

Subjects and Citizens: Gender and Racial Discrimination in Dutch Colonialism at the End of the 19th Century

Berteke Waaldijk
Universiteit Utrecht



In dit artikel wordt besproken hoe rond 1898 de discussie over vrouwen emancipatie in Nederland gekleurd werd door koloniale verhoudingen. In de kolonie werd onderscheid aangebracht tussen onderdanen en burgers om onderscheid te maken tussen de rechten van de oorspronkelijke bevolking en de rechten van de Europese bevolkingsgroep. Vrouwen die in Nederland streden voor volledig burgerschap identificeerden zich deels met de koloniale onderdanen die geen volledig burgerschap bezaten, en deels met hun vaders, broers en echtgenoten, die voor zichzelf de taak van beschermer van de Indonesische bevolking toedacht.



Berteke Waaldijk (1957) is a historian. She teaches as associate professor in the Women's Studies Program of the Faculty of Arts at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. She publishes on gender, colonial cultures, social work and histories of old and new media.



COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

Although European imperialism and colonialism have resulted in unprecedented practices of division and separation between different racial groups, their histories cannot be reduced to separate stories of these different groups¹. The racial differences that were institutionalized by colonial states were almost always contested and lines of racial difference were challenged again and again. Conversations across the 'color line' took place, racial discrimination was disputed and attacked and its legal formalization was an object of constant contestation. Systems of racial discrimination created zones of contact, mestizo cultures and people who did not 'fit' the distinction that colonizing powers tried to impose. Therefore it is useful to consider the history of colonialism not only as a history of separation and division, but to trace the moments of encounter and the instances of blurring lines. An advantage of this approach is that it allows us to detect continuity between contemporary 'multicultural societies' and the colonial societies of the past. In many West European countries it is believed that the multiracial encounter only started when post World War II migration from former colonies to former mother countries brought people with a different hair and skin color to Europe. Therefore issues of race or ethnicity appear as problems without history. The contrary is the case: racial discrimination has been part and parcel of colonizing countries – both at home and in the colonies, in legal structures, in cultural developments and in political practices.

New historiography about the culture of imperialism allows us to trace moments of intercultural meeting and interracial mixing without forgetting the unequal division of power². This work points out how crucial it is to locate the instances where racial discrimination was disputed in the specific phases of the history of colonialism and imperialism. In this chapter I will discuss an episode in Dutch colonial history where Dutch and Indonesian women for a moment seemed to have met across racial boundaries. On the occasion of the inauguration of Queen Wilhelmina in 1898 a discussion about women's role in society took place in which both Javanese and Dutch women participated. Around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, Dutch colonial rule in the Indonesian archipelago was being redefined and expanded. In Dutch historiography, the new colonial policy has been named 'Ethical Policy' and denotes an increased interest of the Dutch in developing Java, educating the Javanese, and military subjection and expansion of direct administration of the archipelago. As such it has been described as the Dutch version of modern imperialism.

Women have often been portrayed as mediators, connecting different groups either through sexual or cultural activities (e.g. Pocahontas in American history, Esther in the New Testament). However, it would be incorrect to see women as eternal mediators in the history of colonial rule. Race, class and the specific form of colonial administration conditioned their possible roles. A Javanese noble woman around 1900 had different options than the white Dutch wife of a planter in the same period, and while women were sometimes in a position to cross (color) lines that their male counterparts had to respect, at other moments they functioned as the sentinels of racial lines of differentiation. The new historiography of the role of women and gender in the history of colonialism tries to address such specificity. This historiography has profited from the way gender history has moved beyond description of women as victims of male subjection to subtle analysis of the interaction between gender and other forms of hierarchical differentiation. Equally important has been the new historiography about the practice of colonialism (the interaction between colonizer and colonized) in what used to be called the periphery, and its impact on metropolitan culture³.

DUTCH COLONIALISM

Dutch colonialism is as old as the Dutch nation-state. In the middle of the United Provinces' Eighty Years' 'War of Independence' against the Spanish crown (1568-1648), the exploitation of trade with the East Indies started with the VOC (United East Indies Company) monopoly on trade with Asia. Creating strongholds in port cities on Java, collecting toll, exacting taxes through indigenous rulers from the Javanese population, enforcing a Dutch monopoly on trade in specific products (coffee, cloves), buying and selling porcelain from China and Japan for the European market, the Dutch took over the Asiatic sea trade in the archipelago. At the same time the colonization in the West Indies started: Suriname and a number of Caribbean islands were colonized and plantations, using slave labor, produced for the European market.

The number of Dutch who migrated to the colonies was limited in 17th and 18th centuries, but those traders, administrators and soldiers who went often remained there. In Suriname the plantations were owned by Dutch who themselves lived in Europe, and often were run

