

### III 'So Close and Yet so Far': European Ambivalence towards Javanese Servants

#### INTRODUCTION

Of all the dominated groups in the former colonies, domestic servants were the most 'sub-altern'. Silenced by the subservient nature of their work and the subordinated social class they came from, Indonesian or Javanese servants in the former Netherlands Indies were neither expected nor allowed to speak for themselves. Nor did they ever acquire a voice because of pressures in the labour market, as was the case with domestic servants in twentieth-century Europe.<sup>1</sup> Because of the large numbers of Indonesian servants, the principle of supply and demand functioned to their disadvantage. Therefore, it is rather difficult to present these servants' historical voices and experiences directly from original (written) source material.

What we can do is reconstruct fragments of their social history from circumstantial evidence. Moreover, in view of the quantity of fictional sources and the growing interest in the history of colonial mentalities, we can analyse the Dutch narratives which chronicle the coloniser-colonised relationship. It is possible to reconstruct images of Indonesian servants by decoding these representations, although we should keep in mind that this tells us more about the colonial mentality than about the servants themselves. Representations of domestic servants are part of the Orientalist tradition, i.e., of Western ideas about the 'East'.<sup>2</sup> They may serve as an illustration of Western constructions of domestic servants, of gender, and of race and ethnicity. In the household, different variations of race (Dutch, Eurasian, Indonesian), class, and gender confronted each other, and illustrated the complicated social patterns of the colonial divide.

In colonial images of colonised subjects race and gender were compelling factors, which formulated identities within specific borders. Indigenous women were part of the self-definition and self-delineation, not only of individual white/European women but also of the internal hierarchy of white colonial society.<sup>3</sup> Depictions of the colonised reflected representations of the

coloniser, individually, socially, and politically. Here I explore the imagery female colonial authors used in portraying Javanese domestic servants. What do the representations of the domestic servants of that time tell us about race and gender relations at home, in the personal sphere where women wielded the sceptre? Were women indeed more race-conscious or openly racist than men, as has been argued more than once in colonial historiography?<sup>4</sup> I want to argue, first that the female discourse on servants tallied with the male discourse on the colonised, as voiced in the political arena; second that this discourse on servants articulated both 'Orientalism' and a rhetoric of the family, two attitudes which were only apparently contradictory; and finally that the rhetoric of the family functioned as a rhetoric of concealment, hiding differences of race, class, and gender.

### SOURCES AND THEIR AUTHORS

Two kind of sources, both constructed mainly by European women, are informative in this respect: 1. the domestic manuals and introductory textbooks for new colonial residents; 2. children's literature, focusing on the home. Both sources are highly prescriptive and normative; they provide us with twentieth-century ideas and ideals concerning the relationship between Europeans and their servants, dealing more with theory than with practice and 'reality'. In the framework of a history of the colonial mentality, especially of women, these prescribed notions offer an illuminating, although partial, entrance into the subject. These normative 'civilising' sources do not speak, for instance, about the role of the indigenous housekeeper (*nyai*), since she was not a regular part of the twentieth-century colonial household.<sup>5</sup>

Sources always reflect the position of their authors, these sources even more so, for Western literature on Indonesia has always had a highly 'autobiographical quality', as James Rush recently stated.<sup>6</sup> The authors all belonged to the European population group, the tiny minority of 0.4 percent among the 60 million Indonesians in 1930, of whom four-fifths lived on Java. One might expect different positions between female authors of *totok* (born in the Netherlands) or *Indisch* descent, but the sources do not refer to such differences.<sup>7</sup> For the authors were all part of the same process of Westernisation of colonial society that took place in the first half of the twentieth century. In the years between the two World Wars a distinct sense of Dutchness and more luxurious material conditions created a *Tropisch Nederland* ('Netherlands in the tropics').<sup>8</sup> This process of 'totokisation' or Westernisation was heavily influenced by the growing influx of Dutch *totok* men and women.<sup>9</sup> Their (temporary) immigration was made

possible by improved infrastructure and developments in the fields of hygiene and health, education, and sports. These immigrants in turn supported and developed further infrastructural progress and strongly affected the culture of the colonial community. The newcomers imported contemporary Western ideas and theories about family life and the household, considered essential for general well-being and family welfare. In the same time, they had to be educated for their future life in the Indies through books or other means. These cultural 'exchanges,' lessons about the East and imprints from the West, can be found in the domestic manuals as well as in children's fiction.

### 'DIFFERENT' OR 'ONE STEP BEHIND'?

The female discourse on domestics should be analysed with, and be compared to, the framework of the male colonial discourse on the colonised other. In this political discourse on Indonesian society and Indonesians, we can identify two distinct modes of thought.<sup>10</sup> In line with the evolutionary theory of nineteenth to early twentieth-century anthropology, representations by Dutch progressives depicted Indonesians as similar to themselves, but less developed, still one step (or more) behind in the track of time. Indonesians, like children, would in due course catch up and be associated with the Dutch. These colonialists considered it their task to further this developmental process. Evolution theory was reflected in the colonial policy of the turn of the century, the so-called Ethical Policy. It was voiced in a rhetoric of the family – Indonesian children under tutelage of the West – with strong paternalistic overtones. Indonesians were part of the family of man but the younger generation.<sup>11</sup>

This rhetorical practice was not a new invention of those twentieth-century progressives, but was rooted in long administrative tradition. In the Netherlands Indies the Governor General held the honorary title of 'father' to the indigenous rulers and royalty, while indigenous civil servants addressed Dutch civil servants as 'older brothers'. Family titles were subtle and euphemistic expressions of a strict hierarchy and of power relations, requesting compliance and consensus.<sup>12</sup> Thus the familial rhetoric itself had double-edged and ambiguous connotations, on the one hand one of familial solidarity and harmony, and on the other hand one that conveyed hierarchy and subtle power. This tallied with general conceptions of the family as a social institution with clear patterns of authority during the time under consideration.

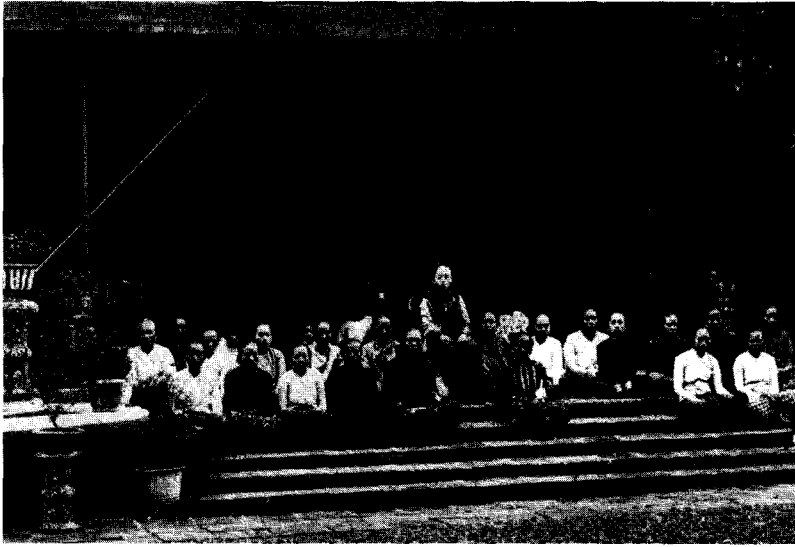
In contrast with this familial rhetoric – and sometimes also in paradoxical combination with it – more conservative Dutch people in the colonies viewed Indonesians as fundamentally and innately different; different in race, cultural

outlook, and behaviour. Of both perceptions, this 'Orientalisation' or 'Orientalism' was the most racist, although this was rarely expressed in biological terms. It represented a permanent conservative trend in Dutch colonialism, exacerbated by an ever-present and deep-seated fear, an apprehension of both the unknown and the strange, whether *guna-guna* (witchcraft), *amok* (sudden explosions of rage), unknown customs, or Indonesian nationalism; fear also of the loss of the colony, which would mean the end of personal positions and would diminish Dutch political identity. What would Holland, a dwarf on the international scene, be without its giant possession, the Indonesian Archipelago, 'a farm by the North Sea'?<sup>13</sup> This existential and political vulnerability implied fearful visions of the future, repressed and therefore rarely taken into account before the Second World War, but always just below the surface.

It appears highly probable that colonial domestic servants were represented more as the 'other' than as 'one step behind' on the evolutionary ladder. The latter position was generally reserved for the Javanese elite, who could catch up by absorbing Western education. Different in race and class (and gender), servants illustrated the 'otherness' of the colonised subject in its most poignant clarity. On the other hand, we have to take into account that these servants were domestic servants. Intimately connected to the family, they formed part and parcel of a paternalistic system. The view of domestic servants as part of the family, rather than as labourers, had a long tradition in Europe.<sup>14</sup> Hence, either 'Orientalism' or the rhetorical celebration of the family or both may have determined colonial views on domestic servants. But before elaborating upon those themes, some factual information concerning servants in the Indies before the Second World War may enhance our understanding of the subject.

#### FACTS AND FIGURES ON COLONIAL DOMESTICS

Domestic service had a long tradition in Java as well as in other parts of the Archipelago, and it appeared in many different forms. Depending on their status and wealth, members of the indigenous elite employed servants in smaller or larger numbers. Domestic servants could be common villagers who might be servants because of debt bondage or *corvée* obligations. But impoverished relatives could also join the households of their more prosperous family members and serve them. In a socially layered society like the Javanese, relationships between employers and servants were always hierarchical. They might resemble patron-client bonds and contain all the elements of distance, power, and fear but they could also be of an emotionally warm and familiar nature.<sup>15</sup>



Wife of the Regent of Kudus among her servants, 1860-1870 (KIT, Amsterdam).

