354. Consulted through Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35220/35220-h/35220-h.htm>.

now familiar line of reasoning, he argued that “Native society” could not advance in full force as long as only a limited number of girls received school education.’²¹ In 1901, Abendanon instigated a survey amongst regents, the highest rank of indigenous colonial officials on Java and Madura, to ask them for their opinion on girls’ education. While many of the petitioned regents had their reservations, around two-fifths of them were in favour of tests with separate girls’ schools.²² Based on this survey, the government decided not to open a girls’ school, and instead prioritize the education of elite boys.²³

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a growing number of privately funded initiatives for girls’ education, many of which were initiated by priyayi women. They typically set up a provisory classroom at the grounds of their residence, where they taught a small number of girls how to read, write and do needlework.²⁴ In response to their efforts, the government decided to repeat the survey in 1909. This time, a large majority of the regents were in favour of the opening of with girls’ schools, leading the Director of Education to conclude that the opinions about girls’ education among the Javanese upper-classes had changed considerably in a short amount of time.²⁵

Despite this evidence of growing interest, the government still postponed the opening of public girls’ schools. Official argumentation for this decision was closely connected to the private educational sector. The colonial Department of Education decided to leave the initiative for girls’ schooling to private individuals and organizations. In that way, it was argued, schools would come into being which would perfectly fit the needs of the local

²¹ ANRI AS GB TZGA inv. no. 7578, Director of Education Abendanon to Governor General, 31 October 1901. Published in: Van der Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, 9–12.

²² ANRI, Collection Algemene Secretarie Grote Bundel Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (hereafter AS GB MGS) inv. no. 4838, ‘Overzicht van de in 1901 en 1909 door de Residenten en Regenten c.q. Patih op Java en Madoera geuite meeningen nopens het denkbeeld der oprichting van Inlandsche meisjesscholen’, undated.

²³ ANRI AS GB TZGA inv. no. 7578, Government Secretary to Director of Education Abendanon, 19 December 1901.

²⁴ ANRI AS GB MGS inv. no. 4838, Director of Education Hazeu to Governor General, 4 March 1913. Also published in: Van der Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, 219–23. For a description of such a school, opened by the daughter of a regent, see *ibid.*, Regent of Temanggoeng to Assistant-Resident of Temanggoeng, 14 May 1909.

²⁵ ANRI AS GB MGS inv. no. 4838, Director of Education Koster to Governor General, 25 March 1911.

population. In order to support such a spontaneous emergence of girls' schools, the government decided in 1913 that private initiatives for girls' education by Indonesian women could apply for state subsidies. The Director of Education explicitly stated that these small-scale initiatives were to provide the example for public girls' schools that were to be opened in the future.²⁶

The influence of privately funded initiatives on official policy was thus not restricted to the spread of ideas about the connection between girls' education and civilization. At a very practical level, too, the state drew its inspiration from the charitable sector. The debates about indigenous girls' education in the Netherlands Indies clearly demonstrate that the colonial state apparatus and the charitable sector were entangled in important ways. This adds to the argument that the foregrounding of the ethical policy and the colonial state does not do justice to the complex historical realities of colonial civilizing missions.

The many faces of charity: two committees compared

As Christian charitable institutions, the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School had been subsidized by the colonial government before the 1914 regulations were introduced. The Tomohon Girls' School had been financially supported by the government since at least 1895.²⁷ In the yearly reports of the Queen Wilhelmina School, direct subsidies from the colonial government were first mentioned in 1913.²⁸ While relatively

²⁶ ANRI AS GB MGS inv. no. 4838, Director of Education Hazeu to Governor General, 4 March 1913. Also published in: Van der Wal, *Het onderwijsbeleid*, 219–23.

²⁷ UA 1102-1 RvdZR, inv. no. 1265, Yearly report Tomohon Girls' School 1895.