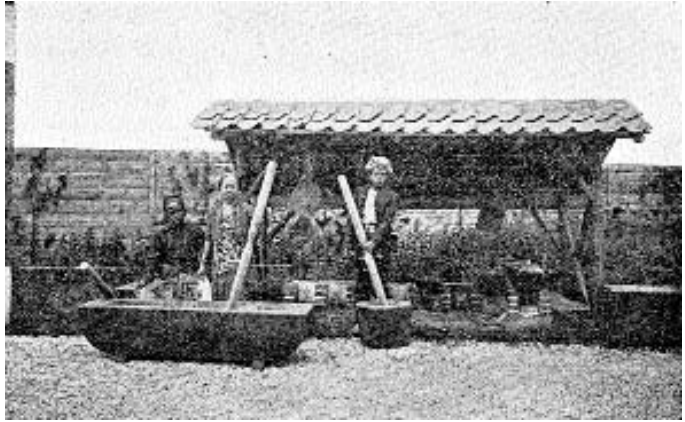
by local agents (Europeans who had moved there permanently), and were worked by slaves brought to the colony by the thriving Dutch slave trade. In Java, military power and the administrators of the VOC guaranteed the collection of taxes and that goods would be sold to the Dutch. Most Dutch people who moved to Java and stayed there were men (from 1652 the migration of Dutch women to Javanese trading posts of the VOC was forbidden), and they lived with and married Asian and Eurasian women. In Batavia the result was what Jean Taylor has called a 'melting pot': interracial marriages between European men and Asian or Eurasian women prevailed and resulted in a substantial group of Eurasians who belonged to the Dutch VOC-enclaves ⁴. Members of this group participated in the Dutch colonial administration. In the 19th century many Eurasians were officially called 'Europeans'. Many of the men from this mestizo-community worked in the VOC agencies as clerks, the women often married Dutch men. Dutch soldiers and the lower ranks of the VOC often preferred concubinage with Javanese or Eurasian women.

The history of rejection of the idea of Dutch settlements may explain why even in the 19th century, when direct exploitation of the colony for the Dutch Treasury replaced the focus on trade, the Dutch were later and slower than the British in India in developing direct forms of colonial administration. Dutch interest in the cultural aspects of Java and the other parts of Indonesia was also slow to develop. Education for the indigenous population was absent in the 19th century. One of the results was that the Dutch language has never spread in the Dutch Asian colonies as did French in Indochina or English in British India. The effects in general were noticeable until the 1930s: only 8% of the Indonesians could read and write (12% in British India, 29% in Malakka and 10% in Indochina) ⁵.

The Dutch colonial state increasingly used racial differentiation to distinguish between the indigenous population and 'Europeans'. This last group included many Eurasians. The presence of a Eurasian group, and their acceptance as 'Europeans' into the ranks of the Dutch colonial administration in the 19th century (although limited to the lower ranks, and without the educational opportunities) might give the impression that the Dutch were more 'enlightened' than the British as far as racial prejudice was concerned (a similar argument based on the frequency of interracial marriages and relations has been made for the lack of racial prejudice in Portuguese Brazil ⁶). The reality of the Dutch colonial state does not support this. The British opened colonial civil service in 1855 to 'subjects of whatever race or creed', admitted Indians to their educational system and introduced a unified judicial system in their colonies. Their Dutch counterparts in Indonesia used the 'race criterion' to decide to which legal system (both for civil law and criminal law) a person was subjected, they excluded indigenous Indonesians from civil service and judicial careers, and in the first decades of the 20th century political representational rights were based on racial distinctions. This situation of formal racial discrimination lasted until the end of Dutch rule in 1942 (Japanese occupation) and 1945 (Declaration of Indonesian Independence) and was similar in its legal inspiration to the system of apartheid developed in South Africa.

As formalized in the 'Regeringsregelement' of 1854, the population in Indonesia was divided into Europeans and so-called 'Natives'. In the course of the following decades the last group was subdivided. 'Foreign Orientals' (Arab, Chinese and other Asians living in the colony) were distinguished from 'Natives' in that in the realm of private law (civil law and trade) they were subjected to European jurisdiction ⁷. Strictly speaking one could say that the lines

Fig. 1
 Photograph in *Wereldkroniek* (1898) of the 'East Indies Kitchen' was used to demonstrate Javanese cooking. Photograph by the female photographer, Sluiterman van Loo in *Wereldkroniek* (July 1898).



between these groups did not coincide with racial differences. The group of 'Europeans' was not strictly 'white': people of mixed parentage (called 'Indisch') belonged to this group, and indigenous Indonesians could apply to be considered 'European' if they were Christian – after some years, Muslims were also allowed to apply – spoke and wrote fluent Dutch and were versed in European morality and concepts. From 1906 Japanese were considered as Europeans as well ⁸. But in practice the tripartite division of the population was based on, and formed the basis for racial discrimination: indigenous people from Indonesian archipelago and lower class Eurasians were called 'Natives' (they constituted more than 97% of the population), all Chinese and Arabs (2%) were called 'Foreign Orientals' and every white person, as well as those Eurasians who were recognized by their European fathers, or were married to European men, were called 'European' (a group that consisted of less than 1%) ⁹. The division also reflected different economic roles played by the different groups: Javanese were in large majority farmers, Eurasians formed the backbone of lower ranks of civil administration, whites were in positions of administrative or economic power, Chinese and Arabs dominated trade. The principle of a dual judicial system introduced different forms of jurisdiction for the different groups. Javanese both for civil and criminal cases were subjected to the judicial power of Dutch colonial administrators who had to respect Indonesian local common law, while Europeans were subjected to separate courts.

The racial differentiation formalized in 1854 gained importance when, from the end of the 19th century, Dutch colonialism modernized rapidly. While Britain and France scrambled for Africa, the Dutch had to make up their minds about the new imperialism: would they join the race for new territories, expand direct administration, claim a Dutch men's burden or a Dutch civilizing mission in their colonies? While some historians still quarrel about whether Dutch colonialism between 1880 and 1920 should be called 'imperialist', 'reluctant imperialist', 'preemptive imperialist' (that is only occupying areas that would otherwise fall to the British), it is clear that the character of Dutch rule in Indonesia changed deeply ¹⁰. Colonial administrators wanted to establish and improve direct administration all through the archipelago, private capital wanted to exploit the cheap labor at rubber and sugar plantations, military wars of aggression against un-subjected areas were deemed necessary and the interest of Dutch in the Netherlands in Indonesian affairs increased.

