

Progressive vs Conservative?: A Study of the Anthropological Images of the Indonesian Population That Arose in Dutch Academic Debates in the Field of Indology During the Interbellum

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Chapter I: Introduction

During the Interbellum, the atmosphere in Europe, as well as in its colonies, had changed. Economic hardship, the recent memory of war, and international unrest had created a grim political atmosphere that characterised the 1920s and 30s in the Netherlands. Its relationship with Indonesia reflected these conditions.¹ Financial shortages limited governmental support for the colony, and the progressive optimism that marked the turn of the century was lost.² At the same, the demands of the local Indonesian population became increasingly radical. In Indonesia, the temporal decrease in contact with the Netherlands during the First World War increased political activity, leading to the establishment of many organisations of different religious, political, cultural, and regional backgrounds.³ In the meantime in the Netherlands, the expanding group of Western-educated Indonesians acquired an increasingly critical tone towards Dutch colonial domination, giving rise to the first Indonesian nationalism that extended beyond regional differences.⁴ In response to the unrest resulting from these developments, the Dutch government in Indonesia took on an increasingly authoritarian tone. Therefore, increased tensions characterised the last phase of Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia.

This development was reflected in the academic world in the Netherlands. In the nineteenth century, the academic field of *Indologie* or ‘Indology’ developed to enhance knowledge about the colonised Indonesian region. Literally translated, the term *Indologie* means ‘knowledge of the East Indies.’ As a science, this was generally understood to cover Indonesian, or more broadly South Asian, history, language, religion, and culture.⁵ Over time, an Indology study program was established as mandatory preparation for all future colonial government officials. This program was intended to enhance their interaction with local populations and systems and would ultimately strengthen Dutch colonial administration in the Indonesian region. After graduation, the so-called *indologen* would have the prospect of becoming civil servants for the colonial government. For many years, Leiden University was the only educational institution that was host to this study program. However, the progressive views on colonial affairs with which this university was associated meant that it faced increasing opposition during the Interbellum.

¹ J.C.H. Blom, “De muitelij op De Zeven Provinciën: reacties en gevolgen in Nederland” (Dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1983): 15.

² Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, “Ethiek in fragmenten: vijf studies over koloniaal denken en doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische archipel, 1877-1942” (Dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1981): 202-3.

³ Herman Jan Langeveld, *Schipper naast God*, vol. 2, Hendrikus Colijn, 1869-1944 (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2004), 68-9.

⁴ Klaas Stutje, “To Maintain an Independent Course. Inter-War Indonesian Nationalism and International Communism on a Dutch-European Stage,” *Dutch Crossing* 39, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 200.

⁵ Jean Kommers and Léon Buskens, “Dutch Colonial Anthropology in Indonesia,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 35, no. 3 (2007): 353.

Conservative groups in the Netherlands and Indonesia increasingly dreaded Leiden's monopoly position as the centre of Indology studies.⁶ The sole dependence of the education of future civil servants on this institution that sympathised with the developments in Indonesia was considered a threat to the future of the Dutch East Indies. These internal tensions resulted in the creation of a new centre of Indology at the University of Utrecht in 1925. Its newly established Faculty of Indology was not government-funded, as Leiden's Indology study program was. Instead, it was funded by private companies with interests in the colony. The financing of this faculty raised concerns about it being based on motives other than science. Soon, the faculty was nicknamed 'the oil faculty' by adversaries because of its association with the *Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij* (BPM), a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell.⁷

As representations of different colonial interests and attitudes, the Indology departments of Leiden University and the University of Utrecht formed different views on Indonesian culture and society. The diverging anthropological images of the Indonesian population these resulted in seem to have formed the basis of the opposition between these two academic institutions. By analysing these underlying anthropological understandings, this thesis reflects on the portrayal of these two centres of Indology as two distinct and opposing perspectives. On the basis of debates on topics such as education, nationalism, and Indonesian autonomy, it intends to question the suggested opposition between their supposed progressive and conservative perspectives. Ultimately, it aims to answer the following research question: What underlying anthropological images of the Indonesian population emerged in Dutch academic debates among progressives and conservatives in the field of Indology during the Interbellum?

While these institutions have received considerable attention from historians over the years, much of their work has based itself on the assumption of a dichotomy between progressive and conservative perspectives. Moreover, secondary literature sources have been the dominant source of information for their conclusions. C. Fasseur's *De Indologen* is one of the most extensive works that gives a clear perspective on the Indology study program and its philosophy. On the basis of archival material, he steps away from presumed conclusions about Leiden and Utrecht and shows the complexity of the history of the Indology study program.⁸ His ultimate conviction about the controversy between the two universities is that, in retrospect, Leiden's progressive ideas on Indonesian nationalism were proven to be much more accurate than those of Utrecht. He praises Cornelis van Vollenhoven in particular for his sensitivity to the developments in Indonesia and the potential he saw in its nationalism.⁹ Another work related to the broader efforts of science to acquire

⁶ Herman Jan Langeveld, *Dit leven van krachtig handelen*, vol. 1, Hendrikus Colijn, 1869-1944 (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 1998), 358.

⁷ O. D. van den Muijzenberg and Herman Feddema, "Was de Utrechtse Indologie-opleiding een petroleum faculteit?," *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 3, no. 4 (February 1, 1977): 466.

⁸ C. Fasseur, *De indologen: ambtenaren voor de Oost 1825-1950* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1993), 14.