²⁸ Atria Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History, Amsterdam, collection Internationaal Archief voor de Vrouwenbeweging (hereafter IAV), archive Steuncomité Christelijke Huishoudscholen voor Indonesische Meisjes (hereafter SCHIM), inv. no. 9, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1913-1917.

high school fees provided the financial base of the schools, this income was supplemented by revenues from subsidies and fundraising.²⁹

The greater part of the fundraising was organized in the Netherlands by the support committees of the schools. Fundraising activities in the colony happened on a smaller scale, and included needlework sales during the yearly open days at the schools.³⁰ This paragraph explores the form the fundraising committees and their activities took in practice. The fact that the schools emerged from very different social circles in the Netherlands, and also targeted different audiences, reinforces the image of civilizing missions as multifaceted endeavours.

As was mentioned before, the Tomohon Girls' School had strong ties with the NZG, a prominent interdenominational missionary society. This organisation had been involved with missionary work in the Minahasa region since in the 1820s and was very active in the field of education. It has been estimated that by the 1870s, almost all Minahasan boys between the ages of six and fourteen, and more than half of the girls of that age, were registered pupils, either in a missionary or in a governmental school.³¹ NZG missionaries in the region were concerned about the lack of domestic education for girls offered at these coeducational schools, because they feared that this would thwart the moral advancement of domestic life in the region. These considerations led to the establishment of a fundraising committee in Rotterdam for the opening of what would become the Tomohon Girls' School. This first committee was well-connected to administrative circles: its most active member was a former

²⁹ In 1895 the Tomohon Girls' School received 7797 guilders in school fees, 3000 guilders in subsidies, and 1737 guilders in donations from the wider public: UA 1102-1 RvdZR inv. no. 1265, Yearly report Tomohon Girls' School 1895. The yearly report of the Queen Wilhelmina School over 1913 shows that school fees amounted to 3535 guilders and interest over the bank account to 204 guilders. The school received 2750 guilders in subsidies and 1849 guilders in donations: Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 9, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1913-1917.

³⁰ For reports on an open day in Tomohon, see: UA 1102-1 RvdZR inv. no. 1252, 'De Meisjesschool te Tomohon', 14 August 1890; UA 1102-1 RvdZR inv. no. 1252, 'Openbare Les te Tomohon', 6 Juli 1883.

³¹ David Henley, *Nationalism and Regionalism in a Colonial Context: Minahasa in the Dutch East Indies* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996), 57.

high colonial official in Minahasa, who had returned to the Netherlands and wrote a brochure in support of the school.³² When the first committee failed to raise enough funds, it transferred its responsibilities to the NZG.³³ Throughout the existence of the school, the all-male committee was composed of NZG board members, former missionaries and clergymen.

In 1905, around twenty-five years after the establishment of the Rotterdam support committee, a group of women met in Amsterdam to establish a committee for the Queen Wilhelmina School. This committee represents another interesting example of the entanglements between charitable circles and official politics. Two of its most active members were Johanna and Henriëtte Kuyper, daughters of the famous Calvinist politician and ethicist Abraham Kuyper.³⁴ The Kuyper sisters remained involved with the Queen Wilhelmina School for many years, and the prominent Christian weekly *De Heraut*, which was owned by their father, published articles about the school.³⁵

The Amsterdam Ladies' Committee [*Damescomité*] had a very different composition than its NZG counterpart. While the NZG committee lacked a connection to the upper class, all members of the Amsterdam committee originated from the highest Protestant social classes, and included countesses and baronesses. The only male affiliate was a clergyman with experience in the colony, whom the ladies installed as their advisor.³⁶ Gradually, the support committee developed a nationwide fundraising structure. Coordinators all over the country were in charge of the fundraising activities in a specific province of the Netherlands, helped by local coordinators who focused on one city or town. By 1927, at the height of its activity, the committee had established branches in nine of the eleven Dutch provinces. Even though the committees in the predominantly Protestant northern and western provinces of the

³² P. Van der Crab, 'Eene Meisjesschool in de Minahassa' (n.p., 1877).

³³ UA 1102-1 RvdZR inv. no. 1254, 'Circulaire', undated.

³⁴ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 5, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1907.