Dutch colonialists, placing themselves above the Javanese aristocracy, accommodated to the social patterns of Javanese society. Eurasian women, married to and heading the households of Dutch immigrants, had played a major role in these processes of acculturation since the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> Dutch men had accepted this pattern of domestic service all the more easily, because the climate as well as colonial prestige in their opinion demanded a leisurely pace of life. Relations between Eurasian men/women and their Javanese servants might still remain warm and familiar, especially those between women, the *nyonya* and her *babu*, as seen in Dutch colonial fiction from the Indies.<sup>17</sup> In the twentieth century a different attitude was prescribed by and for *totok* and a growing number of *Indies* women, as we will see below.

Domestic servants were thus considered indispensable to Dutch colonial society. It was the married woman, either *totok* or *Indisch*/Eurasian, who was responsible for these servants in the first place. Often, the only Indonesians colonial women met in daily life were the servants.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century a European household required, as a minimum, a houseboy (*jongos* or *sepen*), a housemaid or nursemaid (*babu*), and a boy for the horses and the garden (*kebon*).<sup>19</sup> The most popular household manual of 1913 reckoned that seven servants were needed: in addition to the *jongos*, the cook (*kokki*), the *babu*, and the *kebon*, someone was required for the sewing (*jahit*)



*Jongos, babu, kokki, and kebon, Bogor, West Java, 1905 (KIT, Amsterdam).*

and washing, as well as a coachman and/or a driver.<sup>20</sup> Another manual recommended ten.<sup>21</sup> Between four and six servants was the generally accepted number among Dutch colonialists in the twentieth century. Rich people could have more, poorer ones might have less, even only one servant. In the cities, where tap water, gas, and electricity were gradually introduced after 1900, the number of servants would decline. New city planning and construction involved smaller houses with modern sanitation, providing less room for servants who traditionally lived in the backquarters of their employer's house, often with their families around. In this new situation servants might come in

only during the day and live in the *kampung*.<sup>22</sup> But whether servants stayed on the grounds of the house or in the *kampung*, domestic service remained an essential feature of colonial culture. Even in dire economic circumstances (such as the economic crisis of the 1930s) Dutch colonial families adhered to this ostentatious privilege of power.<sup>23</sup>

Only a small number of Indonesian/Javanese were, in fact, servants: in 1930 a mere 2 percent of the total Indonesian working population were classified as domestics, i.e., 350,000 persons (300,000 in Java, 50,000 in the Outer Regions). The actual number of Indonesians engaged (and registered) as domestic servants in 1930 seems to have been closely related to the presence of Europeans, rich Chinese, and the indigenous courts. Where these were concentrated, the largest numbers of servants could be found (Java, Sumatra's East Coast).<sup>24</sup> Domestic service formed part of a stratified, elitist society, characterised by an abundant supply of labour.

The numbers and composition of this small sector of the Javanese labour force illustrate the pre-industrial character of Javanese society in those years. Contrary to the situation in Europe, where a feminisation of household services had accompanied the Industrial Revolution and where domestic service had become the main occupation for women,<sup>25</sup> domestic servants in colonial Indonesia were not exclusively or mainly female.<sup>26</sup> Of the indigenous servants in Java and Madura 39 percent were male, and 61 percent female in 1930, the majority of the latter being unmarried women (72 percent).<sup>27</sup> Only 4 percent of the total female labour force worked in households, while only one percent of all working men were employed in domestic service.<sup>28</sup> Nor was it the largest source of employment for Indonesian women, as it was in Europe. For Indonesian women it remained one of the less 'popular' activities. Indigenous agriculture (employing nearly 40 percent of all working women), (small-) industry (nearly 25 percent), and (small-)trade (12 percent) prevailed over household labour.<sup>29</sup>

As far as the position of family servants within the household was concerned, vague outlines of a hierarchy among them can be discerned. Most often, the *jongos* or *s(e)pen* would come first; in other cases, a trusted and experienced older *babu*.<sup>30</sup> The *jongos* had the task of preparing breakfast, dusting and cleaning the galleries of the house, and serving food at meals or during social gatherings. Although he performed tasks which in European eyes might belong to the domain of women, he resided in the 'outer world' of display and representation, the galleries, the receiving of guests, which in Javanese tradition is the male part of the house. Second in importance might be the (always female) cook, for a *kokki* who could 'prepare a nice rice table and serve a reason-

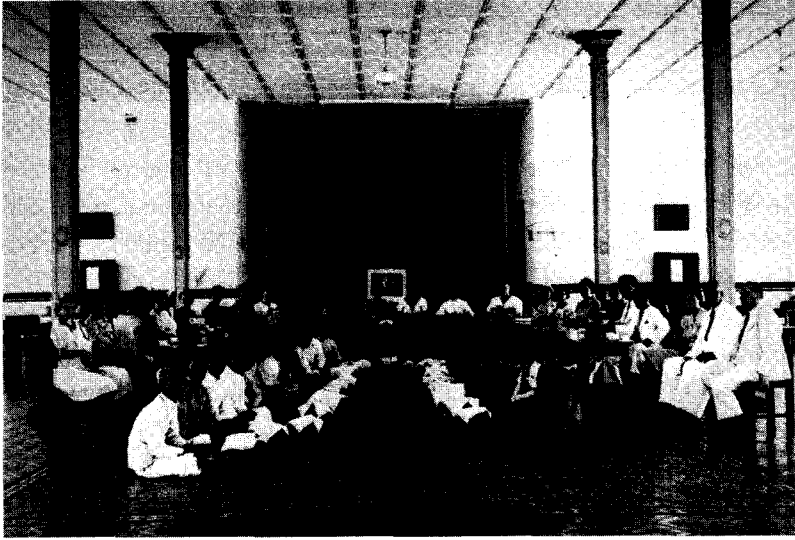
able European dish', was considered 'of inestimable value and incalculable dignity'.<sup>31</sup> The (female) *babu's* task was to dust and clean the sleeping rooms and to care for the children, while the *kebon* (gardener), always male, worked outside and fetched water if necessary. Sewing and washing were not restricted to one gender; they belonged to the more flexible tasks open to either men or women. The division of labour among servants according to gender seems to have been rather fluid. It tallied with hierarchies of age and with the fluid gender systems and subtle gender boundaries that characterised Javanese social structure.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it concurred with traditional lines of spatial organisation in the Javanese household, the outer world being reserved for men, whereas the inner space and the back of the house were the domain of women.<sup>33</sup>

Recruitment of servants took place mainly by word of mouth, either on the recommendation of trustworthy servants or through the intercession of European friends. In Batavia in the 1930s some professional *Bedienden-kantoren* (offices for servants) mediated between employers and servants. The Association for Housewives in the Indies (*Vereeniging voor Huisvrouwen in Indië*), founded in 1931 in the wake of a late professionalisation of female activities in the Indies,<sup>34</sup> did the same. It provided its members with *bediendenpassen* (evaluations, or letters of recommendation, which employers completed after one year of service); it published advertisements and organised contact addresses.<sup>35</sup> For others the indigenous *kabar angin* (rumour, literally: the sound of the wind) did its work: some families found their personnel waiting for them when returning from a European leave. From these data we may deduce that a more or less clearly defined 'professional' identity existed among servants. One was a servant, a *babu*, a *kokki*.

Indigenous domestics were trained on the spot. They learned the work from their *nyonya* or from other servants. The issue of simple basic education in housekeeping skills for *desa* girls emerged as a point of discussion only in the second half of the 1930s. There are no indications that it got off the ground.<sup>36</sup> In the 1930s the Association of Housewives in the Indies organised some short-term courses in cooking (European menu) for Indonesian *kokki* as well as courses in sewing for *babu*.<sup>37</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s some secondary schooling (two years) was available after primary education to prepare girls of all population groups for household activities (the so-called *nijverheidsonderwijs voor meisjes*). A specialised school for home economics for girls was only founded in 1931, but because of its requirements of a high school certificate it was beyond the reach of Indonesian personnel.

Regarding the salaries and fringe benefits servants received we remain in the dark. The Association for Housewives in the Indies produced lists of the





In the Regent's *pendopo*, Magelang. Ceremony to decorate servants with 'medals of loyalty' for their long years of service, ca. 1935 (KITLV, Leiden).

standard wages in the 1930s for their members, but did not publish them. Days off were not common for indigenous personnel; just before the Second World War such days off were officially recommended for European personnel but not for Indonesians.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s some changes took place in the position of servants, due to the *totokisation* of colonial culture. The demand for higher standards for (indigenous) personnel was translated into practical guidelines and inducements such as medals for faithful service and a (very limited) number of courses in domestic work offered by the Association for Housewives in the Indies. The economic crisis of the 1930s, on the one hand, restricted the number of servants in individual households (a way of cutting the budget); on the other hand it pushed new groups into the labour market, amongst others Eurasian girls, trained in *nijverheidsscholen*. These changes, however, were barely reflected in Dutch representations of Indonesian servants in domestic manuals and children's fiction.