⁹ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 417-8.

knowledge of the Indonesian region is Maarten Kuitenbrouwer's *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*. Kuitenbrouwer poses that Fasseur's portrayal of the dispute between the two universities and Leiden as its ultimate winner paints a too optimistic image of Leiden's position in debates on Indonesian nationalism. Instead, he suggests Leiden took an awkward middle position between Dutch conservatism and Indonesian nationalism.¹⁰ Despite their critical approach to the assumptions about these institutions, these conclusions maintain a presupposed distinction between conservatism and progressiveness. This thesis aims to step beyond this dichotomy by looking at the underlying ideas that justified these separate ideologies. This way, it hopes to add more depth to historical debates surrounding this topic. In a broader sense, it aspires to gain insights into the interaction between academic discourse and the justification of colonial intervention.

To achieve this, this thesis analyses works from professors associated with Leiden and Utrecht's departments of Indology. A number of these works are speeches delivered at the universities, of which the majority were introductory speeches of the professors in their newly appointed functions. As such, these sources clearly express the way they positioned themselves within their field. In addition, this analysis builds on works related to questions concerning Indonesia that indicate the stance of both universities and individuals linked to the institutions. Although discussions about Indonesia during the Interbellum went far beyond the Universities of Leiden and Utrecht, these two institutions represented two main opposing academic trends. Therefore, the scope of this thesis forces it to limit itself to these two centres of education. Even though an extensive analysis of the Indonesian perspective in this debate would be a very valuable addition to this, the incorporation of this perspective is beyond the extent of this thesis. As the academic debates that form the topic of this research predominantly took place between Dutch scholars who only indirectly incorporated Indonesian perspectives into their positions, this perspective deserves a separate study in itself.

Throughout this thesis, the terms progressive and conservative are used to refer to the ideological stance of the Indology scholars at Leiden University and the University of Utrecht. These terms function as a reference to the way the different schools identified themselves and were perceived at the time. Apart from that, this thesis aims to distance itself as much as possible from any assumptions about the supposed progressiveness or conservativeness of these attitudes. The heterogeneity of the ideas within these institutions among its different scholars is recognised and used to build on this analysis. The term 'Dutch East Indies' is used to refer to the political unity of the Dutch colony in Indonesia and is applied only when considered befitting the context in which it is used.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. First, Chapter II gives a concise overview of the historical context of this analysis. Second, Chapter III focuses on the supposed progressive stance of Leiden University's centre of Indology. The main focus of this chapter lies on Christiaan Snouck

¹⁰ Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap: het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde in historisch verband 1851-2001* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2001), 124.

Hurgronje and Van Vollenhoven, the most prominent names within the field of Indology. The discussed works of Snouck Hurgronje are his speech *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, held at the 347th anniversary of Leiden University in 1922, and *Colijn over Indië*, which consists of six works published in the newspaper *De Telegraaf* in 1928 as a response to the book *Koloniale vraagstukken van heden en morgen*, written by Hendrik Colijn. The work of Van Vollenhoven that is discussed is *Indië gisteren en heden*, written in 1922 for the *Genootschap voor zedelijke volkspolitiek*, a society representing the progressive *ethische politiek*. In addition, the chapter discusses the introductory speeches of H.T. Colenbrander, professor of colonial history, titled *Nederland's betrekking tot indië in verleden en toekomst* held in 1918 and J.P.B. de Josselin de Jonge, professor in the ethnology of the Dutch East Indies, titled *De Maleische archipel als ethnologisch studieveld* held in 1935. Third, Chapter IV focuses on the ideas underlying the conservative perspective of the University of Utrecht's Faculty of Indology. The emphasis of this chapter lies on M.W.F. Treub and F.C. Gerretson, who played a central role in the establishment of Utrecht's Faculty of Indology. Although Treub was not a professor at this new faculty, he was the initiator of the fund that allowed for its establishment. The book *Onafhankelijk Indologisch Hooger Onderwijs*, in which he justified this establishment, is discussed. Furthermore, this chapter discusses Gerretson's speech *De Historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, held at his appointment as professor of the Faculty of Indology during its opening in 1925. Additionally, the speech held by I.A. Nederburgh at this opening, which introduced him as a professor of colonial law, is incorporated into this chapter. Finally, Chapter V discusses the main conclusions of this thesis.

Chapter II: Historical Background

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the regions of today's Surinam, the Caribbean islands, and Indonesia were part of the Dutch colonial empire. Out of these regions, the latter, at the time referred to as the Dutch East Indies, encompassed the largest and most populous overseas territory of the Dutch.¹¹ As a region about 50 times the size of the Netherlands, it gave the small country a lot of international prestige. As it also was of significant economic importance, it was a valuable possession for the Dutch. This chapter discusses the historical context of the late colonial period of Indonesia before the outbreak of the Second World War, which is essential in understanding the dispute between Leiden and Utrecht's centres of Indology.