³⁵ 'Vereenigingleven. Koningin Wilhelmina School te Jogjakarta', *De Heraut* 23, (1909) 3. 'Vereenigingsleven. Djogjakarta', *De Heraut* 25, (1911) 3.

³⁶ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 1, 'Stellingen', 2 May 1905.

Netherlands were more active, there was a local coordinator in the Catholic province of Limburg as well.³⁷

The Dutch support committees of both the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School corresponded regularly with local committees in Tomohon and Yogyakarta.³⁸ The Amsterdam Ladies' Committee was connected to a separate association that raised funds in the colony. Europeans residing in the Dutch East Indies could become a member of this Society for Javanese Girls' Schools by contributing at least twelve guilders a year. The society mirrored the elite composition of the Amsterdam support committee. While there were a few clergymen on the list, most of the society's members were people from prominent colonial families, including members of the Dutch nobility.³⁹ Both in the metropole and the colony, then, the support network of the two girls' schools looked quite different, both in terms of class and gender.

This difference is evident as well from their respective fundraising activities. The committee of the Queen Wilhelmina School was much more geared to the general public than its counterpart in Rotterdam, which limited itself largely to circles of supporters of the mission. The Ladies' Committee regularly organized lectures about the school, followed by a collection. When the school had been running for some years, the committee acquired a series of projector slides, showing images of "the life of the Javanese nobility in Jogjakarta [sic]".⁴⁰ Sympathizers of the school were encouraged to use these slides at lectures, and they were shown in cities and towns all over the Netherlands, and, at one occasion, even in Brussels. By the 1930s, a documentary film was made about the school, which the support committee lent out to Christian

³⁷ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no 12, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School, 1923-1927, 'Organisatie voor de "Koningin Wilhelmina-School" te Jogjakarta en de "Koningin Emma-School" te Solo'.

³⁸ UA 1102-1 RvdZR, inv. no. 1252, 'Reglement voor de Meisjes-Kostschool voor Dochters van Inlandsche Hoofden in de Minahassa, gevestigd te Tomohon', 8 December 1891.

³⁹ See for example: Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 7, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1909-1911, 'Lijst van de Leden der Vereeniging voor Javaansche Meisjesscholen te Jogjakarta (in 1911).'

⁴⁰ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 8, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1911-1913.

women's associations and other interested parties. The committee also designed a collection of postcards picturing daily life at the school.⁴¹ Throughout the existence of the Queen Wilhelmina School, articles about its work appeared in various Christian media outlets in the Netherlands, especially in publications for women and teenage girls.⁴² These articles invariably closed with a call for a generous donation or encouraged Dutch women to organize their own fundraising events.

In contrast to the Ladies' Committee, the support committee of the Tomohon Girls' School was less active in trying to engage the wider public. It put much less effort, for example, in the organization of public lectures, and instead mainly strived to inform the supporters of the Dutch Missionary Society about the school. Almost all its publications about the school in appeared in NZG magazines, and for a long time remained limited to fragments from yearly reports.⁴³ By the 1920s the publications became more extensive, and often included photographs. At the special occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Tomohon Girls' School, the monthly magazine of the NZG and its collaborating missionary organizations even published a festive special issue about the schools and its history.⁴⁴

Through these magazines, publicity for the Tomohon Girls' School primarily reached people who were already supporters of the NZG mission; articles about the school also regularly addressed the readers as *zendingsvrienden*, 'friends of the mission.' The committee thus not only originated from different social circles, but also targeted a different audience than the support committee of the Queen Wilhelmina School.

⁴¹ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 15, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1933-1935. Two of these postcards, showing a cooking class and a group of girls on an outing, have been preserved: Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 42.

⁴² Amongst other magazines, articles appeared in the women's magazine *Christelijk Vrouwenleven*, the girls' magazine *Onze Jonge Meisjes* and in *Opgang*, a magazine for Christian young people in the Dutch East Indies.

⁴³ A. Limburg, 'Uit de jaarverslagen van de Kost- en Dagschool', *Maandberichten van het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*, published yearly from 1896 to 1910; A. Verkuyl, 'De Meisjesschool te Tomohon in 1919', *Maandblad der Samenwerkende Zendingcorporaties* 3, (1920) 69-70.