## MANUALS AND ADVICE LITERATURE

Dual messages characterise the manuals and instruction booklets for travellers and new-comers.<sup>39</sup> In the first place, prescribed spatial arrangements marked otherness. Servants lived on the grounds in the servants' quarters at the back of the house, where the kitchen, the washroom, and the provision room were situated, in short where the physical functions of colonial superiors were cared for. Servants did not come into the house of their masters except to do their work. The *nyonya* was not expected to come to the servants' quarters either, except in cases of illness or internal conflicts between servants. The liberty and autonomy of the latter required this distance, as one author maintained.<sup>40</sup>

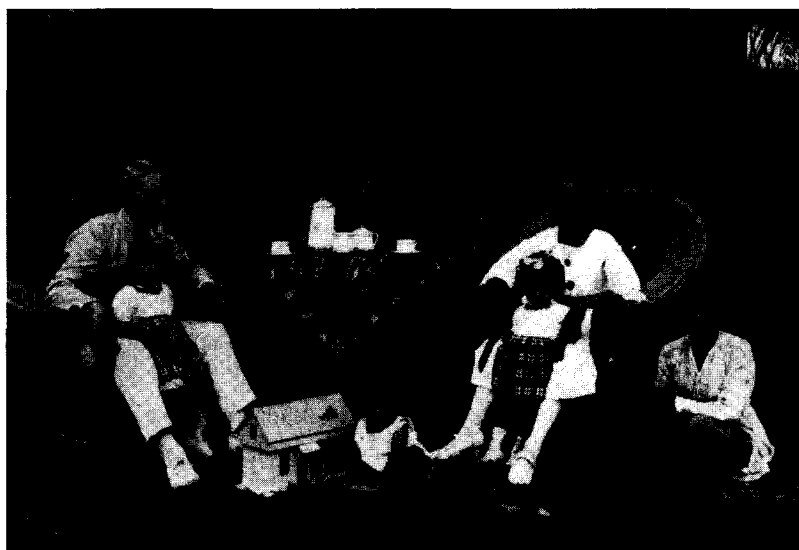
Spatial and social separation was considered necessary not only in terms of physical contact but also as far as other bodily aspects were concerned. According to these manuals, a *cordon sanitaire* should be socially constructed around each home, as well as individually within each home. Children should not be allowed to eat the food servants gave them, instead mothers should feed the children themselves. Modern education required a larger role for mothers, as the moulders of moral and responsible citizens.<sup>41</sup> Children should also be forbidden to have conversations with the Indonesian servants, as this would hamper their language abilities and give them the wrong Dutch accent. Moreover, servants might endanger health and morality. In the 1930s, a medical doctor cautioned mothers against surrendering their children to the care of the *babu*, since her unclean hands might infect small girls with venereal disease. Teenagers should be kept away from the servants' quarters, because there they might learn about sexuality, which was considered improper and precocious by the puritanical twentieth-century Western moral codes.<sup>42</sup>

Strict rules reigned in the field of hygiene. The *babu* should never wash the clothes of her master and mistress together with her own textiles, 'a serious offence against tradition'.<sup>43</sup> If she did so, she could be fired immediately. Nor should she wash those clothes at the well near the servants' quarters; her master's bathroom was the proper place. The two worlds were not to touch one another too intimately, as the same author informs us. Fear of the other was expressed in terms of cleanliness and hygiene. The white body itself was considered beyond the reach of the other race. This message was voiced both explicitly and implicitly.<sup>44</sup> These modern manuals preached lessons, that deviated from earlier practices of race relations within the majority of the (Eurasian) households where the *babu* massaged their *nyonya* and were in close relationships with them. Moreover, this distancing conveyed a clear

message in a paradoxical situation. For it were the servants, who by preparing food and serving it, by washing and cleaning, by looking after the children, and by living near the bathroom, were physically the most proximate of all Indonesians that the colonisers met. Or to quote Ann Stoler: 'Resident native servants were part of the accoutrements of European colonial households but also viewed as the ultimate transgressors of bourgeois civilities in those same homes'.<sup>45</sup> If we take the messages of the manuals seriously, this nearness must have been scarcely bearable according to twentieth-century white opinion.

Stories about servants were indeed highly ambivalent. On the one hand, Indonesian servants were depicted as dirty, lazy, and unreliable; on the other, they were praised for their inner ethos (*innerlijke beschaving*), skills, compliance, and modesty, for being easier to find and easier to get along with than servants in Europe. On the one hand, *babu* were condemned for spoiling European children, since they raised little potentates by fulfilling all the children's wishes: the Javanese custom of not allowing any child crying conflicted in a direct way with European pedagogical notions about the productive role of frustration in 'building' a child's character.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand the *babu* were praised for their loyalty and devotion:

A European family in the Netherlands Indies with their *babu* in *sarong* and *kebaya*, 1922 (KIT, Amsterdam).



*The devotion of a babu towards a child she is caring for is touching. True, one has to keep an eye on her to prevent bad habits; nevertheless I think that the devotion of the babu is infinitely greater than that of a Dutch nursemaid. She attaches herself wholeheartedly to your child and keeps this attachment her entire life.<sup>47</sup>*

Virtually all authors underlined the difference in habits (*adat*), in language, and in emotions between colonial employers and indigenous servants. However, they did so in diverse ways and tones. Servants might be vilified or their actions might be described in more understanding terms. For instance, their differing opinions regarding personal property were condemned outright or 'explained', by calling theft a sport, i.e., taking what was left behind.<sup>48</sup> Their habit of asking for a *perskot* (an advance, in Dutch: *voorschot*) was smiled upon or indignantly rejected.

The Eurasian J. Kloppenburgh-Versteegh, one of the most important spokeswomen on the subject, held her Indonesian servants in very low esteem indeed. Of all the authors, she demonstrated racism in the most explicit way: 'in everything you will see that Javanese servants are not European personnel but only machines'.<sup>49</sup> Repeatedly, she typified them as filthy, lazy, and unreliable. But she also ended her book with the – then common – 'ethical' rhetoric of the family: 'Our servants are like big children. Let us try to understand their situation and feel compassion for them, this will urge us to improve their lot, to uplift them'.<sup>50</sup> European (both *totok* and Indies) women should educate their servants, teach them hygiene, and improve their standard of life. This metaphor of the child, one of the most common for servants, implied a motherly attitude on the part of the mistress.<sup>51</sup>

These images of the other, of servants, mirrored images of self. European women themselves should be clean and active. They should control their servants, teach them hygiene, and be very careful when receiving them into their household. Order and regularity should reign supreme in the home. 'We Europeans are obliged to set the example in everything, even if it gives us trouble and displeasure'.<sup>52</sup> One of the means of doing so was to learn about native habits, another was to learn Malay, the *lingua franca* of the Indonesian Archipelago as soon as possible – this would enhance European prestige among the servants. We do not know whether this result was reached. The language booklets are filled with commanding and critical remarks, and teach how to order servants around in stiff, short sentences.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, women were taught to react in a wise and restrained manner. Only then would they be able to control and supervise their servants.<sup>54</sup>

Behaviour toward the servants should be calm, self-possessed, never angry, but always resolute and superior.

*In all behaviour, in word and deed, one should remain the calm superior, the loftier person, to whom the servants will look up. [...] A hot temper is always harmful, especially to the mistress, who by her excitement does not manage to control her sentences.*<sup>55</sup>

Or as Kloppenburg-Versteegh put it:

*Remember not to speak to the servants when in anger: in the first place you will not impress them; in the second place you will upset yourself, while the servant might ridicule your words [...].*<sup>56</sup>

One should not express 'complaints' in the form of harsh scolding: 'natives hate rows and abusive language'.<sup>57</sup>

This 'emotionology' (ideologically-permitted emotions) coincided with Javanese ideals about *halus* (restrained) behaviour. But first and foremost, it reflected the cultural ideals of the colonial upper class of that period, which exacted the same attitude from women toward their husbands and children. European education should be geared to self-discipline and self-control; mothers had to function as role models. For white women, anger was the least appropriate of all emotions, as it would also lower white prestige.<sup>58</sup>

And to maintain and bolster white prestige was one of the most important tasks of colonial women. It was after all one of the main reasons to have servants. As a male writer concluded: 'In the first place, a decent European [man/woman] does not perform manual labour or housework because of his prestige, and in the second place it is far too hot to do so'.<sup>59</sup> Prestige was the reason behind proper and restrained behaviour and behind learning the servant's language and being informed about his or her culture. Like men in the outside world, women should maintain white prestige within the domestic sphere.

Of course there may have been (and were) Dutch and Eurasian women in the Indies who wanted to know more about the society and people among whom they were living, and who thus trespassed and crossed the social borders of colonial culture. But this was not the primary message of the Colonial School for Girls and Women in The Hague, founded in 1920. The school's program was informed by the same ambivalent attitudes of 'Orientalism' and 'familisation.' Succeeding earlier short courses on hygiene for women going abroad, the

school was firmly rooted in a pragmatic approach: the growing need for hygiene as well as the professionalisation of the domestic scene. Both 'movements' were exported to the tropics. Between 1921 and 1938 approximately 1,000 women followed the three-month courses in tropical hygiene, tropical medicine, food, ethnology, and Malay, offered by the school.<sup>60</sup>

Behaviour toward servants formed part of the lessons in home economics. On the one hand, the school provided its pupils with the negative images of Kloppenburg-Versteegh, whose 1913 book was the main textbook on domestic servants for some years. On the other hand, the school depicted Indonesians, painted so often 'unnecessarily black', as completely different people, but 'not less' than Dutch people.<sup>61</sup> Although servants did not figure prominently in the curriculum, the school's success was attributed to its efforts to increase the knowledge of the language and the habits of the servants among its students. It achieved its goal of preventing unnecessary fear of the strange surroundings, 'of natives, wild beasts and serpents [sic]'.<sup>62</sup> As former pupils reported, servants were 'no absolute strangers', once these pupils arrived in the Indies.<sup>63</sup> The fear of the unknown had evaporated.