A Modern Imperialist State

Despite the significant importance of Indonesia to the Dutch, the Dutch colonial empire remained of relatively little significance on a global scale. At the time, the Dutch generally considered the colonial practices of their state to fall outside of the phenomenon of modern imperialism, which they regarded as belonging to other colonial powers.¹² Today, however, historians agree that the colonial practices of the Dutch from the end of the nineteenth century onwards are in line with global practices of modern imperialism. In "Imperialisme in de Marge?" Jur van Goor argues that the expanding and increasing influence of the Dutch in existing overseas territories in its late colonial period should not be undermined, despite the marginal position of the Dutch empire in the international order of colonial empires.¹³

What was considered to set Dutch colonial intervention apart from that of other imperialist states was its so-called *ethische politiek* or 'ethical policy' that characterised the last phase of colonial presence in Indonesia. Whereas up until the end of the nineteenth century the interests of the Netherlands dominated colonial policy, this new policy argued for the prioritisation of the interests of the colony. Rather than taking advantage of the colonised region, the colonial government was to support local development by taking on a guardian position in the 'colonial bond' between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Its ultimate goal was the political juxtaposition of Indonesia and the Netherlands. At first, the policy was mainly concerned with economic interests but soon expanded to other aspects of society, including education, government, and politics.¹⁴

¹¹ Jennifer L. Foray, "A Unified Empire of Equal Parts: The Dutch Commonwealth Schemes of the 1920s–40s," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 2 (June 2013): 259.

¹² J. van Goor, "Imperialisme in de Marge?" in *Imperialisme in de Marge: De Afronding van Nederlands-Indië*, ed. J. van Goor, HES Studies in Colonial and Non-European History 2 (Utrecht: HES Uitgevers, 1986), 9.

¹³ Goor, "Imperialisme in de Marge?" 14, 17.

¹⁴ Pierre van der Eng, "Ethical Policy," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, 2008),

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195176322.001.0001/acref-9780195176322-e-525>; Locher-Scholten, "Ethiek in fragmenten," 176.

Although this colonial policy presented itself as unique, its underlying moral argumentation was essentially very similar to the argumentation of the white man's burden used elsewhere. After the downfall of the Dutch colonial empire, critical re-evaluations of this policy have shed a light on the problematic notions underlying its supposed humanitarian rationale. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten has pointed out how earlier definitions of the ethical policy ignore one very essential aspect of Dutch colonial policy at the time: the expansion of Dutch power in the Dutch East Indies that happened simultaneously with the implementation of the ethical policy.¹⁵ Ultimately, she argues that the 'ethical' motivations and the expansion of the power of the Dutch state were an expression of the same attitude of mind. To bring this deceptive nature of the term to light, she proposes a redefinition of the ethical policy as:

[A] policy aimed at bringing the entire Indonesian archipelago under Dutch authority and the development of the land and people of this area towards self-government under Dutch leadership according to a Western model.¹⁶

Although this policy did not directly acknowledge Dutch interests, these formed the foundation of the political measures taken. Ultimately, it was the Dutch that benefited most from the implemented changes.¹⁷ Therefore, the policy was not as selfless nor unique as it presented itself.

Science and Colonial Administration

In *Orientalism*, Edward Saïd points to the crucial role the academic field played in the process of modern imperialism.¹⁸ As in other colonial states, knowledge of local languages, systems, and cultures became of increasing interest to the Dutch government as its power over Indonesia expanded. The *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (Royal Institute for Linguistics, Geography and Ethnology) established in 1851 is an example of this development. In cooperation with other educational institutions, it was to acquire knowledge about the overseas territories of the Netherlands to run a better functioning colonial administration. As the Dutch East Indies were considered of the biggest importance by the Dutch, this region acquired the most scholarly attention. Therefore, well up into the twentieth century, anthropological research was almost exclusively concerned with the Indonesian region.¹⁹

As early as 1842, basic knowledge of the Indonesian region became a requirement for those who aspired to a career in colonial administration with the implementation of the compulsory

¹⁵ Locher-Scholten, "Ethiek in fragmenten," 185-6.

¹⁶ "Beleid gericht op het onder reel Nederlands gezag brengen van de gehele Indonesische archipel en op de ontwikkeling van land en volk van dit gebied in de richting van zelfbestuur onder Nederlandse leiding en naar Westers model."

Locher-Scholten, "Ethiek in fragmenten," 200-1.

¹⁷ Locher-Scholten, "Ethiek in fragmenten," 200-1.

¹⁸ Edward W. Saïd, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 5.

¹⁹ Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*, VII.

Indology study program for aspiring colonial government civil servants. At first, this program had a linguistic focus but soon acquired a more scientific orientation. In addition to knowing local languages, being aware of local habits, laws, and systems was considered of increasing importance for adequate colonial administration. While Delft had long been the centre of the education of colonial civil servants, this centre moved to Leiden in 1902. Although the program was associated with Leiden University after its rehousing, it was not a university-level program.²⁰ There were no university exams, and graduates did not obtain an academic title after graduation.²¹ It was not until 1920 that it was determined that the program was to be lifted from the level of secondary education to the level of higher education. This university program was to focus equally on Indonesian languages, ethnology, and economy. Next to language courses, courses on comparative ethnology of the Dutch East Indies, institutions of Islam, and the ‘old’ and ‘new’ history of the Dutch East Indies would be a mandatory part of the program. In 1922, these changes were officially implemented.²²

Leiden’s Ethical School

The Indology section of Leiden University was a collaboration between its faculties of Law and Humanities (*Letteren*). As its most prominent professors had a predominantly ‘ethical’ orientation and supported progressive measures of the colonial government, Leiden was considered an embodiment of the *ethische politiek*. The two most prominent names directly related to Leiden University and its Indology studies were Snouck Hurgronje and Van Vollenhoven. Although Snouck Hurgronje stood at the top of Leiden’s internal hierarchy, Van Vollenhoven soon followed.²³

As an Islamologist, Snouck Hurgronje was internationally known as a prominent Orientalist scholar. After his studies on Islam, he was appointed as an adviser to the Dutch government in Indonesia, allowing him to influence colonial intervention in the region from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.²⁴ Together with other influential scholars and (former) government officials, Snouck Hurgronje fulfilled a leading role in elevating the Indology study program to an academic level and was associated with the program as its professor on Islam.²⁵ Like Snouck Hurgronje, Van Vollenhoven was part of the committee that advised the government on what form the education of civil servants was to take. As a law professor, he was famous for his lectures and works on Indonesian adat law and was an outspoken figure within the ethical movement. For many years, both had an influential role in determining the study program.²⁶

²⁰ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 13.