SUBJECTS, NOT CITIZENS

Although it is customary to start the description of Dutch modern imperialism with the military exploits of the 1880s and 1890s, in this chapter focussing on racial discrimination, it may be good to start with the formalities of racial discrimination at the end of the century. In the 1880s and early 1890s, the Dutch parliament in The Hague discussed a new law about who was to be considered a Dutch citizen. A new law came into being in 1892. Until that moment Dutch nationality could be based on territory (you were Dutch when you were born to parents who lived in the Netherlands) and on parentage (you were Dutch if your parents were Dutch). Inhabitants of the colonies were automatically Dutch nationals. In the 1880s it was felt that the territorial principle should disappear and that people could only be a Dutch citizen if their father (the nationality of the mother was less important) was Dutch. The new law defining this had to include a provision about the transition of the old situation to the new. One of the Dutch members of parliament – a colonial civil servant who had lived for years in Indonesia – on that occasion argued for the exclusion of the group of ‘Natives’ from Dutch nationality. He warned the Dutch government against the consequences of giving millions of Indonesians Dutch nationality and thus allowing them admission to all public functions. He could make this argument without risking the Dutch nationality of his white family and friends in the colony: they belonged to the group of ‘Europeans’ and he proposed only to exclude the ‘Natives’ and the ‘Foreign Orientals’ from Dutch nationality. His amendment was accepted and as a result the indigenous population of Indonesia was officially stateless from 1892 on. In the West Indies the formal distinction between Europeans and Natives had never been made, and therefore the Dutch nationality was implicitly given to all the inhabitants of the colonies in the Americas ¹¹.

Although in practice not much changed in the way the colony was ruled, problems arose when Indonesians who needed help while traveling outside Indonesia could not be protected by Dutch ambassadors. To solve these problems and to prevent the Chinese government from exercising influence in Indonesia via the Chinese, who also officially did not have Dutch nationality, a new law was accepted in 1910. Here a new concept was introduced in Dutch legislation: the indigenous population and the foreign orientals in Indonesia were declared to be ‘Dutch subjects, not Dutch nationals’. The Dutch word ‘onderdaan’ (resembling the German word ‘Untertan’) indicated that although the Indonesians were subject to Dutch authority, they could not be seen as Dutch citizens. This distinction remained the basis for racial discrimination by the colonial state until the end of Dutch power in the archipelago. As mentioned above, it was decisive in defining civil, political and social rights. The status of being ‘European’ conferred Dutch citizenship: it allowed members of this group to migrate to the Netherlands after Indonesia became independent. In Europe, the members of the group that had been called ‘European’ in the Dutch East Indies, were called ‘Indische Nederlanders’ (‘Indian Dutchmen’) and included Eurasians as well as white Dutch men who had lived for in Indonesia for a long period and identified with the colonial culture.

The 1880s and 1890s the whole Indonesian archipelago was conquered in a series of colonial wars. Paradoxically, the era also witnessed the rise of moral arguments in favor of colonialism. The Dutch combination of moral and military arguments resembles other imperi-

alist policies of the period as well. The rhetoric of French *Mission Civilisatrice* and the British White Men's Burden, advocating colonialism as a moral responsibility of Western nations to rule, educate and elevate the non-western world, supported many forms of military violence. They contributed to the strengthening of colonial states that supported the exploitation of labor and resources of the colonies by private capital. Dutch colonial policy was not directed at acquiring new territories, but at intensifying the colonial state in Indonesia and expanding direct rule of the Dutch over the whole archipelago. Sometimes this strategy is characterized as 'preemptive imperialism' because it was directed at territories that might otherwise have fallen into the hands of Britain. The Dutch government showed no interest in joining the scramble for Africa; support for the 'Boeren' in the Boer Wars was limited to lip-service and some emotional outbursts. In the motherland the interest in the Asian colonies rose: missionaries wanted to convert the millions of Muslims to Christianity, prospective colonial civil servants became interested in Indonesian law and customs (*adat*), artists and scholars in Indonesian art and culture (*batik*, *gamelan* music); entrepreneurs wanted to exploit the natural resources (rubber, coffee, tea, tobacco). In this time novels about life in the colonies began to be popular.

Dutch criticism of the way Indonesia was exploited had a long tradition, with a first high mark in 1860 when the author Multatuli (pseudonym for Eduard Douwes Dekker, 1820-1887, a colonial civil servant) published the novel *Max Havelaar*. Here both the exploitation by the Dutch (symbolized by the Dutch coffee trader) and the lack of protection of the indigenous population against exploitation by the local Javanese authorities were angrily and eloquently attacked. In the 1890s a more direct political opposition developed. The famous article *A debt of honor* by C. Th. van Deventer, published in 1899, calculated in guilders the profit the Dutch had made by their colonial rule and advocated that these 823 million guilders should be invested in the colony: in education, infrastructure and other measures that serving the indigenous population.