*The idea of necessary contact with the silent, dark population of their future country no longer contains anything oppressive, since they have learned to understand the language and the religion and know how to respect it.*<sup>64</sup>

But the Colonial School wanted to do more. It wanted to prepare Dutch women for their 'beautiful and educational' task in Indies society, to make them 'pioneers' in medical care, and stepping outside the narrow enclave of their Indies' home. The self-image engendered in these Dutch women was one of active 'mothering'. Mothers in the Indies, especially those outside Java, were held responsible not only for their own family, but for lots of families, including those of their domestics, first and foremost in cases of illness. The school wanted to teach women 'how they could be a helpmate and an adviser to them [their domestics] and the natives in general in their surroundings'.<sup>65</sup> The school should raise, as a firm believer of 'ethical' ideas postulated,

*a woman's consciousness of her future, her task, her calling, when she possesses the means to find the way to the soul of the people she is going to live with [...] when she feels that she also has a national task, i.e., to create bonds of appreciation and devotion between the people of the Netherlands and the people of Insulinde (the Indonesian Archipelago).*<sup>66</sup>

#### EUROPEAN AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS JAPANESE SERVANTS

Next to their tasks of educating responsible citizens and maintaining colonial prestige within their households, it was this larger framework of social mothering that incorporated white women into the realm of colonial domination. It enlisted them in the Ethical colonial project and diminished the boundaries between the home and (colonial/Indonesian) society at large. To European women servants were the primary representatives of this society. The Colonial School's official ideology suggested that the task of white women was broader and nobler than being enclosed in the house. It might even convert the housewife's role into an attractive occupation, providing her with an honourable social purpose to live for. In this discourse we find again a familial rhetoric, in

*Kokki* in her kitchen, no year (KITLV, Leiden).



close but not unequivocal harmony with the otherness and Orientalisation of domestic servants. This female discourse was completely in tune with the male-dominated political discourse of those years.

Race, class, and gender, 'the axes along which inequalities of power between men and women [and between coloniser and colonised] are organised and maintained',<sup>67</sup> each played their own (hidden) role in this discourse. Domestic servants were to a large extent desexualised. Little difference was made between male and female domestics. Servants were treated as a non-gendered group, in which only the *babu* might be granted a special place, since she, through her tasks and her (appreciated) devotion to the children, came closest to the family. Neither were class differences between employer-employee taken into account; only incidentally does one find any remark on that subject.<sup>68</sup> The third marker of difference, race/otherness, figured most prominently in the discourse, voiced in terms of differences in culture and education.

In sum, we find dual messages in the European female manuals on domestics in the Indies: distance and nearness; unreliability and loyalty; Orientalisation and familial rhetoric, reflecting the colonial discourse on Indonesians as part of the family of man to be educated or as the totally different.

This twofold discourse on servants betrayed the deeply ambivalent attitude of white Dutch women and men toward their Indonesian surroundings in general, and toward their Indonesian servants of a different race and culture in particular. Servants, male and female, were kept at a distance psychologically and ideologically, in glaring contrast to their daily proximity. It was this nearness, unavoidable and undeniable, as well as the experience of being dependent on Indonesian servants that stimulated the ideology (and practice) of distance. Of all Indonesians, the servants came closest to Europeans. Mistress and servants were tied together in an ambivalent relationship; their lives were interwoven in a most intimate manner.<sup>69</sup> This intimacy was one face of the Janus head of the employer-servant relationship, which opposed the second face, that of power, prestige, and superiority.

It is interesting to note that the literature about Indonesian servants, published in the Netherlands during the Second World War, tended to stress the rhetoric of the family more strongly than ever before. In this period of national Dutch trauma and of a despised Nazi ideology, ex-colonialists apparently idealised the colonial relationship, glorifying a national colonial past as well as the harmonious cohabitation of different races, inside and outside the home.<sup>70</sup>

In practice, being a white or Eurasian housewife in the Indies was to reign over the known (a house) and the unknown (servants). It meant arriving with Western ideas of superiority and power, of hygiene and education, and having



to adapt oneself to tropical circumstances and Indonesian habits, which both were unknown and frightening. This created the psychological tensions and the paradoxical attitudes of colonial employers, that Indonesian/Javanese servants had to endure.

#### CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

How were these dual messages translated into children's literature, if at all? What visions of the other did Dutch children in the Indies absorb? Whether or not literature may serve as a trustworthy source of information about the past is the subject of a lively debate among historians and social scientists. Without entering into a detailed discussion of these matters, we can say that children's literature offers a useful source for the study of attitudes and mentalities of grown-ups. Children's literature, especially Dutch literature from the period between the two World Wars, was highly prescriptive, representing the ideas of and ideals about (colonial) society, which the European middle-class considered valuable enough to pass on to the younger generation. This literature represented more how things should be, than how they were, more the 'Sollen' than the 'Sein'.<sup>71</sup> Hence, children's literature can be used as an entry to adolescents' comprehensions of the nature of colonial society and its inhabitants. Like domestic manuals it can be studied for Dutch colonial norms and values concerning servants.

The valuable bibliography on this topic, edited by Dorothée Buur, allows us to put this source in its proper context.<sup>72</sup> The 'Indies' children's fiction (i.e., Dutch books set either in the Indies or in the Netherlands but referring to experiences and characters from the Indies) was thoroughly colonial. The genre was dominated by the Netherlands as far as themes, characters, and economic context were concerned. Because of the restricted demand in the Indies, very few books indeed (only 4 percent of the books mentioned in Buur) were edited there; editors in the Netherlands dominated the Indies market.<sup>73</sup> Writers were mainly Dutch *totok*, born in the Netherlands; no books for children, written in Dutch by Indonesians, were published in that period.<sup>74</sup> In the 1930s, books for Indonesian children in Malay or Javanese were virtually non-existent, except for the editions of the government service, the Commission for Popular Reading Material (*Commissie voor de Volkslectuur* or *Balai Pustaka*), which published *wayang* stories, Indonesian legends, and translations of European fairy tales and children's classics.<sup>75</sup>

The subject matter and themes of this literary genre were colonial as well. Dutch colonial history (the period of the Dutch East India Company, the

Aceh war) figured prominently; contemporary politics (nationalism) were rarely included. Indonesian culture was included primarily in books about Indonesian legends and fairy tales; Indonesian children as central characters figured mainly in tales by missionaries and progressives.<sup>76</sup> In books for girls, the central character was reserved for Dutch girls in the Indies or for Dutch girls from the Indies returning to or living in the Netherlands. Eurasian girls also appeared, but to a lesser extent. Here I will be dealing with books for girls, set in the Indies in the decades between 1910 and 1940, which were written mainly by *totok* women, because these focus on family life, and thus bring domestic servants into our range of vision.<sup>77</sup>

This literature for girls followed the general pattern of Dutch children's fiction of the period. The books were more ethical than aesthetic and conformed to the rigid moral codes of the first half of the twentieth century. As a colonial government report stated in 1920:

*If the effect is an awakening, reinforcing and comforting one, if the book has touched your conscience, if it has reconciled you to your work, your duties, your surroundings, to nature, to people [...] then you have read a good book. [...] A good book [...] arouses loving thought and noble deed; a bad book, [...] depresses one to doubt.*<sup>78</sup>

Girls' books were ethical and 'good' in that sense. They described reconciliation to difficulties as the resolution of all problems, either of a personal character (the hot-tempered girl developing into a mature woman, preferably a housewife) or of the family. The plot often presented a stereotyped narrative: the death of a mother, or incidentally another family member, as a crucial moment offering the possibility for change, adaptation, and – what we now call – 'personal growth'. Presumably, death provided the story with emotional depth; it offered the heroine appropriate grief, and she could then exemplify the possibility of overcoming misfortune by reconciling herself to the situation.<sup>79</sup>

As might be expected from literature of the period between the two World Wars, these books represent highly traditional gender roles and gender relations.<sup>80</sup> The (white) mother is depicted as the emotional centre of the family, always at home. Camaraderie and friendship characterise the relations between the parents. Girls have good relationships with them and treat their parents with respect or even friendship. Although some female protagonists yearn for a career, novels often end with 'the most beautiful role for a woman, that of a wife and mother'.<sup>81</sup>

Race relations are ambivalent. Most books centre on *totok* families. Open discrimination is frowned upon, but Indonesians are rarely its victims; in general it concerns the painful experiences of Eurasian children, scorned by whites. The view of Indonesian society is extremely limited. Java is present in lyrical descriptions of a beloved nature or of glorious holidays in the mountains. Race relations are restricted to relations with servants or with Javanese mothers. The Javanese mother, silent and withdrawn, is depicted as full of admiration for her mixed-blood children; her children treat her with (some) respect but they know they have to follow the white family when the white father dies. In *Dona Alve*<sup>82</sup> the seventeen-year-old Eurasian girl of the same name is not allowed to stay with her mother and moves in with her rich uncle in Batavia (now Jakarta). Here her all-white aunt has problems accepting her, although her younger white cousin grows very fond of her. A car accident (she is hit by her older cousin's car) changes her life; her aunt regrets her former prejudices. She and her husband allow Dona to become a singer in Europe. In the end, however, Dona leaves a promising career and returns to East Java, her maternal home, to become the wife of her childhood friend on the coffee plantation. In another novel, *Sinjo-Juul*,<sup>83</sup> a young Eurasian boy of that name is fetched by his Eurasian aunt – after the death of his father – to live in the city; he has to leave his Javanese mother who later comes to him. However, his mother has to remain in the servants' quarters of the house. Her in-laws do not allow her inside. Sinjo Juul in the end manages to find his identity and to accept his mixed roots. As an adult engineer, he returns to the Indies and vows that his mother will never live in the servants' quarters again.