⁴⁴ 'De Meisjesschool te Tomohon', special issue *Nederlandsch Zendingblad* 4, 11 (1921).

The class dimensions of girls' education

The differences in fundraising strategies between the two support committees suggest that their members had diverging conceptions of their civilizing missions. In this section, source material about the civilizing work of the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School is compared to arrive at a deeper understanding of these conceptions. While there were striking similarities, further analysis reveals important variations connected to the very different cultural contexts of the schools.

As was noted before, the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School were similar in their emphasis on the important role of women in the home. Their civilizing missions revolved around their image of well-trained mothers and wives, who could become driving forces of civilization. It is crucial to note that in the context of both schools, this gendered civilizing mission carried heavy connotations of social class. The support committees of the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School presented their students as the future wives of prominent men in indigenous society, who would serve as examples to women of lower social standing. By the early twentieth century, this line of argumentation had become common in circles of social reformers. Kartini, too, in her plea for Western-style education for girls, applied this argument only to "the daughters of the nobility." She described these girls as the future mothers of influential men, who could spread civilization among the rest of the people.⁴⁵

The fundraising material of the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School reveals many instances in which gender and class were connected. During the first fundraising efforts for the Tomohon Girls' School, the members of the committee pointed at the uneven educational opportunities for boys and girls from higher social classes. There were

⁴⁵ R.A. Kartini, 'Geef den Javaan opvoeding!', 358.

various schools in Minahasa which prepared upper class boys for a suitable career, for example as colonial officials. Their future spouses, by contrast, were presented as lacking opportunities for class-specific schooling, and the committee presented the resulting “difference in intellectual development” as a danger to the stability of Minahasan families.⁴⁶

In the case of the Queen Wilhelmina School, a similar class-related argument was put forward. Whereas elite Javanese boys had plenty of opportunities for Western-style education, the committee pointed out, girls had none. Parents, too, favoured the education of boys over that of girls.⁴⁷ But their well-educated sons would soon need educated wives, and it would not be long before parents would want their girls to “follow in the footsteps of their brothers”. The school would therefore fulfil a real need in Javanese society.⁴⁸ The committee also argued that by focusing on the influential Javanese aristocratic classes, the entire population would eventually be reached.⁴⁹

While the support committees thus initially used comparable arguments related to class, important differences appeared over the years. While the support committee of the Queen Wilhelmina School was fascinated by the highly hierarchic culture of the Yogyakarta priyayi, Minahasan society was considered to be less rigidly stratified.⁵⁰ Ultimately, therefore, all girls whose parents could afford school fees were accepted at the Tomohon Girls’ School. This included girls from Chinese-Indonesian families, even though they were not defined as ‘Native’ and therefore strictly spoken did not belong to the schools’ target audience. Over the decades, the fundraising material of the Tomohon Girls’ School focused less and less on the

⁴⁶ J.N. Wiersma, ‘De meisjes- kost- en dagschool te Tomohon (Minahassa)’, *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap*, 26 (1882) 142-153.

⁴⁷ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 6, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School, 1907-1909.

⁴⁸ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 5, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1907.

⁴⁹ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 5, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1907.

⁵⁰ For more on the social stratification of priyayi society, see Heather Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979). For Minahasa, see M.J.C. Schouten, *Leadership and Social Mobility in a Southeast Asian Society: Minahasa, 1677-1983* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998).

class dimensions of the school, and instead stressed its inclusivity towards Chinese girls.⁵¹ By contrast, the Queen Wilhelmina School only gave up its exclusively priyayi character under considerable pressure. By the 1920s, the schools' entrance policy sparked criticism from people whom the Ladies' Committee described as "democratically inclined". The committee defended itself by saying that selection on the base of class was a necessary evil, as priyayi parents would ostensibly refuse to send their children to school together with the daughters of lower-ranking families.⁵² The school was only opened to girls from non-priyayi families during the economic crisis of the 1930s, when the colonial government threatened to put an end to the subsidies of the school unless it changed its entrance policies.⁵³ Both support committees thus initially saw class as a defining feature of their civilizing missions, but while this changed in the course of time in the case of the Tomohon Girls' School, the initiators of the Queen Wilhelmina School gave up its class-related ideals only when it was forced to do so.