ETHICAL POLICY

The formal confirmation of these winds of change came in 1901. Then the first cabinet headed by a member of the new Protestant political party redefined the aims of colonial policy that had until then been set by conservative and liberal politicians. The interest in the expansion of missionary activities in the colonies and the 'moral' obligations of the state resulted in a sentence in the 1901 'Address from the Throne' that announced Dutch responsibility for elevation of the colonial population: colonial policy should be 'Ethical Policy', answering to the needs of the population, advocating education, irrigation (expansion of agricultural potential) and emigration (stimulating Javanese men and women to move to other parts of the archipelago to make up for the lack of labor). A whole generation of Dutch colonial civil servants was trained and inspired along the lines of this 'Ethical Policy'. They went to the colony not only to make a career for themselves, but also to help the indigenous population, fight poverty and superstition, start schools, educate, elevate. Some – though certainly not all – of these 'ethical' civil servants were fervent advocates of the dualistic judicial system. In their view the authentic cultures of the different peoples in the colony should be respected and protected. During the first decades of 20th century until the end of Dutch colonial rule a fierce struggle raged among colonial administrators

and policy makers about the advantages and disadvantages of a dualist judicial system. The idea of having a separate judicial system for the indigenous population was defended with the argument that it was to their advantage, that it answered the judicial needs of the population, and that it would be pretentious to force Western concepts of justice upon them. The unwritten Javanese common law called *adat*, and fervently studied by Indologists at Leiden University, had only recently been 'discovered' by Dutch scholars. As mentioned above, the Dutch were late in their 'orientalist' interest for Indonesian culture. The principles of the 'Ethical Policy' were therefore based on the principle of racial discrimination as it had been institutionalized in the Dutch colony. Difference between 'Natives' and 'Europeans' was taken for granted. 'Foreign Orientals', especially the Chinese, were often considered as a danger for both colonial rule and for the indigenous population and many colonial administrators tried to become the protective champions of the indigenous population. Eurasians, especially those who did not belong to the community of 'Europeans' and who lived in poverty, were considered tragic victims of immorality such as concubinage of Dutch men and Indonesian women. 'Ethical' administrators described the inhabitants of the colony as 'wards' who needed custodial protection.

The changes in colonialism had an important impact on the 'gender of Empire'. Until then Dutch women had been rather unimportant in colonial imagination. In trade, seafaring and military activities one could hardly envision a role for women. The Dutch East Indies Company had forbidden the migration of Dutch women to Java – making the system of interracial marriages and concubinage the rule. Now the new 'Ethical' definition of colonial policy created new fields of activity (missions, education, health care) where women in the Netherlands felt they could contribute. Especially the fight against the 'immorality' of interracial concubinage and the pitiful plight of the children born from these unions encouraged women to play an active role in the colonies.

The new directions of Dutch colonialism also changed some of the options for Javanese women. The idea of giving more education for the indigenous population was not limited to boys, and some Javanese women could profit from the new policy; others noticed that their well-being was now an official aim of Dutch policy¹². Many Javanese women participated in the migration across the archipelago. Being knowledgeable about indigenous culture, Indonesian women were also considered interesting conversation partners by some 'Ethical' Dutch civil servants. Worlds that had been divided could meet, and at moments even mix within the context of colonial policy. While interracial sexual relations were increasingly frowned upon, some Dutch began to pride themselves in their knowledge about what they considered to be 'authentic' Javanese culture. The basis of racial discrimination however, had not changed. It provided the parameters within which these encounters took place.

1898 – A WOMAN ON THE THRONE

In 1898, Wilhelmina, only surviving child of the last King William III, turned 18 and she became Queen of the Netherlands. On this occasion a group of Dutch women decided to organize a national exhibition to show what women could do. One of the first manifestations of the Dutch women's movement, this exhibition was a success, over 90,000 visitors (among whom the young queen to be herself) came to the temporary buildings at the out-

skirts of The Hague and saw demonstrations of women's labor in factories, health care, social work, agriculture, art, education and other professions. A large colonial pavilion showed replicas of buildings from different parts of the Indonesian archipelago where a group of Javanese men and women gave demonstrations of arts, crafts and cooking from Java, and performed dance and music.

This event, organized exclusively by women, offers the opportunity to see how women defined their interest in the Dutch colonialism, and how cooperation between women in Indonesia and in the Netherlands was shaped. I will start by examining a discussion among the organizers (a group of Dutch women, some of whom had lived in the colony) about the question whether to include the colonies in a Dutch *national* exhibition. Then I will turn to the support for this event by a young Javanese noble woman, Raden Adjeng Kartini. By juxtaposing their interventions I will show how the discussions about the position of women was influenced by the legislative racial discrimination of the colonial state, and by sexual discrimination in the legislation about citizenship in the European part of the kingdom.

The women who took the initiative for a national exhibition in 1898 organized several meetings in 1896 and 1897 to discuss the way the event should be organized. Although inspired by American and Danish examples (the Women's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and the Women's Exhibition in Denmark in 1895), some women were hesitant to organize an exhibition that might turn into a fair and that would thus lack the serious and moral character required by their cause. Their ideal was to show that women could and should contribute to the Dutch nation, not only as the queen, but also as teachers, nurses, social workers, factory workers and in the multiplicity of other jobs and professions that were not yet or only recently open to women. The event would be called the 'National Exhibition of Women's Labor'. By arranging a number of supplementary conferences and congresses where serious discussion could take place, and by closing the exhibition grounds in the evenings, the 'risk' of too much fun and entertainment was countered. As we will see the colonial part of the exhibition entered the discussion about serious study and superficial entertainment.