#### SERVANTS IN YOUTH LITERATURE

The representation of servants in this literary genre occurs within the context of the traditional, Europe-oriented family. Small wonder, then, that the rhetoric of the family prevails. In one of the most popular books, *De Canneheuveltjes* [The Canneheuvel Family], written by Marie Ovink-Soer (wife of a former civil servant and one of the older Dutch women who were close to and inspired Kartini), servants are depicted as natural friends of the children. Baboe Tjidem takes them for walks to her mother in the *desa*, where the youngest child's dreams of becoming a buffalo boy. Servants take part in the games at a birthday party. Having to leave them behind when the family returns to Holland is a painful experience, especially for the youngest, for Baboe Tjidem saved the child's life during an earthquake that killed the children's mother.

Race relationships in this popular book (published in 1912 and reprinted four times in the 1920s and 1930s) are harmonious. There is a fruitful cooperation between the step mother and the *jahit*, who together prepare party costumes for the four children. When two of the children get lost in the mountains during a wonderful holiday, an old Javanese *desa* woman receives and consoles them (in which language they communicate is not clear). The 'evil' characters are usually the Chinese, not the Indonesians. The novel clearly delineates the lines of authority. Succeeding some authoritarian European nurses and an indulgent Eurasian 'aunt', the second (*toto*) mother finally brings order into the house: 'She did not reign but guided and advised, did miracles with a soft, appropriately spoken word, both in her contact with family members and with servants'.<sup>84</sup> Anger again is excluded.

The same mixture of familiarity and authority is repeated in many other books in this genre. The relationship of the Eurasian Dona Alve with the servants is even more natural and close, the *babu* being a kind of aunt.<sup>85</sup> In *Kitty's leed en vreugde* [Kitty's Sorrow and Joy] the Dutch high school student Kitty deplores the departure of the Ambonese girl/housekeeper Nel who had so quickly become an integral member of the family. Children from the Dutch family in *Tussen sawah's en bergen* [Between Sawahs and Mountains] are friendly with their servants, whom they found waiting for them in Bandung

Domestic servants in the garden with their utensils: *kokki*, *jongos*, *jahit*, and *kebon*, West Java, 1910 (KIT, Amsterdam).



upon their return from their European leave. These servants organise a *slametan* (a ritual meal) for the new house, at which the father invites the children 'to make this house a good one for everybody, including the servants'.<sup>86</sup> The servants help, admire, and care for pet animals along with the children. A motherless and difficult European boy, accepted into the family, offers the moral lesson of the story. This representation of harmonious race relations results in the ideal of one of the children (after a holiday at a tea plantation in the mountains) becoming a planter himself. The message is clear: the harmonious Indies are the home land for a new generation of Europeans.

But there are other messages as well. In *Een moeilijk jaar voor de Van Heerden* [A Difficult Year for the Van Heerden Family] the widowed father admits that Holland has remained a source of his yearning: 'Despite all those years in the Indies I have always had the strong feeling that we do not belong here.'<sup>87</sup> In this novel we find more distance and superiority toward the servants. These servants may 'love Nonna Elly, but native servants are just like small children: one has to keep a tight rein on them.'<sup>88</sup> As prescribed in the manuals, but without specific reference to them, the oldest girl, who assumes the deceased mother's place, washes and feeds the twin babies herself.

The adult accusation against *babu*, that they spoil and over-indulge Dutch children, resonates throughout much of the young people's literature, but only vaguely in the books under review here. Their loyalty prevails. In *Aan den Oedjoeng* [At the Seashore], a fourteen-year-old girl has recently lost her mother; she remains alone with her father and a much beloved, affectionate, and faithful *babu*, who helps her.<sup>89</sup> Admiration for servants' loyalty is expressed most clearly in the (Christian-inspired) story, *Wongso's offer* [Wongso's Sacrifice].<sup>90</sup> This *jongos* leaves the European family without permission and uses his savings to fetch Chinese medicine in Singapore for the European girl Nonnie, who has been paralysed by a snake bite. He takes a plane (aviation is a recurring, literary theme in this genre in the 1930s, recalling the great aviation endeavours of the time), but after his return he is fired for desertion. When, by chance, his story is revealed, Nonnie's father restores him to his position. His Chinese medicine did not really help, Western pharmaceuticals are represented as clearly superior. But the girl recovers and old Wongso gets a pension (and a Bible). In this book, the tone is not one of familiarity; the father admits he does not know 'how to handle natives', especially when Wongso has asked permission to leave (using the popular excuse that a member of his family has died). But a profound respect for the servant's selfless sacrifice offers this book its moral message; the father asks to be forgiven for his hot-tempered and premature reaction.



„Ik ben toch hier geboren. Ik houd van de bergen en van de mensen hier!”

‘I am born here. I love the mountains and the people here.’

Illustration from *Ams houdt van Indië* (1941).

A last book, *Ams houdt van Indië* [Ams Loves the Indies], published in 1941, seems to summarise many of the themes of manuals and youth literature, mentioned above. This book is highly informative about *totok* family life in Semarang and very Dutch in its focus on the cosiness and intimacy (*gezelligheid*) of the family.<sup>91</sup> The fifteen-year-old high-school student Ams, the oldest of four children, was born in the Indies. Her father is a businessman. Servants are integral characters in the narrative. A natural and relaxed contact seems, at first glance, the primary message of this book.

But all the afore mentioned images of servants resurface. Should the youngest learn Malay from the servants? Is she not spoiled by the *babu*? In a long dialogue between Ams and her mother (a mother who in this book actu-

ally survives), the latter explains that as a *toto* she had been afraid that this might happen. For that reason she had decided not to have a *babu* when Ams was born. In passing, the mother confesses her earlier racism: 'Also, I still had such an antipathy towards the Natives and the idea that one would touch your dear pink skin with its brown hands made me rebellious. What nonsense, Ams!'<sup>92</sup> Then she continues with her story. After a year, when she was expecting her second child, she became ill and had to seek assistance. Two loyal servants, who have remained with them, entered the house and put the household in order. 'And ever since, Baboe and I have worked together.' Gratitude to the servants is expressed as part of the dialogue between mother and daughter; and in the end the mother advises Ams: 'You should not exaggerate the bad influence of Baboe Roes. You will see, it will turn out for the better later'.

Relations with servants seem to be harmonious. However, if we look at the story with Toni Morrison's eyes, we see other 'black perspectives'.<sup>93</sup> Turning points in the plot revolve around the mistakes made by servants or other Indonesians. Because the driver has not put the car's hand brake on, while the toddler and Baboe Roes are playing in it, the car inadvertently starts moving. Had it not been for the resolute reaction of the second son who leaps up on the car's running board and manages to grab the steering wheel, they would have crashed. When the mother is ill, the servants grow unruly. The *kebon* tries to break into the house, but Ams, warned by Baboe Roes, prevents the burglary. The servants are the ones who make the mistakes; heroism is a European attribute and is ascribed to Ams and her brother.

'Orientalism' is not absent either. At various difficult moments the father confesses: 'they are such different people from us' or 'They really are difficult people, those Natives' (when the driver, being ashamed of the near accident, asks permission to leave).<sup>94</sup> Paternalism is also very evident. Father provides the servants with their salaries, their *perskot* (advance); he teaches them how to save money. Both attitudes of 'Orientalism' and paternalism are expressed at moments when Javanese behaviour – its withdrawal and silences – contrasts most strongly with Dutch directness and openness (or bluntness) and is misunderstood. The Javanese *slametan* (religious meal) offered for the happy ending of the car incident, however, is gladly attended by the family members.

Paternalism in a more hidden form can be discerned at the end of the story. When Ams and her brother Wim take a walk in the mountains during a long holiday, they find and rescue a Javanese boy who has fallen in the woods. They discover that he is Soedarso, one of Ams's classmates. Soedarso realises that he owes his life to her. Ams's mother confesses after having met his uncle, a

*wedono* (Javanese civil servant): 'it is for the first time since I have been in the Indies [fifteen years or more!] that I meet such a Javanese. Except for our servants we have no contact with Javanese families'.<sup>95</sup>

If we read the story as a metaphor, the messages become clear: brown is where the danger lurks, whether in a runaway car or in a thieving servant; white educates and even saves lives, for which brown will be grateful. The political ideal of association of coloniser and colonised – or the harmonious coexistence on a more or less equal level – is the final imagery of this novel. Together the children – Ams, Wim, and the now-recovered Soedarso – go for their last holiday walk. The following conversation develops:

*'We have a very nice country indeed,' Ams said with satisfaction.*

*'But this is not your country.' Soedarso said calmly.*

*'This is not my country?' Ams said with indignation.*

*'Holland is your country,' and Soedarso looked at Ams, a little shy about the effect of his words.*

*'Holland,' said Ams, 'Holland is the country of Mother and Father; they belong there. But not me, I belong here.' In her excitement Ams got up and stretched out her arms. 'I belong here,' she repeated. 'I was born here. I love these mountains and the people here!' Soedarso looked at Ams as she stood on the mountain top and he felt a deep sympathy for this blond girl from a different race who had accepted him so simply as a comrade and now also made his country her own.<sup>96</sup>*

These words occur near the end of the story. They reflect the strong connection Indies-born children may have felt toward their country of birth, from which they – like Dutch adults – could not distance themselves. The quote itself is thoroughly colonial. The idea of cultural or political association is expressed by appropriating the Javanese mountains and therefore the Indonesian Archipelago, without asking the original inhabitants (Soedarso) for their opinion. Even stronger: the Dutch author inscribes into the Javanese boy a tacit agreement with her gesture and a love for the white girl who has saved his life. Or as Soedarso 'softly' says: 'I did not know [...] you considered it that way'. The rhetoric of the family implies an ownership of land and people, and a disregard for the opinions of Indonesians.