Christianity as a civilizing tool

The role of religion within the schools was the crucial point on which the civilizing missions of the Tomohon Girls' School and the Queen Wilhelmina School diverged. As the first school was located in a predominantly Protestant region, almost all of its students were Christians to begin with. This was a completely different situation than at the Queen Wilhelmina School, where the students came from Muslim families. As a result of these

⁵¹ UA 1102-1 RvdZR, inv. no. 1265, Yearly report Tomohon Girls' School 1905.

⁵² Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 12, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1923-1927.

⁵³ UA, entry number 1133, Generaal Deputaatschap voor de Zending, Zendingbureau, Zendingcentrum en aanverwante instellingen van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, inventory number 3114, Director of Education De Kat Angelino to Board of the Society for Christian Dutch-Javanese Girls' Schools, 19 October 1935.

cultural differences between the school populations, the respective support committees presented the place of Christianity in their civilizing missions in different ways.

In the context of the Tomohon Girls' School, the importance of consolidation of Protestantism in Minahasa was highlighted. During its first fundraising efforts, the support committee presented the upbringing of Christian mothers and wives as a way of securing the future of Christianity in the region. The graduates of the school would raise their own children in a Christian spirit, and thereby spread Christian values in their own private environment. The committee tried to prove the pertinence of this issue by pointing at a possible competitor on the educational market. In alarming terms, the leaflet sketched the ambitions of the Catholic church to make its entrance in Minahasa. The so-called "black herd", it warned, was eager to sow ill weeds among the good seed that was spread by the Protestant mission.⁵⁴ By repeatedly referring to Catholic competition, the support committee of the Tomohon Girls' School tried to convince its audience that the results of Protestant civilizing work needed continuous financial support. Even at the fortieth anniversary of the school in 1921, its supporters continued to emphasize Catholic attempts to "destroy the work of the Gospel in the Minahassa [sic] and crush schools like those in Tomohon."⁵⁵

At the Queen Wilhelmina School, by contrast, the fact that the students were Muslim girls gave a distinctive quality to the role of religion. The colonial government of the Dutch East Indies wanted to avoid religious conflict with the Javanese elites, whose support it needed for the functioning of the colonial state, and restricted missionary work among the priyayi classes.⁵⁶ The Queen Wilhelmina School was therefore not allowed to actively proselytize, and conversion could not be the direct aim of the school. Instead, the Ladies'

⁵⁴ UA RvdZR 1102-1, inv. no. 1254, 'Een kost- en dagschool voor Minahassische Meisjes', undated.

⁵⁵ J. Louwerier, 'De Meisjesschool te Tomohon. Een dank- en feestdag', *Nederlandsch Zendingsblad* 4, 11 (1921), 168.

⁵⁶ Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 639–58.

Committee argued in the fundraising material that Christianity would influence the students in an indirect way. The ladies described Christianity as “a ferment, permeating life in its entirety, on the personal level, in the family and in society.” Through daily life at school, the girls would be infused with what the committee called “a Christian spirit.”⁵⁷

More than in the context of the Tomohon Girls’ School, the support committee of the Queen Wilhelmina School conceived of Christianity as a civilizing force. According to the NZG committee, Minahasan people had already been brought on a higher level of civilization, as the region had been almost entirely Christianised in the six decades before the opening of the school: it described Minahasans as former cannibals who had been “humanized and evangelized”.⁵⁸ The Ladies’ Committee, by contrast, portrayed Muslim priyayi culture as unenlightened, especially as far as gender roles were concerned. Polygamy, a practice which was relatively common in priyayi circles at the beginning of the twentieth century, was particularly emphasized as proof for the uncivilized state of Javanese family life. In an article in a Christian women’s magazine, Henriëtte Kuyper described it as “the curse of Javanese home life” which “reduces women and girls to the rank of slaves.”⁵⁹ In distinctly orientalist terms, Kuyper described the “deeply sad” faith of priyayi girls who were “simply sold off, without any voice at all, to a stranger (...) who can resell or outcast them at will” at an age at which they were “practically still children.”⁶⁰