²¹ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 384.

²² Fasseur, *De indologen*, 390, 400-4.

²³ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 131-2.

²⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, 210.

²⁵ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 131, 384.

²⁶ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 364.

The Rising Popularity of Conservatism

Although the *ethische politiek* was never officially abandoned, it was increasingly considered outdated by many.²⁷ Although those demanding Indonesian emancipation welcomed the ethical policy at first, the demands of the Indonesian population increasingly went beyond what the government was willing to provide. As a result, political organisations started to express a willingness to achieve political autonomy in a non-cooperative way, which resulted in growing political unrest. Although uprisings were easily suppressed, they were considered an unwelcome threat to the colonial relationship that had already proved vulnerable to the political and economic instability of the time.²⁸ Therefore, the increasing call for Indonesian autonomy went hand in hand with growing resistance against Indonesian nationalism.

This development was reflected in what Locher-Scholten labelled the turn to ‘ethical conservatism.’ During the 1920s and 30s, a shift took place in political leadership from figures that embodied the ethical policy to strict conservative figures with authoritative attitudes. While the *ethische politiek* remained the official colonial policy, its emphasis on the promotion of local interest gradually shifted to an emphasis on authoritative Dutch leadership under which this development was to take place.²⁹ Hendrik Colijn was one of the most prominent figures that resembled the loss of the dominant progressive colonial attitudes in this period. At the time, Colijn fulfilled several political functions as minister and chairman of the council of ministers. He was the leading member of the protestant Anti-Revolutionary Party. More than a political leader of a religious political party, however, Colijn was a businessman. He had fulfilled an important position in the management of BPM and stood up for Dutch entrepreneurial interests in Indonesia. For thinkers like Colijn, ending the colonial bond between Indonesia and the Netherlands was not considered an option.³⁰ Therefore, Leiden’s progressive attitude was considered to reinforce the existing threats to Dutch colonial authority. Accordingly, Colijn had supported the initiative of establishing a new centre of Indology studies that could compete with Leiden and had played an advisory role in this process.³¹

Utrecht’s Faculty of Indology

The rising popularity of conservative perspectives eventually led to the establishment of the Faculty of Indology at the University of Utrecht. This new centre of Indology would form a political counterweight to the ethical Leiden as it would base itself on a perspective of a future for Indonesia within the Dutch empire.³² Although there were no legal objections against creating a second Indology study program, it did not acquire any financial support from the government. Therefore, 25 private

²⁷ Locher-Scholten, “Ethiek in fragmenten,” 51,193.

²⁸ Langeveld, *Schipper naast God*, 85-90.

²⁹ Locher-Scholten, “Ethiek in fragmenten,” 202-3.

³⁰ Langeveld, *Schipper naast God*, 88.

³¹ Langeveld, *Dit leven van krachtig handelen*, 358.

³² Locher-Scholten, “Ethiek in fragmenten,” 191-2.

businesses, among them the *Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* (Netherlands Trading Society), *Koloniale Bank* (Colonial Bank), and BPM, would finance Utrecht's Faculty of Indology. This establishment had not been without its difficulties. Concerns arose about the involvement of business in science as it was feared that the university's professors and the future civil servants they educated would be the prisoners of the capitalists that financed them. This led to protests among students and professors from different universities, including the University of Utrecht. However, without much effect.³³

One of the most prominent figures behind the establishment of Utrecht's Indology faculty was Willem Treub, a radical liberal turned conservative, ex-minister of Finance, and former professor at the University of Amsterdam. He was the initiator of the *Ondernemersraad van Nederlands-Indië*, a political body established in The Hague that represented Dutch entrepreneurial interests in the Dutch East Indies and was one of the biggest critics of Leiden and its alleged anti-capitalist and pro-nationalist attitude.³⁴ Treub found support in his critical stance in figures like Colijn, the member of parliament BJ Gerretson, and his son FC Gerretson.³⁵ Once the faculty was established, FC Gerretson, a prominent member of the right-wing opposition to the colonial policy of the Dutch government, would become one of its central names.³⁶ He was considered somewhat of a self-made historian as he never officially finished his sociology studies and obtained his doctorate on the grounds of a dubious dissertation. After being a government official at the Ministry of Finances, he became an executive secretary of BPM in 1917.³⁷ Once he was appointed professor of the old and new history of the Dutch East Indies and comparative colonial history in Utrecht, he would come to directly stand opposed to Leiden's professors in the public debates concerning Indonesia.

³³ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 415-8.

³⁴ Van den Muyzenberg and Herman Feddema, "Was de Utrechtse Indologie-opleiding een petroleum faculteit?" 466-7.

³⁵ Emile Henssen, *Gerretson en Indië* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff: Bouwma's Boekhuis, 1983), 55; Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*, 133-4.

³⁶ Emile Henssen, *Gerretson en Indië*, 1.

³⁷ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 410-3.