If we compare the views on servants in this children's novels with those in the manuals, a few differences and many similarities come to the fore. Youth literature stresses harmony and family; its messages of difference are more



implicit. Class differences are not elaborated; they remain hidden under the ideology of the family in which everybody has his own (hierarchical) place. Differences in gender are not acknowledged. Female servants sometimes play a more prominent role than male ones, being closer to (or in) the house and to the family. But servants' dedication toward the children may be found in both male and female servants – in Wongso and in Baboe Roes. Racism is rarely explicit, at most it is described as an emotion of the past. However, all differences, especially those of class and race, are subtly present when we take these stories not only in a literal sense but also as metaphors. In that sense, as metaphors for the relations between employer and indigenous servant, they are exemplary for the colonial relationship itself, in which the Dutch supposedly educated and lifted the indigenous population to a higher level, while Indonesians were seldom addressed directly.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The colonial imagination regarding servants in the pre-war Indies consisted of two 'ingredients': 'Orientalism' or otherness as well as nearness or 'familisation'. It reflected the male political discourse of the period, which incorporated both elements. Although colonialism, as an adventurous European enterprise and as a practice of institutional dominance, may have been primarily a man's affair, European women were not divorced from it. The ideology of the colonial state as the family of men was derived from the home situation and was expressed in metaphors relating to the household which included women. Explicitly, European women occupied their place in the colonial order in different ways: as the modern caretakers and educators of their children to become responsible citizens of the colonial state as well as guardians of white prestige within the household among Javanese servants, and as colonial parents in charge of training, educating, and supervising these servants as their special pupils. Servants can be considered the metaphor for the colonial relationship, being both included in and excluded from the colonial family. Since the family at that moment in history was hierarchically structured, the ideology of the family gave colonial masters, whether male or female, a superior position and the right to rule, both inside and outside the home.

Were colonial women in the Indies more racist than men? It seems doubtful. The discourse on servants clearly contained racist overtones in language and thinking. European women enacted ambivalent attitudes and formulated dual messages in the private sphere, culturally reserved for them at that period in history. Men, however, employed the same rhetoric in theirs, the political

and industrial arena. Both 'Orientalism' and 'familisation' were expressed, for instance, during the debate about the regulation of women's night labour in the all-male People's Council in 1925.<sup>97</sup> Was female racism perhaps more painful because it was felt at home, in the informal setting of the family, where personal feelings were closer to the surface and abstract political structures could not conceal inhumanity? Even there, racism was not a female prerogative. In many novels it was the father who expressed the 'otherness' of the servants (for instance in *Wongso's offer* and *Ams houdt van Indië*).

Otherness and 'familisation' seem to be paradoxical opposites. Difference and nearness created complicated and paradoxical models of relationship. Manuals warned housewives of the first, literature educated girls about the second experience. But both genres of literature embodied elements of the opposite attitude. 'Orientalism' and 'familisation' may even have been indissolubly related to each other, woven into a yin and yang entanglement. On the one hand, the nearness of indispensable servants and the average European family's dependence on them caused a psychological reaction of distancing, in terms of spatial design as well as symbolic categorisation. On the other hand, this distancing could not go too far, for otherness would lead to a frightening unknown. Hence, otherness could only be mastered by making it, both literally and figuratively, familiar. And what was and is more familiar than the family? 'Familisation', in turn, could not be endured without some simultaneous distancing. Dutch colonials, it seemed, were caught in this vicious cycle. Female rhetoric about servants illustrated the paradox of the Dutch colonial mentality, which in the twentieth century moved between the opposites of domination grounded in social distance and development policies that incorporated Indonesians into a family model. 'Orientalism' and familial ideology belonged to each other as opposite sides of the same colonial coin.

Of the two attitudes, the rhetoric of the family might seem the more progressive; it had, however, its own faults. It masked many differences, especially those of race, class, and gender, the axes along which inequalities of power are usually structured (see above). It reduced servants to the status of children, who had to behave well and do what they were told, i.e., to be 'clean, honest, compliant, and capable'.<sup>98</sup> This rhetoric had its own hierarchy and might be used in a progressive as well as in a conservative sense.

It is the concealing and obscuring character of this rhetoric, which made (and still makes) it politically useless, or even dangerous, for 'subaltern' groups who want(ed) to delineate their political (op)position. This criticism of familial ideology is not new. It has been expressed again in recent years with regard to Asian countries, such as the modern Indonesian state, and the modern indus-

EUROPEAN AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS JAPANESE SERVANTS

trial organisations in Japan.<sup>99</sup> In the case of modern Indonesia, we may conclude that – even if the Suharto political rhetoric of the family did not have its roots in colonial ‘familisation’ – it was strongly reinforced by the language and ideology of Western colonialism.

Dutch boy with *babu* and male servant (the driver?), ca. 1910  
(KIT, Amsterdam).



## Notes

- 1 Since the Vassar historian Lucy Maynard Salmon published the first study on domestic service in the United States in 1890, the history of American and European domestic service has become a well-documented field of historical analysis. See for instance, Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women. Household Service in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution. The Modernisation of the Household Service in England and France 1820-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); Uta Ottmüller, *Die Dienstbotenfrage. Zur Sozialgeschichte der doppelten Ausnutzung von Dienstmädchen im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Münster: Verlag Frauenpolitik, 1978), and bibliographies. For the Netherlands: Barbara Henkes and Hanneke Oosterhof, *Kaatje ben je boven? Leven en werken van Nederlandse dienstbodes 1900-1940* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1985); Barbara Henkes, *Heimat in Holland. Duitse dienstmeisjes 1920-1950* (Amsterdam: Babylon-De Geus, 1995); Jannie Poelstra, *Luiden van een andere beweging. Huishoudelijke arbeid in Nederland 1840-1920* (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 1996).
- 2 E. Said, *Orientalism* (3rd imprint, London and Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987).
- 3 Ann Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures,' *American Ethnologist* 16 (1989):26-51. This article also appeared in J. Breman, ed., *Imperial Monkey Business. Racial Supremacy in Social Darwinist Theory and Colonial Practice* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1990) 35-70. I refer to this edition.
- 4 See K. Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj. Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics 1793-1905* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980); Rudy Kousbroek, 'De Mem in de koloniale samenleving', in: Josine Blok et al. eds., *Deugd en ondeugd. Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis* 13, (Amsterdam: IISC, 1993) 149-162; on counter-arguments, see Mieke Aerts, 'Gemengde gevoelens bij gemengde berichten uit de Oost', in: *Ibid.*, 163-174; Margaret Strobel, 'Gender and Race in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Empire', in: R. Bridenthal, C. Koonz, and S. Stuard eds., *Becoming Visible. Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 375-398; Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable'; Claudia Knapman, *White Women in Fiji 1835-1930. The Ruins of Empire?* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire. European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke and London: MacMillan Press, 1987); L.E. Clerkx and W.F. Wertheim, *Living in Deli. Its Society as Imaged in Colonial Fiction* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1991).
- 5 I did not turn to adult fiction, memoirs, or autobiographical writings here. For the *nyai*, see amongst others Tessel Pollmann, 'Bruidstraantjes. De koloniale roman, de *njai* en de apartheid', in: Tessel Pollmann, *Bruidstraantjes en andere Indische geschiedenissen* (The Hague: Sdu, 1997) 9-31, Nicole Lucas 'Trouwverbod, inlandse huishoudsters en Europese vrouwen. Het concubinaat in de planterswereld aan Sumatra's Oostkust,' in: Jetske Reijs et al. ed., *Vrouwen in de Nederlandse koloniën. Zevende jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis 1986* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1986) 78-97; Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, 'The Nyai in Colo-