In the eyes of the support committee, polygamy was the logical outcome of Islam, which it considered the main obstacle to the uplifting of Javanese elite family life. The ladies routinely contrasted Islam with ‘enlightened’ Christianity to convince its audience of the dire need for Christian schooling amongst priyayi girls. The “half-heathen, half-Mohammedan

⁵⁷ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 8, Yearly report Tomohon Girls’ School 1911-1913.

⁵⁸ UA RvdZR 1102-1, inv. no. 1254, ‘Een kost- en dagschool voor Minahassische Meisjes’, undated.

⁵⁹ H.S.S.K. [Henriëtte Sophia Suzanna Kuyper], ‘De Christelijke Scholen voor Meisjes uit den Javaanschen adelstand te Jogjakarta en Solo’, *Christelijk Vrouwenleven* 10 (1926), 172.

⁶⁰ H.S.S.K., ‘De Christelijke Scholen’, 172.

religion” of the Javanese was blamed for their supposed ignorance of “[t]he free and happy life, as it blossoms in our Christian families, in the relationship between husband and wife, in the honourable place of the mother in the family, in the relationship between parents and children and the children amongst themselves.”⁶¹ Here, as in other instances, Christian female sympathizers were encouraged to compare their own situation with that of priyayi women. The readers were told that they had acquired “many and important privileges” through their religion and were urged to support the school so that upper class Muslim women would get access to the same freedoms.⁶²

When it came to religion, then, the two support committees clearly had different conceptions of their respective civilizing missions. The support committee of the Tomohon Girls’ school emphasized the importance of the consolidation of Christian values in Minahasa, and pointed at Roman Catholicism as its main competitor in the field of girls’ education. In comparison, the Ladies’ Committee put much more emphasis on the civilizing influence Christianity would have on the students and on priyayi society more broadly. In this case, Islam was presented as the main impediment to the moral advancement of indigenous families.

Conclusions

Through an in-depth analysis of charitable fundraising for two girls’ schools in the Dutch East Indies, this article has put forward a two-fold argument. In the first place, it has problematized the centrality of the ethical policy in the historiography of civilizing missions in the Dutch East Indies by arguing for the inclusion of privately funded, charitable initiatives. An

⁶¹ Atria IAV SCHIM inv. no. 10, Yearly report Queen Wilhelmina School 1917-1919.

⁶² H.S.S.K. [Henriëtte Sophia Suzanna Kuyper], ‘De Christelijke Scholen voor Meisjes uit den Javaanschen Adelstand te Jogjakarta en Solo’, *Christelijk Vrouwenleven*, 10 (1926) 203.

exploration of debates about Indonesian girls' education has demonstrated that there were important interactions between charitable organisations and the colonial state, which are often obscured by an exclusive focus on official policy. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that charitable organisations with similar goals – in this case, two support committees for elite Christian girls' schools – still could differ significantly in terms of their social origins, audience and in how they conceptualized their civilizing work. Consequently, these case-studies underline the pluriform nature of civilizing endeavours, and destabilize the notion of 'the civilizing mission' as one uniform discourse. Most importantly, it has demonstrated that the supporters of charitable initiatives for girls' education mainly thought of this education as a way to influence the domestic lives of indigenous people.

Giving for girls, then, has turned out to be far more complex and revealing than the simple notion of putting some cents in a collection box might suggest. To elaborate on this argument in future research, it would be important to include Indonesian organisations for girls' education in the comparison. It would be interesting to see whether in these organisations, as well, girls' education was thought about in terms of the uplifting of the domestic sphere. This would add greatly to a more nuanced understanding of the links between charity and civilizing missions in the late colonial Dutch East Indies.