Chapter III: The Progressive Perspective of Leiden University

Leiden University's department of Indology was known for its apparent progressive attitude on colonial matters and its close ties to the *ethische politiek*. As highlighted in the previous chapter, however, this policy was not as progressive as it portrayed itself. Although it argued for increasing the independence of Indonesia, it insisted on preserving its colonial ties to the Netherlands. Instead of starting from the notion of Leiden's supposed progressiveness, this chapter analyses the underlying argumentation of the philosophies of the individuals associated with this school of thought. It takes a closer look at the implications of 'progressive' ideology in an attempt to give light to the underlying anthropological perspectives on the Indonesian population expressed by Leiden's professors.

East is East and West is West

The colonial system in the Dutch East Indies strongly based itself on the notion of a separation between East and West. Colonial society legally separated Europeans from Indonesians and other non-Europeans, who were denoted as 'foreign Orientals.'³⁸ However, the definition of Europeanness that formed the basis of this societal hierarchy was obscure. Japanese, Turkish, and Thai nationalities, for example, were considered 'European' enough to access its accompanying advantaged legal category. In "Beyond Race: Constructions of 'Europeanness' in Late-Colonial Legal Practice in the Dutch East Indies," Bart Luttikhuis argues that a complexity of factors such as race, culture, class, education, nationality, and religion formed the basis of European self-understanding.³⁹ An interplay of complex factors and power relationships resulted in an image of the Western European self and Eastern Indonesian other as essentially different. This fundamental division between East and West was reflected in the perspectives of Leiden's professors.

In 1918, Colenbrander introduced himself as a professor of colonial history at Leiden University. In his introductory speech, he discussed the plans for the history courses he would teach, which provide insights into his historical perspective on the relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia. A red line through his speech is his reference to Rudyard Kipling's statement "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet," from *The Ballad of East and West*. Rather than agreeing with this statement, Colenbrander suggested that "never the twain shall meet" be changed into "never the twain shall melt," as East and West did meet over 300 years ago. The two met and would continue meeting each other as their mutual relations expanded and as they continued influencing each other's material and immaterial culture, according to Colenbrander.⁴⁰ Thus he

³⁸ Louis de Jong, *Nederlands-Indië I: eerste helft*, vol. 11a, Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog (Leiden: Nijhoff, 1984), 101; Bart Luttikhuis, "Beyond Race: Constructions of 'Europeanness' in Late-Colonial Legal Practice in the Dutch East Indies," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 20, no. 4 (August 2013): 529.

³⁹ Luttikhuis, "Beyond Race," 547-50.

⁴⁰ H.T. Colenbrander, *Nederland's betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1918), 7.

recognised the growing mutual influence between the East and West. Nevertheless, he presented the two as essentially divided parts of the world.

At the time of his speech, a legal change had removed the term ‘overseas possession’ from political language. This suggested that the Dutch East Indies, Surinam, and Curaçao were equivalent to the Netherlands within the Dutch Empire. Colenbrander considered this a logical step in times of transition but stated that, in reality, this was nothing but a legal construction. According to Colenbrander, “The four are not equals and can never be.”⁴¹ He compared this situation to British India, which was independent in name but would remain dependent on Western knowledge and capital for a long time to come.⁴² While Colenbrander acknowledged the possibility and importance of creating balance in the attunement of the interests of different regions of the Dutch Empire, he questioned the possibility of ever finding intellectual harmony between these essentially divided regions.

Even though Luttikhuis suggests a complexity of factors formed the basis of the distinction between the Western and the non-Western world in colonial society, race remained a topic of recent interest in science at the time. In his speech *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, held in 1922, Snouck Hurgronje analysed the topic of race from an Islamic perspective as he argued that this religion had remained free of major racial conflict.⁴³ The inspiration for this speech seems to have been J.H. Oldham’s analysis of race in ‘Christianity and the Race Problem,’ which he referred to in another work.⁴⁴ At the basis of Snouck Hurgronje’s oration is the question of whether unity would eventually be possible in the dividedness of the world into categories of religion, language, level of civilization, nationality, and race.⁴⁵

Snouck Hurgronje’s speech bears witness to an underlying belief in a fundamental dividedness of the world comparable to that of Colenbrander. He stated that race inevitably characterised people independently of their will. He argued that this fundamental division of humanity into different races provided an inevitable potential for racial conflict. Modern developments of globalisation and population growth would only increase the risk of its outbreak.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, he pointed out how the novelty of sciences concerned with race made it difficult to come to any harsh conclusions on this topic. He argued that because of the many opposing positions taken by scientists, opinions were often largely dependent on one’s personal sympathies. Yet, he argued that the basis of the various positions taken was always a belief in the unity of humanity. Therefore, Snouck Hurgronje emphasised unity rather than difference. He referred to conclusions of American scientists suggesting

⁴¹ “De vier zijn geen gelijken en kunnen het nimmer worden.”

Colenbrander, *Nederland’s betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst*, 22.

⁴² Colenbrander, *Nederland’s betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst*, 22-23.

⁴³ C. Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem* (Leiden: Brill, 1922), 21.

⁴⁴ C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië* (Amsterdam: Becht, 1928), 10-11.

⁴⁵ Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 5-6.