- nial Deli: A Case of Supposed Mediation', in: Sita van Bemmelen et al. eds., *Women and Mediation in Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1992) 265-280.
- 6 James R. Rush, 'Journeys to Java: Western Fiction about Indonesia 1600-1980', in: R.W. Winks and J. R. Rush eds., *Asia in Western Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991) 156.
  - 7 *Volkstelling 1930. VI. Europeanen in Nederlandsch-Indië (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1933)*, 68.
  - 8 As the title of a famous atlas ran: *Atlas van Tropisch Nederland* (Batavia: Topografische Dienst, 1938).
  - 9 Although *totok* also alludes to Indonesian Chinese born in China, I use the term here in its European context.
  - 10 See chapter 2.
  - 11 Frances Gouda, 'The Gendered Rhetoric of Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism in Twentieth-Century Indonesia', *Indonesia* 55 (April 1993) 1-22.
  - 12 For different aspects of this rhetoric in Suharto's Indonesia see Madelon Djadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, 'Ibuisism and Priyaization: Path to Power?' in: Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Anke Niehof eds., *Indonesian Women in Focus. Past and Present Notions* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1987/1992) 43-52; Julia Suryakusuma, 'PKK: The Formalization of the Informal Power of Women' (Paper Third International KITLV Workshop 'Women as Mediators in Indonesia', Leiden 1988).
  - 13 H.L. Wesseling, *Indië verloren, rampspoed geboren en andere opstellen over de geschiedenis van de Europese expansie* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1988) 288.
  - 14 This view can already be found in fourteenth-century Florence. See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, 'Women Servants in Florence During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', in: B.A. Hanawalt ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) 56-80. See also Dudden, *Serving Women*, where the development from household member to domestic servant in nineteenth-century America is described. According to nineteenth-century law in Europe, domestic servants had the status of children, 'protected by and subject to the authority of the parent employer'; McBride, *Domestic Revolution*, 15. In the Netherlands in 1906 a servant was not considered a wage earner, but 'a household member', hence not in need of social legislation; Henkes and Oosterhof, *Kaatje*, 59.
  - 15 See, for the many forms of Indonesian servants, the descriptions in the book for girls written by the Javanese Arti Poerbani (pseudonym of A.P. Djajadiningrat), *Widijawati, het Javaansche meisje* (Amsterdam: Keizerskroon, 1948); Minarsih Soedarpo. *Niet louter kleine toegenegenheden. Herinneringen van een Indonesische vrouw 1924-1952* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1999) 33.
  - 16 Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); also Jean Gelman Taylor, 'Women as Mediators in voc Batavia', in: Van Bemmelen, *Women and Mediation*, 249-264.
  - 17 For instance E. Breton de Nijs, *Vergeelde portretten. Uit een Indisch familiealbum* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1973).
  - 18 See the quote of note 95 of this chapter.

- 19 As the young wife of a young civil servant learned from her older colleague. See M. H. Székely-Lulofs, *Onze bedienden in Indië* (Deventer: Van Hoeve, n.d.) 10; B. van Helsdingen-Schoevers, *De Europeesche vrouw in Indië* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1914) 32.
- 20 J. Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Het leven van de Europeesche vrouw in Indië* (Deventer: Dixon, 1913).
- 21 C.J. Rutten-Pekelharing, *Waarom moet ik denken? Wat moet ik doen? Wenken aan het Hollandsche meisje dat als huisvrouw naar Indië gaat* (2nd imprint; Gorkum: Noorduyt, 1927) 46-47.
- 22 Rutten-Pekelharing, *Waarom moet ik denken?*, 44-45. Personal communication of Mrs. L. Blumenthal, June 6, 1993.
- 23 Ems I.H. van Soest, *De Hollandsche vrouw in Indië* (Deventer: Van Hoeve, n.d.) 96. Traces of this attitude can still be found in the memories of the oldest generation from the Indies, living in the Netherlands. Yvonne Keuls, *Mevrouw mijn moeder* (Amsterdam: Ambo, 1999) 14.
- 24 Deduced from *Volkstelling 1930. VIII, Overzicht voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1936) 126-127. In Java and on Sumatra's East Coast, 2 percent or slightly more of the working population was in domestic service. In Bangka it was as high as 2.8 percent. Elsewhere the number was less than one percent.
- 25 McBride, *Domestic Revolution*, 82-99. In Europe the dramatic growth of this institution had gone hand in hand with the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation and had reflected the burgeoning growth of a middle class. New middle-class 'arrivistes' asserted their new status through the employment of domestics, while domestic service offered women the possibility of upward mobility. Domestic service remained the major occupation of women until 1940 in the United States, England, France, and the Netherlands; McBride, *Domestic Revolution*, 111; Henkes and Oosterhof, *Kaatje*, 14.
- 26 *Volkstelling 1930. VIII*, 126-127. Seven hundred servants belonged to the European population group: housekeepers replacing an absent mother, or nurse-maids for children. Just 0.5 percent of the servants were of Chinese descent. Here only the Indonesian group will concern us, since the others figure rarely in the non-statistical sources.
- 27 Deduced from *Volkstelling 1930. III. Uitkomsten voor Oost-Java* (Batavia, Landsdrukkerij, 1934) 94-95. Of the male servants most were married (57 percent).
- 28 *Volkstelling 1930. III*, 94-95.
- 29 Deduced from *Volkstelling 1930. III*, 94-95.
- 30 For the first, see Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven* and D.C.M. Bauduin, *Het Indische leven* (The Hague: Leopold, 1927); on the second, Székely-Lulofs, *Bedienden*, 20. According to the latter the *babu* received a monthly salary of f 25, while the *jongos* and *kebon* received f 9 and f 7.
- 31 Bauduin, *Indische leven*, 67.
- 32 Shelly Errington, 'Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview', in: Jane M. Atkinson and Shelly Errington eds., *Power and Difference. Gender in Island Southeast Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) 1-58, esp. 5; Shelley Errington's remark is useful in this respect: 'In island Southeast Asia, by contrast [to the us], speculations about the reasons of differences between people [...] sel-

- dom put anatomy or physiology at the center.' *Power and Difference*, 57. See also Ward Keeler, 'Speaking of Gender in Java,' in: Atkinson and Errington, *Power and Difference*, 127-153.
- 33 Although researchers on the household in Indonesia accept this as a general pattern, no specific studies on the spatial organisation of the Central Javanese household seem to be available. For Madura, see Anke Niehof, 'Women and Fertility in Madura, Indonesia.' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leiden, 1985), 215-216. On West Java, see R. Wessing, *Cosmology and Social Behavior in a West Javanese Settlement* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Relations, Southeast Asian Program, 1978) 53-63.
- 34 Its establishment was strongly influenced by the crisis and a growing longing for an organisation of women. Housewives, having to cope with fewer servants and less money, had to organise their households more professionally. *De Huisvrouw in Indië* 1, 10 (August 1932) 5. The purpose of the association was to create a platform for housewives and to enhance the status and practice of housekeeping. In its monthly journal, *De Huisvrouw in Indië*, attention was given to such activities as cooking and sewing, gardening, pet animals, children, etc. The association was explicitly open to members of all population groups. A few Indonesian *priyayi* (Javanese elite) ladies took part in it, but the atmosphere of its journal remained thoroughly European as well as apolitical. The association counted more than 10,000 members just before the Second World War, more than the largest European political parties at the time. As the largest women's organisation, it was an important source of information on practical aspects of house-keeping in the Indies.
- 35 On 'Bediendekantoren,' see *De Huisvrouw in Indië* 7, 2 (1938) 72.<sup>36</sup> A.J. Resink-Wilkens, 'Huishoudonderwijs voor het dessa-meisje', in: M.A.E. van Lith-van Schreven and J.H. Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp eds., *Indisch Vrouwenjaarboek 1936* (Jogjakarta: Kolff-Buning, 1936) 61-67.
- 37 *Huisvrouw in Indië* V, 2 (1936) 83; VII, 7 (1938) 643.
- 38 In 1914 four servants, working in one family together earned f 60.- (Van Helsdingen-Schoevers, *Hollandsche vrouw*, 32). Figures were only published in the 1930s. *De Huisvrouw in Deli* 1, 8 (1931). The car driver received the best remuneration. In the 1930s the Association for Housewives in the Indies provided medals in silver and gold for long service. Of these, 500 were distributed between 1936 and 1939, some to servants who had been with one family for more than forty years (*Huisvrouw in Indië* V, 10 (1936) 700; VI, 10 (1937) 593; VII, 10 (1938) 518; VIII, 11 (1939) 618.
- 39 The most widely used is the work of J. Kloppenburgh-Versteegh, *Het leven van de Europeesche vrouw in Indië* (Deventer: Dixon, 1913). Eurasian herself and raised in the Indies, the author was the mother of a dozen children. See also Van Helsdingen-Schoevers (also a Eurasian), *De Europeesche vrouw*; Van Helsdingen-Schoevers, *Indië en Europa. Causeriën en beschouwingen over het leven in Ned. Indië over de vrouw en het kind en hun belangrijke problemen* (Leiden: Leidsche uitgeverij, 1929). Totok women giving information to others after 1920 were Rutten-Pekelharing, *Waarom moet ik denken?*; C. Swaan-Koopman, *Vrouwen in Indië* (Amsterdam, 1932); M. Székely-Lulofs, *Onze bedienden in Indië* (Deventer: Van Hoeve, 1941). A man's voice can be found in D.C.M.