Although colonial exhibits were mentioned in the earliest proposal for the event, the inclusion of 'the Netherlands in the Tropics' was by no means self-evident. Exhibits devoted to the East and the West Indies had first been proposed by a woman who had been born in the East Indies, but it was also by Dutch women with experience in the colonies that the first objections were raised¹³. Elise Haighton, who had worked a governess in Suriname, wrote in 1897, that she was willing to participate in the organization of the pavilion devoted to the West Indies, but that this part of the exhibition was not absolutely necessary, since still so little was known about the colonies. Her remark reflects how little the Dutch in the Netherlands knew or wanted to know about the colonies in the 19th century. In March 1897 a more extended discussion took place. At one of the preparatory meetings, the issue was raised as to whether space should be devoted to the colonies, to the East and West Indies. The argument that opened the discussion reflects the 1892 debate in parliament about who was Dutch and who was not. A member of the association that prepared the event argued during this meeting that an exhibit about the colonies was not in the interest of 'Dutch women'. Clearly she thought – as Dutch parliament had ruled in

1892 – that Dutch nationality was limited to those who lived in the European part of the kingdom. Her line of argumentation was both countered and confirmed by a woman who herself had lived in Indonesia for a long period as the spouse of a Dutch military man. Her argument was that so many Dutch women now moved to the colonies, either for work or as the wives of Dutch men, that it was really necessary to show these women what they could expect in the archipelago. The exhibits could explain Dutch women about conditions in the colony and about the work done by ‘Indische’ women (the word ‘Indische’ here seems to indicate both Indonesian and Eurasian women and those Dutch women who lived in the colony). Another contribution to the discussion suggested that the conditions in the Dutch East Indies were most deplorable, and that the Exhibition might stimulate Dutch women to improve these circumstances. Thus the idea that women could contribute to the colonial rule in the colonies was introduced along the lines of what would in a few years be called ‘Ethical Policy’: a Dutch responsibility for the improvement of bad conditions in Indonesia. In addition to this argument, another justification was advanced: not only would the women in Indonesia profit from the Dutch women’s intervention, the Dutch women themselves would profit from the new challenges the colony offered. Since the expansion of women’s opportunities for paid labor and useful careers was the main argument for organizing this National Exhibition, one would have expected this argument at least to swing the mood. Those present however were hesitant: the idea that Indonesia was a field of activity for enterprising Dutch was by 1897 not yet as widespread as it would become in the 20th century. The participants in the meeting still disagreed about the question as to whether to include the colonies in the Exhibition.

Agreement was reached when another type of argument was brought forward by a young journalist. She began by warning that women, who themselves suffered from exclusion by men, should be careful to not exclude others. She then stated that the young Queen Wilhelmina would never support an event that excluded a large numbers of her subjects, in this case the ‘Indische’ women. She used the word subject (*‘onderdaan’*) that was later to become the official designation for the indigenous population of Indonesia. It is important to notice that solidarity between women from the colonies and from the Netherlands could only be envisioned by these women through the use of a word that denoted second-class citizens. The fact that in the Netherlands women were not yet full citizens (female suffrage in the Netherlands dates from 1919, many civil rights were severely limited) allowed them to cross – at least in their imagination – the color line. In a way the racial discrimination in the colony provided women in the motherland with a metaphor for their own position: these Indonesian women are subjects like us. This image of female solidarity however, came at a price, it was based on the approbation of Dutch colonial rule, and acceptance of monarchy as its symbol. This last argument seems to have convinced the meeting, the minutes register applause and from then on no objections against a colonial exhibit were heard.

The fantasy about female solidarity however turned out to be more difficult than imagined. A conference was devoted to ‘social work in the East Indies’ (August 1898) but it was one of the conferences that attracted fewest visitors. The topics focused on what later would become ‘Ethical’ issues: education for indigenous population, how to end concubinage in the military. The Javanese women who came to the Hague did not participate in these conferences: they belonged to the group that performed music and dance from the colonies,

they gave demonstrations of *batik* and weaving, they could be seen wearing Javanese dress. As had been a practice in many colonial exhibitions, 'human showcases' constituted the main attraction of the exhibition. For many Dutch this was an occasion to 'see' the colony they had never visited¹⁴. Thus the colonial pavilion attracted visitors that would not have come if the exhibition had been limited to 'Dutch women'. The popularity of gamelan concerts and the colonial food (the Indische 'rice table') prompted the organizers to extend opening hours to include the evenings. Thus the National Exhibition of Women's Labor became a popular place of entertainment in the summer of 1898. Some organizers were critical of this development: the entertaining character of this pavilion confirmed their ideas about the immoral character of life in the colonies. Others defended the shows by stating that the men and women who performed the dances that accompanied a Javanese wedding ceremony were really married.

However, the dream of female solidarity between Queen Wilhelmina's subjects of was not realized, the color line between the white organizers and the Javanese performers was not crossed. Both Dutch visitors and the organizers saw Javanese women as the objects of their good intentions, not as partners in a struggle for emancipation.

RADEN ADJENG KARTINI AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

The efforts to organize the National Exhibition of Women's Labor were not limited to the Netherlands. In an effort to get as much support as possible, the initiators had stimulated the formation of local committees to prepare parts of the Exhibition. They wrote to friends and relations in the colonies and implored them to support their plans as well. In the West Indies this worked out remarkably well. Several women, mostly related to the upper classes and colonial administration collected numerous examples of women's labor and sent them to the Hague. In Indonesia however, the interest of Dutch women in this project was very limited. No meetings took place, no local committees were set up, and hardly any other support were given. Most of the work for the East Indies pavilion was done by Dutch women who had lived in the Asian colony but who now lived in the Netherlands. There was one important exception: Raden Adjeng Kartini (1879-1904) was a staunch supporter of this project of Dutch feminists. Kartini belonged to the upper classes of Java. She was the daughter of the regent of Japara, a district in the North of Java. One year older than the young Dutch queen, her noble birth impelled Dutch admirers to call her and her sisters 'princesses', though she herself disapproved of this word. Since she was Javanese she was excluded from Dutch education in the colony, but an exception had been made and she had attended an 'European' primary school. She was therefore bilingual and an avid reader of Dutch journals. Through her father she met and befriended several Dutch men and women, among whom some socialists and several colonial administrators who later considered themselves to belong to the 'Ethical' movement. Kartini wanted to continue her education. Her brother studied in the Netherlands and this was her ambition as well.