⁴⁶ Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 5.

that psychological differences between individuals within the same racial category were of more significance than the psychological differences between different racial classifications.⁴⁷ To support this conclusion, Snouck Hurgronje pointed to the growing number of Indonesians studying at Dutch universities, the first of whom had successfully acquired his doctorate. This was a reference to Hoesein Djajadiningrat, the first Indonesian student to obtain his doctorate in 1913, who achieved this under the supervision of Snouck Hurgronje himself.⁴⁸ Ultimately, he concluded that there was no ground for discussion about the intellectual potential of this other race.⁴⁹

Although Snouck Hurgronje's perspective at first glance resembled Colenbrander's perspective of a fundamental division in the world, he took a more nuanced stance throughout his analysis. The works of Van Vollenhoven expressed a similar tone. His appreciation of local judicial systems as the best law for the Indonesian region and Indonesians themselves as the best translators of this law suggest a sense of cultural relativism in his ideas. Yet his work on adat law was based on an underlying notion of an essential difference between Eastern and Western law, which seemingly remained a strong expression of an orientalist perspective. Moreover, Indonesians themselves were generally sceptical of the importance Dutch scholars attached to adat law. Once Indonesia gained independence, it averted from traditional law systems in favour of a form of unified Western law.⁵⁰ Thus, while these perspectives began to question the ideas of an essential dividedness between the Western and the non-Western world, they maintained the discourse of which these ideas were a part.

It would take a few more years before the intellectual transition that Van Vollenhoven and Snouck Hurgronje were beginning to show glimpses of would take full effect. De Josselin de Jong is an example of a new generation of scholars that distanced themselves from former assumptions by opposing any strict division of humanity into separated categories.⁵¹ His introductory speech held in 1935 shows an emphasis on the unity of humankind similar to that of Snouck Hurgronje, yet rejects the dividedness of the world into categories of civilization and race:

All attempts to divide humanity into small, sharply defined groups by race or civilization have hitherto failed. It is with civilization as it is with races: there are innumerable ones or many, while really there is only one.⁵²

By referring to the mistakes of race theorists, De Josselin de Jong showed how the field of ethnology gave rise to growing resistance to sharp definitions of characteristics of societies and sought to

⁴⁷ Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 21-2.

⁴⁸ Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*, 136.

⁴⁹ Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 25.

⁵⁰ Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*, 139-40.

⁵¹ Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*, 142.

⁵² "Alle pogingen om de menschheid naar ras of naar beschaving in kleinere, scherp omlijnende groepen in te deelen zijn tot nu toe op niets uitgelopen. Het is met de beschavingen als met de rassen: zij zijn talloos vele of enkele en eigenlijk is er maar één."

J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, *De Maleische Archipel als ethnologisch studieveld* (Leiden: Ginsberg, 1935), 3.

characterise culture rather than race.⁵³ This way, he fits well in the development of the field of cultural anthropology and its related theory of cultural relativism that gained prominence at the time. This field stepped away from all dividing lines in humanity, most importantly race.⁵⁴ Along with this new perspective eventually came the conviction that Western society was not the end of the development of history, allowing the West to start questioning its own superiority and position in the world.⁵⁵ Although this perspective was still seemingly far removed from the outlook of Snouck Hurgronje and Van Vollenhoven, their views expressed the first instability of the old colonial discourse.

The Question of Nationalism

The appreciation and optimism for the potential of the Indonesian population that characterised the ideas of Snouck Hugronje and Van Vollenhoven allowed them to feel empathy for the rising demands of the Indonesian population. While many held communist and other rebellious forces responsible for provoking the masses against authority and creating recent unrest, both professors refuted these accusations. Instead, they blamed those who accused outside forces of causing recent upheavals for not understanding what was truly going on in Indonesian society. From their perspective, unrest could only take hold in regions with pre-existing problems.⁵⁶ This belief allowed them to take a critical approach to the circumstances in the Dutch East Indies and be open to the rising Indonesian sentiments in society.

In six articles published in *De Telegraaf* in 1928, Snouck Hurgronje responded to Colijn's denial of the possibility of Indonesian nationalism as expressed in his *Koloniale vraagstukken van heden en morgen*. Colijn depicted Indonesian nationalism as a superficial phenomenon led by Indonesian elites that had overfed on Western education for which there was no place in their own society.⁵⁷ He condemned the term 'Indonesia' as meaningless by arguing that the Dutch East Indies could only be considered a unity in so far as it was ruled over by the Dutch.⁵⁸ Snouck Hurgronje debunked these claims by stating that a mutual affinity between several local empires in the Indonesian archipelago existed long before the arrival of the Dutch. Current circumstances had only allowed these feelings of unity to increase. Therefore, he condemned the argument that only Dutch colonial presence held the region together invalid. Moreover, he argued that the magnitude of regional differences in Indonesia did not compromise its striving for united independence, as nations in Europe

⁵³ De Josselin de Jong, *De Maleische Archipel als ethnologisch studieveld*, 4-5.

⁵⁴ Charles King, *The Reinvention of Humanity: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Remade Race, Sex and Gender* (Penguin Random House, 2020), 8-9.

⁵⁵ King, *The Reinvention of Humanity*, 343.

⁵⁶ C. van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek, no. 3 (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1922), 1; Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 9-10.

⁵⁷ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 9-10.

⁵⁸ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 13-15.

had ultimately been formed on similar grounds.⁵⁹ This way, Snouck Hurgronje argued that there was no legitimate basis for denying Indonesian nationalism.

Rather than deciding *for* the Indonesian population whether it was possible to speak of Indonesian nationalism, Snouck Hurgronje believed it was up to Indonesians to determine whether the term ‘nationalism’ fit their aspirations. He referred to how scholars in the past long quarrelled over the question of whether the Javanese were to be considered Muslim or not until it was decided that this was for the Javanese to decide for themselves.⁶⁰ Ultimately, Snouck Hurgronje argued for not repeating past mistakes and allowing Indonesians to determine their own future.