- Bauduin, *Het Indische leven* (The Hague: Leopold, 1927); S. Franke, 'Indonesisch personeel,' in: C.W. Wormser ed., *Zóó leven wij in Indië*, (Deventer: Van Hoeve, 1943) 241-253.
- 40 Székely-Lulofs, *Bedienden*, 22; see also Franke, 'Personeel', 246.
- 41 Stoler, 'Making Empire Respectable', 64; Ann Laura Stoler, 'A Sentimental Education. Native Servants and the Cultivation of European Children in the Netherlands Indies', in: Laurie J. Sears ed., *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 1996) 71-91.
- 42 P. Peverelli, 'De hygiëne van het gezin', in: Van Lith-van Schreven and Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp, *Indisch Vrouwenjaarboek 1936*, 100-104; also *Ibid.*, 149; Székely-Lulofs, *Bedienden*, 55. The puritanical standards of the Indies community can be derived from a book review in *Huisvrouw in Indië*, stating that the drawings of the female parts of the body made the book under review inappropriate for the common room in the home; *Huisvrouw in Indië* V, 2 (1936) 115. See also Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven*, 67; Bauduin, *Indische leven*, 59; Van Soest, *De Hollandsche vrouw*, 28.
- 43 Székely-Lulofs, *Bedienden*, 42.
- 44 Similar rules about hygienic separation of masters and servants reigned in Dutch homes; yet, in the Indies, they were acerbated by racial difference. Ileen Montijn, *Leven op stand, 1890-1940* (Amsterdam: Rap, n.d. [1998]) 109, 227, 235-238.
- 45 Stoler, 'Sentimental Education', 72.
- 46 Kloppenburg-Versteegh again was the most expressive in this respect. *Babu*, according to her had very special means to silence a child and get it to sleep: not only rocking but even opium, 'rubbed on parts of the body decency prohibits being called by name.' (*Leven*, 64-65). For a more balanced opinion, see *Indisch Vrouwenjaarboek*, 44, 230.
- 47 T. Brondgeest Sr., *Nederlanders in Indië* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1919) 39. For a description of the faithfulness of male servants see also G. Jonckbloet, 'Over Inlandsche bedienden,' *Studiën, Tijdschrift voor Godsdiens, Wetenschap en Letteren* (1917) 269-294, and C.J. Jongejans-van Ophuijsen, 'De B.B.-vrouw in de Buitengewesten' in: Van Lith-van Schreven and Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp, *Indisch Vrouwenjaarboek 1936*, 44; Franke, 'Indonesisch personeel', 247.
- 48 Székely-Lulofs, *Onze bedienden*, 35-36.
- 49 Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven*, 54.
- 50 Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven*, 112.
- 51 Rutten-Pekelharing, *Waarom moet ik denken?*, 50-51.
- 52 Rutten-Pekelharing, *Waarom moet ik denken?*, 3-4.
- 53 Sandarella Plak, 'Van sarong en kabaya naar mantelpak. De rol van Europese vrouwen in Indië van 1900 tot 1942' (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of Political, Social and Cultural Sciences, University of Amsterdam, 1993) 37-41.
- 54 See also Van Helsdingen-Schoevers, *De Europeesche vrouw*, 25, and Van Soest, *De Hollandsche vrouw*, 111.
- 55 J.M.J. Catenius-van der Meiden, *Ons huis*, in: Indië (Semarang: Masman and Stroïnk, 1908) 141.
- 56 Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven*, 53. Also Van Helsdingen-Schoevers, *De Europeesche vrouw*, 32.



- 57 Rutten-Pekelharing, *Waarom moet ik denken?*, 50.
- 58 Carol Z. Stearns and Peter N. Stearns eds., *Emotion and Social Change. Towards a New Psychobiology* (New York/London: Holmes and Meier, 1988) 7; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire. Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 1995) 143; Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven*, 90-91, 98 on behaviour towards children. The same conduct is prescribed in children's fiction. Girls should not be choleric or hot-tempered (G.C. van der Horst-van Doorn, *Kitty's lief en leed. Van Indisch meisjesleven* (Gouda: Van Goor, 1923). Practice might be different. In 1936 it was noted that children should speak to servants in a friendly way, and should not scold them 'as one hears so often'; parents should set the example. M.A.E. van Lith-van Schreven, 'Zullen wij onze kinderen naar Holland zenden?', in: Van Lith-van Schreven and Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp, *Indisch Vrouwenjaarboek* 1936, 231.
- 59 Bauduin, *Indische leven*, 65.
- 60 Archive Koloniale School voor Meisjes en Vrouwen [Colonial School for Girls and Women], file 77, 78. Algemeen Rijksarchief (General State Archives), The Hague. 2.20.24
- 61 Brochure 1923, Archive Koloniale School, file 77; Radiorede (radio speech) Ros Vrijman, 27-3-1930, 6, Archive Koloniale School, file 81.
- 62 Radiorede Ros-Vrijman, 19-7-1938, Archive Koloniale School, file 81.
- 63 Brochure 1923; Vierde propagandaboekje 1927, 13. Archive Koloniale School, file 77; Radiorede Ros-Vrijman, 19-7-1938, Archive Koloniale School, file 81.
- 64 Brochure 1923, 12. Archive Koloniale School, file 77.
- 65 Brochure 1923, 10, 12; Derde propagandaboekje 1925, 4, 12. Archive Koloniale School, file 77.
- 66 Brochure 1923, 9. Archive Koloniale School, file 77.
- 67 Joan W. Scott, 'Gender, a Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' *American Historical Review* 91 (1986) 1054.
- 68 A journalist, Melis Stoke, reminded his readers that servants could rarely be identified with the indigenous population in general. Melis Stoke, *Wat men in Indië moet doen en laten* (The Hague: Leopold, 1939) 100. See also Kloppenburg-Versteegh, *Leven*, 6.
- 69 Albert Memmi has stressed the intimacy of this relationship as a reason behind the violence of servants toward their masters. A. Memmi, *Dominated Man. Notes towards a Portrait* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) 178.
- 70 Székely-Lulofs, *Bedienden*, passim; Franke, 'Indonesisch personeel', 252: 'we belong to them and they to us. Together we continue to build our beautiful archipelago [...]. Our heart gropes for that of our brown brother.' Székely-Lulofs, famous for her highly critical Indies novels *Rubber* and *Coolie*, voiced the same ambivalence regarding servants as the other authors did.
- 71 L. Dasberg, *Het kinderboek als opvoeder. Twee eeuwen pedagogische normen en waarden in het historische kinderboek in Nederland* (Assen: Van Gorcum 1981); Bob Dixon, *Catching Them Young. 1. Sex, Race and Class in Children's Fiction; 2. Political Ideas in Children's Fiction*, (London: Pluto Press, 1978) vol. 1 48.

- 72 See Dorothée Buur, *Indische jeugdliteratuur. Geannoteerde bibliografie van jeugdboeken over Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1992). Of her 602 titles from the period 1900-1942 only 26 were published in the Indies, and many of them after the German occupation of the Netherlands in 1940 had cut all ties between the Netherlands and the Indies.
- 73 Dorothée Buur, *Indische jeugdliteratuur*, 21.
- 74 Buur mentions only one book, that of Arti Poerbani, *Widijawati*, written in Dutch and published later, in 1948.
- 75 See J.H. Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp, 'Inheemsche kinderboeken', in: Van Lith-van Schreven and Hooykaas-van Leeuwen Boomkamp, *Indisch Vrouwenjaarboek 1936, 189-194*.
- 76 This Protestant mission played an important role in popularising the Indies in Holland through children's fiction about Indonesian children, living their lives, having their adventures, and being adopted or rescued by the missionary in the end. Of books published from 1900 to 1942, 12 percent present the lives of Indonesian children as a central topic, two-thirds of those being inspired by the mission. Buur, *Jeugdliteratuur*.
- 77 Buur, *Jeugdliteratuur*, 17-20.
- 78 *Een weg tot volksontwikkeling (Openbare bibliotheken en leeszaalen)*. Uitgave van de Commissie voor de Volks-lectuur (Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, n.d. [1920]).
- 79 Deceased parents figure in 16 percent of all youth books in the period 1900-1942, published in Buur, *Jeugdliteratuur*.
- 80 See Dasberg, *Kinderboek*, 182 on the traditional imagery in youth literature before 1940; J.C.H. Blom, 'Een harmonisch gezin en individuele ontplooiing. Enkele beschouwingen over veranderende opvattingen over de vrouw in Nederland sinds de jaren dertig,' *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 108 (1993) 28-50.
- 81 Van der Horst-van Doorn, *Kitty's leed en vreugde*. Also, by the same author *Tineke* (Gouda; van Goor, n.d.).
- 82 M.C. van Zeggelen, *Dona Alve* (Amsterdam: Scheltema and Holkema, 1928).
- 83 S. Franke, *Sinjo-Juul* (Amsterdam: Scheltens and Ciltay, 1939). He is one of the few male authors used here.
- 84 M.C.E. Ovink-Soer, *De Cannebeuveltjes. Een verhaal uit het Indische kinderleven* (Gouda: Van Goor, 1912) 76.
- 85 That this is not typical for all Indo-Europeans is shown by the aunt of Sinjo-Juul.
- 86 C.H. Sevenhuysen-Verhoeff, *Tussen sawah's en bergen* (Amersfoort: Valkhoff, 1936) 38.
- 87 Tine Ophof-Sterk, *Een moeilijk jaar voor de Van Heerdentjes* (Weltevreden/Amersfoort: Visser/Valkhoff, 1921) 198.
- 88 Ophof-Sterk, *Een moeilijk jaar*, 134.
- 89 A. Romein-Verschoor, *Aan den Oedjoeng* (Santpoort: Mees, 1928).
- 90 M. van der Hilst, *Wongso's offer. Een Indisch kinderverhaal* (Hoorn: Edecea, 1937).
- 91 M.J. van Marle-Hubregtse, *Ams houdt van Indië* (Deventer: Van Hoeve, 1941). It even presents a map of a colonial house.
- 92 Van Marle-Hubregtse, *Ams houdt van Indië*, 34.

EUROPEAN AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS JAPANESE SERVANTS

- 93 Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1992). In this study Morrison analyses the concepts of black and white in white American literature from the starting point that the dream is the dreamer. Hence, what it said about the object, tells us something about the subject/writer.
- 94 Van Marle-Hubregtse, *Ams*, 45, 58.
- 95 *Ibidem*, 178.
- 96 *Ibidem*, 196.
- 97 See chapter 2 of this volume.
- 98 These were the qualities regularly requested in the 1930s advertisements for personnel in *Huisvrouw in Indië* 5-2, 2 (1936) 131.
- 99 See Karel van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power. People and Politics in a Stateless Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Laura Cooley, 'Maintaining Rukun for Javanese Households and for the State', in: Van Bemmelen et.al., *Women and Mediation in Indonesia*, 229-248.