Kartini was 18 years old when she heard about the plans for the National Exhibition of Women's Labor. She immediately decided that she wanted to contribute. In letters to a Dutch pen-friend she wrote that she wanted to contribute to the emancipation of women,

'white and brown'. With her younger sisters she tried to collect money for the Exhibition. She describes ironically fact that 'European women' were shocked at the idea that a Javanese woman was asking for support for a project of Dutch women in the Netherlands. Her ideal was to support the solidarity of women across the color line, but the reality of colonial society made it difficult to realize that dream. When she could find no other women to support the exhibition, she and her sisters decide to collect material that could be sent to the Netherlands. A collection of crafts by women (wood-cutting, embroidery and *batik*) from Japara was the result. Kartini herself wrote a long description of the technique of dying cloth with the help of wax patterns and sent it to the Netherlands. Her contributions were gratefully accepted by the organizers. When Queen Wilhelmina visited the exhibition a letter from Kartini was shown to her to indicate the quality of Dutch education in the colony. It is ironic to think that Kartini had only been admitted to the European school as an exception to the rule that Javanese children were not entitled to Dutch education. The interest in Kartini's proficiency in Dutch indicates how the dream of educating and elevating the indigenous population inspired Dutch women. Kartini seemed like the perfect object of 'Ethical' policy: a young Javanese woman, who aspired to Dutch education, was critical of polygamy, and seemed in need of Dutch support and protection. But in the end attitude of the Dutch organizers towards Kartini was not much different from that towards the Javanese dancers. Kartini provided an image of the colonial subject that should be protected against the backward culture of her family, not a fellow feminist. The irritation of Kartini about the way she and her sisters were described as 'little princesses' illustrates how she felt about this. She objected to being reduced to an exotic princess who should be liberated by Dutch women. She was as critical of Dutch prejudice as of Javanese *adat*, but for the Dutch women who organized the Exhibition that was not interesting.

Kartini did not live to come to the Netherlands: in 1904 she died in childbirth. Some of her letters were published in 1911 by a group of Dutch 'Ethical' colonial administrators. Her early death and her unfull-filled wish to study in the Netherlands allowed the editors to portray her as a tragic victim. The money made by the sale of the book was devoted to schools for Javanese girls. Kartini's feminism was defined as resistance against Javanese *adat*. Her connection with the Dutch women's movement did not fit that image. In conclusion one might say that the shortcomings of the 'Ethical Policy' were already clear in the way Kartini was treated in the context of the National Exhibition of Women's Labor: the indigenous population of the colony was seen as an object of guardianship, not as independent citizens. They might be the beneficiaries of social policies, but not citizens with political rights. The increase of Dutch women's interest in colonial policy would not change that.

CONCLUSION: IS THERE A COLONIAL PREHISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY DUTCH ATTITUDES ABOUT MULTICULTURALISM?

Dutch colonial rule proclaimed that different groups required different legislation; this resulted in the legal invention of second class citizenship. When at the turn of the century, Dutch women advocated citizenship for women, they could identify partially with the indigenous population of the colonies. This however, did not result in real solidarity between Dutch and Indonesian feminists. Many Dutch women were eager to participate in

the colonial ambitions of their husbands, brothers and fathers. They soon identified with the self-proclaimed guardians of the Javanese and thus contributed to visions of custodial citizenship.

Today in the Netherlands one can see many traces of this history. In discussions about the multicultural society, attitudes and 'solutions' from the colonial past resurface regularly. In 2003 a Dutch high-ranking police officer advocated heavier sentences for Moroccan boys than for white boys who had committed the same crime. It is not difficult to recognize the echoes of the dualist judicial system of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia in this suggestion. As regards gender relations, the historical roots of contemporary thinking are even clearer. The idea that for example Muslim women in the Netherlands must be protected against the way the men in 'their' community treat them, strongly resembles the idea that white Dutch women were more emancipated than their Indonesian counterparts. In 1898 this attitude resulted in a silence where a conversation across lines of racial discrimination might have been possible.



NOTES

- ¹ This article is based on the research I conducted with Maria Grever (Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands) for our book on the Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898. (M. Grever, B. Waaldijk, *Feministische Openbaarheid, De Nationale Tentoonstelling Van Vrouwenarbeid in 1898*, Amsterdam 1998). A revised English version of this book will be published in 2004: M. Grever, B. Waaldijk, *Transforming the Public Sphere: The Dutch National Exhibition of Women's Labor in 1898*, Durham (NC). I have also profited from working with Susan Legêne (Tropenmuseum Amsterdam) on Dutch colonial culture: S. Legêne, B. Waaldijk, *Reverse Images – Patterns of Absence. Batik and the Representation of Colonialism in the Netherlands*, in I. van Hout (ed.), *Batik Drawn in Wax*, pp. 35-69, Amsterdam 2001.
- ² H. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994; A. Burton, *Burdens of History. British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, Chapel Hill - London 1994; C. Hall, *Civilising Subjects. Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, Cambridge 2002; E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London 1993; J. Clancy-Smith, F. Gouda (eds.), *Domesticating the Empire. Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, Charlottesville - London 1998.
- ³ A. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Durham - London 1995.
- ⁴ J. Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, Madison 1983.
- ⁵ R. Jeffrey (ed.), *Asia: the winning of independence: the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaya*, New York 1981.
- ⁶ C.N. Degler, *Neither Black nor White : Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*, New York 1971.
- ⁷ C. Fasseur, *Hoeksteen en Struikelblok. Rasonderscheid en Overheidsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië*, "Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis", 1992, 105, pp. 218-242; E.J.M. Heijs, *Van Vreemdeling Tot Nederlander*, Amsterdam 1995, p. 70.
- ⁸ Fasseur, *Hoeksteen en Struikelblok* cit., p. 223.
- ⁹ J.E. Ellemers, R.E.F. Vaillant, *Indische Nederlanders en gerepatrieerden*, Muiderberg 1985, p. 15.
- ¹⁰ See for this debate: M. Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism: Colonies and Foreign Policy, 1870-1902*, New York 1991; E. Locher-Scholten, *Sumatrans Sultanaat en Koloniale Staat. De Relatie Djambi-Batavia (1830-1907) en het Nederlandse Imperialisme*, Leiden 1994; and F. Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas. Colonial Practices in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*, Amsterdam 1995.
- ¹¹ Heijs, *Van Vreemdeling* cit., p. 63-72.