Education Demands

To allow Indonesians this autonomy, education was considered crucial. Internationally, education debates played an important role in colonial empires. In the British empire, these debates took place as early as the 1830s. Disputes existed about whether schooling in India was to prioritise ‘Oriental’ knowledge, taught in local languages, or Western knowledge, taught in English. Eventually, the latter stance won the dispute, which resulted in the promotion of English Western education in India from 1835 onwards.⁶¹ In the Dutch empire, this debate became prominent after the implementation of the *ethische politiek*. During the Interbellum, conservatives and progressives stood on opposing sides in the dispute about higher education. Colijn’s fear for Indonesian intellectuals and their role in recent upheavals led him to argue for bringing the intellectual development of the Indonesian population to a provisional stop. The professors of Leiden University, on the other hand, considered closing the doors of Western education to no longer be an answer to the problem of rising unrest.⁶²

One of the more practical arguments in favour of this was that closing the doors of Western education would imply that Indonesians could simply travel to other countries in which education was accessible for them, such as Egypt or Turkey.⁶³ However, more importantly, withholding the Indonesian population from Western knowledge was deemed immoral. Colenbrander regarded education as an instrument against unreasonable forms of continuation of Western domination. Therefore, preventing Indonesians from acquiring these means no longer fit twenty-first-century colonial practices.⁶⁴ Moreover, Van Vollenhoven believed that demands for an Indonesian university were a sign that the Indonesian population could no longer do without an intellectual centre.⁶⁵ Hence, the promotion of education was considered an essential part of progressive colonial policy. Snouck Hurgronje believed that the most important questions concerning the Dutch East Indies were to be

⁵⁹ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 13-15.

⁶⁰ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 13-15.

⁶¹ Sanjay Seth, *Subject Lessons: The Western Education of Colonial India, Subject Lessons* (Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

⁶² Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 29-30.

⁶³ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 22.

⁶⁴ Colenbrander, *Nederland’s betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst*, 23.

⁶⁵ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 8-9.

answered within the academic world.⁶⁶ Rather than arguing that there was no place for Indonesian intellectuals in Indonesian society, he believed they could fulfil a crucial role in answering these questions. Therefore, the education of Indonesians was considered essential in Indonesia's development toward independence, as this would eventually allow the Dutch government to give up its role of 'knowing and decisive guardian' over Indonesia.⁶⁷

A Changing Dynamic

While conservative perspectives tended to consider increasingly radical demands as something of Indonesian intellectual elites, the progressive perspective identified the extent and diversity to which all layers of society in the Dutch East Indies expressed nationalist sentiments.⁶⁸ Van Vollenhoven connected this to a self-awareness that was growing all across Asia, as exemplified by Japan and the Philippines. It had become clear that East Asia was no longer willing to let Europe decide its fate and was not afraid to speak its mind. Recent developments in Indonesia showed how this growing self-awareness allowed the Indonesian population to become critical of Dutch domination.⁶⁹ Colenbrander made clear how this development implied that the presence of Europeans was no longer assumed to be self-evident:

The times have forced the local population to no longer be regarded as mere objects but as subjects that will acquire a growing influence on the determination of this mutual relationship. What we think of them has become less important for the future than what they think of us. Will they continue to tolerate the intruder? And if so, for how long, and why?⁷⁰

Thus, a changing dynamic in the relationship between coloniser and colonised was acknowledged.

Without being directly referred to as such, this changing dynamic posed a danger to the colonial bond. Van Vollenhoven insisted on the urgency of listening to the demands of the Indonesian population and warned against the consequences of not taking recent developments seriously:

It is not by supporting Indonesia in its desire for real emancipation that it will be torn away from the Netherlands . . . but on the contrary, by opposing it, keeping it small, depriving it of the indispensable political training grounds, persecuting it with contempt and with declarations of our own superiority.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 25.

⁶⁷ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 37.

⁶⁸ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 14.

⁶⁹ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 7.

⁷⁰ "De tijden hebben dit element gedwongen, zich den inlander niet enkel meer als object voor te stellen, maar als subject, dat op de bepaling der onderlinge verhouding wassenden invloed verkrijgen zal. Wat wij van hem denken, is voor de toekomst van minder gewicht geworden, dan wat hij denkt van ons. Zal hij den indringer blijven dulden? en zoo ja, hoe lang nog, en waarom?"

Colenbrander, *Nederland's betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst*, 10-11.

⁷¹ "Niet door Indië te steunen in zijn wensch naar werkelijke ontvoogding scheurt men het van Holland los; . . . maar integendeel door het tegen te werken, het klein te houden, het de onmisbare staatkundige oefenschool te onthouden, het te vervolgen met geringschatting en met betuigingen van eigen superioriteit."

Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 19.

He argued that if measures failed to materialise, the demands of the local population would become harsher and eventually deteriorate all that was admirable about the Dutch approach towards the Indonesian region.⁷² Thus, although denying the potential of the Indonesian population was regarded as unethical, it was also recognised that it put the relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands at risk.

Responsibility and Superiority

Although progressive notions such as the promotion of education were presented as the product of the commitment to acting upon the wishes of the local population, they indirectly expressed resistance to ending the colonial bond. Within the phenomenon of modern imperialism, education was an important tool to hold onto colonies. Paternalistic convictions like the need of the colonial government to ‘enlighten’ the ‘irrational’ local societies of the colonies formed a justification for the maintenance or even expansion of Western power over colonised regions.⁷³ The *ethische politiek* and its related ‘progressive’ mindset were no exception to this phenomenon. Despite the critical approach of Leiden’s professors toward the Dutch colonial government, they did not advocate ending the colonial ties between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Instead, they called upon the responsibility of the Dutch government to act upon local demands, which essentially implied a belief in the need for the colonial government.