¹² Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas* cit., 1995b.

¹³ The archives (containing correspondence, minutes and proceedings) of the National Exhibition of Women's Labor are kept in the International Information center and Archives of The Women's Movement (IIAV) in Amsterdam. On the website of the IIAV (www.iiav.nl) one can also find a virtual representation of the exhibition in 1898.

¹⁴ Cfr. T. Mitchell, *The World as Exhibition*, "Comparative Studies in Society and History", 1989, 31, pp. 217-236.



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"Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant", August 30, 1898:

Nationale Tentoonstelling van Vrouwenarbeid. De Koninginnen op de Tentoonstelling

Dat was heden een heele drukte op de tentoonstelling toen het bericht kwam dat HH. MM. de Koninginnen haar met een bezoek zouden vereeren. Want niemand was er op voorbereid en iedereen haast die bij de ontvangst tegenwoordig moest zijn moest worden gewaarschuwd. Om een uur kwam het bericht. Toen HH. MM. even over vieren kwamen waren allen tegenwoordig wier aanwezigheid noodig was, maatregelen van orde genomen enz. enz. In de stad het voorgenomen bezoek blijkaar bekend geworden, want na tweeën regende 't als 't ware publiek.

HH. MM// vergezeld van de heeren de Raniz, Taets van Amerongen, Grovestins, Van Suchtelen en de dames Van de Poll en Van Limburg Stirum, werden door het hoofdbestuur ontvangen, en dadelijk begon de rondgang. De Koningin was gekleed in een zijden kleed met korte slee van rose fané in een schakeering naar fraise met wit zijden kraag, voorzien van rivera, met borduursel in de kleur van het kleed en goud; een wit hoedje met kleine veeren. De Regentes was in 't zwart satijn met zwart-witten hoed. Eerst onderweg boden Mevrouw Goekoop en Mevrouw Pekelharing-Doijer onderscheidelijk aan H.M. de Koningin en aan H.M. de Regentes ruikers aan.

De wandelpaden werden uitstekend vrij gehouden door de dames van elke afdeeling in het bijzonder, versterkt met politie. In de industriezaal rechts van de ingang verbleven HH. MM. 't langst bij de tijpijtweverij en het netten-boeten. In de galerijen rechts vertoefden de Vorstinnen 't langst in de afdeeling zieken ver-

pleging in elke sectie voorgelicht door het bestuur en het hoofdcmité. Toen de Vorstinnen in de wandelgalerij verschenen, klonk 't hoezee! der menigte haar tegemoet.

Op den weg naar de kunstzaal passeerden HH. MM. de dameskapel die het Wien Neêrlands bloed speelde, dezelfde kapel had haar bij het binnenkomen met het Wilhelmus begroet. In de kunstzaal werden ververschingen gebruikt.

Door de galerijen links werd de afdeeling Oost-Indië en het Insulinde-terrein bereikt. Sawa, de West-Indische had zich onderweg opgesteld om in haar full dress nog eens door de Koninginnen, die haar in West-Indië hadden opgemerkt te laten bewonderen.

In het gamelanhuis was een koninklijke tribune geïmproviseerd met tapijten en fraaie zetels. De muziek klonk, de Indische vrouwen en mannen waren neergehurkt, en HH. MM. namen plaats om een korte begroeting te ontvangen en een kort gevecht bij te wonen.

Bij het heengaan merkte de Koningin den prins van Solo op onder het publiek. H.M. vertelde 't Hare moeder, die den heer Grovestins verzocht den prins uit te noodigen zich bij het gezelschap te voegen. Weinige oogenblikken later, tijdens een wandeling door Insulinde, wendde de Koningin zich tot de prins met de woorden: "Ik vind 't erg aardig dat ik ook de afdeeling Indië bezoek", waarop de Regentes zich informeerde naar de gezondheid des prinsen. Met de handen tegen elkaar voor het gelaat en een hoofdbuiging beantwoordde de prins de hem ten deel gevallen onderscheiding.

Staande op het trapje van het huisje waar gebatikt wordt namen HH. MM. den Indischen bruiloftstoet in oogenschouw die in allerijl was gevord.

Terug door de afdeeling Oost-Indië, waar mevr. Lucardie de Koningin een brief voorlas van een Javaanse prinses ter begeleiding van een geschenk, dat H.M. echter, getrouw aan haar te kennen gegeven voornemen, niet aannam, werd de afdeeling onderwijs bereikt, en even een bezoek gebracht aan de waschzaal gelijk zoo even aan den overkant de zuivelbereiding. Links de industriezaal nemende kwamen HH. MM. weder in den voortuin waar het rijtuig gereed stond. De Koningin dankt mevr. Goekoop voor haar geleide. Te 5.15 reden de HH. MM. onder de hoezee's der menigte paleiswaarts.

"Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant" reports on August 30, 1898 about the visit of Queen Wilhelmina and her mother:

The National Exhibition of Women's Labor. Queens visit the exhibition [1]

It was very busy at the exhibition when it became known that the Majesties the Queens would honor the Exhibition with a visit. Since the visit was not planned in advance, nobody of the organizers was prepared, and almost everyone who had to be present had to be called to the exhibition grounds. At one o'clock the announcement came, and when the majesties arrived shortly after four o'clock, everyone whose presence was needed had arrived and all necessary measures were taken [2]. Apparently the word had spread in the city: from two o'clock it was 'raining' new visitors.

The Her Majesties, accompanied by four gentlemen, Mr. de Ranitz, Mr. Taets van Amerongen, Mr. Grovestins, and Mr. Van Suchtelen and by two ladies, Mrs. Van

den Poll and Mrs. Van Limburg Stirum, were greeted by the Board of the Exhibition and they immediately started their tour [3]. The Queen wore a silk garment with a short pink train, a white silk collar, with lapels embellished with embroidery in pink and gold. The Regent Queen was dressed in black satin and wore a black and white hat. Mrs Goekoop and Mrs Pekelharing-Doijer offered nosegays to the Queen and the Regent Queen after the tour had started [4].

The footways were kept perfectly free by the ladies in charge of the different exhibition rooms, they were supported by the police [5]. In the Hall of Industry, to the right of the entrance, the queens lingered longest at the carpet-weavers and the net-menders. In the galleries to the right the queens stayed longest at the room devoted to nursing. Everywhere members of the board and the managing committee explained what was exhibited. When the Queens appeared in the corridor, they were cheered by the crowd.

On their way to the Art exhibit, the Queens passed the all-female musical band that played 'Wien Neêrlands bloed', this same band had welcomed the Queens with the national anthem 'Wilhelmus' [6]. In the Art exhibit they received refreshments. Via the galleries to the left, the Queens proceeded to the room devoted to the East Indies and then to 'Insulinde'. Sawa, the West-Indian woman had positioned herself in 'full dress' in such a way that the Queens who had already seen her in the West Indies exhibit could admire her again [7].

In the house for the concerts of the gamelan, a royal gallery had been improvised with carpets and fine chairs. The music resounded, the Indonesian women and men crouched down and the Queens took their seats to accept a formal greeting and observe a short staged fight. When they left, the Queen noticed the Prince of Solo in the audience, she notified her mother, who asked mr Grovestins to invite the Prince to join the royal company [8]. A few moments later, the Queen told the prince that she was especially happy that she could visit the exhibits devoted to the East Indies, and the Queen Regent inquired about the health of the prince. With his hand together in front of his face and a bow of the head, the prince responded to the honor that he received.

Standing on the stairs of the small house where one could watch the preparation of batik, the Queens observed a hastily arranged show of an Indonesian wedding procession [9]. In the East Indies room, Mrs Lucardie read a letter written by a Javanese princess, written to accompany an offering of presents to the Queen [10]. However, as she had announced, the Queen did not accept any presents. After this the visitors went to the department of Education, the room for washing demonstrations and the dairy department. Via the left side of the Hall of Industry, the Queens returned to the park in front of the Exhibition, where the carriage was waiting. The Queen thanked Mrs. Goekoop for the escort. Cheered by the crowd the two majesties returned to the royal palace.

Notes

[1] The plural 'queens' is used because the young queen Wilhelmina, who would turn 18 two days later on August 31, was not yet inaugurated, and her mother Emma was still Regent Queen. The inauguration would take place one week later, on September 6, 1898.

[2] The men and women who accompanied the queen were dignitaries of the court.

[3] The visit almost coincided with the lectures and discussions about suffrage that lasted until four o'clock. In another article in the same newspaper, the journalist apologizes for not covering this discussion: he had to witness the preparations for the royal visit.

[4] Cecile Goekoop - de Jong van Beek en Donk was the president of the Board of the Exhibition,

Cato Pekelharing-Doijer was a member of the Board.

[5] The Exhibiton consisted of a series of halls and rooms devoted to different forms of women's labor and a colonial pavilion with a mock Javanese village called 'Insulinde' in a garden that could be reached via the room devoted to arts and crafts in the East Indies.

[6] This nationalist song described how all who had 'Dutch blood' in their veins loved their fatherland.

[7] With 'Sawa' the journalist refers to Louise IJda, a woman from Surinam who came to The Hague for three months in the summer of 1898 to work as a waitress at the Exhibition. Her traditional dress, Koto Missi, attracted much attention. Louise IJda was born in slavery. In other newspaper reports she is called 'Sassa'.

[8] The Prince of Solo was one of the highest ranking Indonesian representatives, he was invited to the Netherlands to attend the inauguration. He was one of the few men who became a member of the [9] Batik is a Javanese dying technique that uses wax to produce complicated patterns on cotton. The exhibit of batik at the National Exhibiton of Women's Labor contributed to the interest in this technique in the Netherlands. The staged fight and the wedding procession were performed daily by the group of Javanese men and women during the Exhibition. They had toured several European countries before they came to the Netherlands.

[10] This letter was written by Raden Adjeng Kartini who had, with her sisters, put together a collection of crafts as a present for the young queen. Later, after the exhibition, the gift was accepted by Wilhelmina. The use of the word 'princess' here may be one of the examples that Kartini heard about later and to which she objected.