Van Vollenhoven illustrates this well when speaking of the supposed backwardness among the Indonesian population, “which it deplores, yet cannot overcome without governmental support.”⁷⁴ For true independence, the Indonesian population was not considered developed enough, still expressing the ills of a young political nation.⁷⁵ Underlying these ideas lay a clear sense of superiority which led to the conviction that the Indonesian population required the help of a Western nation to become the people it desired to be. Not only were the Western ways considered superior to those of the colonised region, but the West was also considered to hold the only means for the colonised populations to become ‘developed.’ According to Van Vollenhoven, the Indonesian population would eventually be able to gratefully acknowledge that it would be for a large part “a product . . . of Dutch heart and hand.”⁷⁶

The call for responsibility upon the Dutch government partially relied on historical arguments. The support of the local population was portrayed as a form of repayment for the many years of

⁷² Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 12.

⁷³ Catriona Ellis, “Education for All: Reassessing the Historiography of Education in Colonial India,” *History Compass* 7, no. 2 (2009): 364.

⁷⁴ “Een achterlijkheid, die zij zelf dikwijls het meest betreurt, doch zonder overheidsmaatregelen niet kan verhelpen.”

Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 10-11.

⁷⁵ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 8.

⁷⁶ “Een werk . . . van Hollands hart en hand.”

Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 20-1.

exploitation.⁷⁷ In the words of Snouck Hurgronje, “That part of the Far East, which on the politically divided map is still called the Dutch East Indies, has in this respect undeniable historical claims to our selfless involvement.”⁷⁸ Not only did this statement portray colonial exploitation as something of the past, but it also allowed Dutch interference in the Indonesian region to be portrayed as a selfless act. Snouck Hurgronje went as far as to argue that the Netherlands was responsible for a substantial part of the solution to the global race problem. Internationally it was to be considered an example without being assigned this task.⁷⁹ With regard to the relatively insignificant position of the Dutch empire in the global hierarchy of colonial empires, one may wonder how seriously this claim would have been taken internationally.

Thus it seems that, in addition to the underlying notions of superiority that allowed for the call upon the moral duty of the Dutch, this moral call in itself created a new sense of superiority. In *Britons*, Linda Colley reflects on a similar phenomenon taking place in Great Britain during its campaigns against slavery. She shows how, in a few years, the British went from being the largest slave-trading nation to being the world’s prime opponents of slavery and proudly presented themselves for this fact.⁸⁰ She argues how the anti-slavery campaigns were a way to redeem the nation after the loss of the American colonies, as they allowed the British to reaffirm their identity as uniquely committed to liberty.⁸¹ At the same time, it functioned as a means to justify British domination over the non-Western world as bringers of civilization. So, despite its progressiveness, the anti-slavery campaign had a conservative impact as it allowed Great Britain to establish itself as a leading colonial power.⁸² Although circumstances were very different, the progressive notions of the *ethische politiek* and its desire to maintain the colonial bond with Indonesia followed a very similar pattern.

Only Colenbrander seems to deviate somewhat from this line of reasoning, as he admits that the development of progressive colonial policy was partially influenced by self-interest. Rather than arguing that the changes in colonial policy were the result of some moral revelation, he admits that the *ethische politiek* was partially initiated on the basis of the realisation that strengthening the Dutch East Indies, instead of merely looting and exploiting the region, was a necessity in maintaining the colony.⁸³ However, this seems an exception to the general patterns expressed by those associated with the *ethische politiek*.

⁷⁷ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 15.

⁷⁸ “Dat stuk van het Verre Oosten, dat op de kaart der staatkundige indeling nog altijd Nederlandsch-Indië heet, heeft in dit opzicht onafwijsbare historische aanspraken op onze onzelfzuchtige bemoeïing.” Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 23-4.

⁷⁹ Snouck Hurgronje, *De Islâm en het rassenprobleem*, 23.

⁸⁰ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 351.

⁸¹ Linda Colley, *Britons*, 354.

⁸² Linda Colley, *Britons*, 358-9.

⁸³ Colenbrander, *Nederland's betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst*, 21.

A Moral Alternative Between Two Forms of Extremism

Although this supposedly progressive perspective argued for an Indonesia that existed *for* and, to a certain extent, *by* itself, it did not argue for an Indonesia that was truly determined by itself. The continuation of the colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia was decided to be the right path for Indonesia's future. Therefore, it was argued that striving for Indonesian independence had nothing to do with the expulsion of Europeans from the region.⁸⁴ Calls for the immediate autonomy of Indonesia were condemned as expressions of ingratitude and impatience, although the Indonesians were not to blame for this after many years of oppression.⁸⁵ Regardless, it had to be accepted that they might not be able to acknowledge this.⁸⁶ Therefore, all demands for the complete independence of Indonesia were dismissed as extremism.⁸⁷

Ultimately, this perspective presented itself as the only moral option between the extremes of conservatism and radical nationalism. Leiden's Indology section acknowledged the mistakes of the past and the dangers of the continuation of these mistakes by what Snouck Hurgronje called 'entrepreneurial fanatics.' He stated that "One does not have to be an anti-capitalist to recognise the serious danger posed by Western capital to the local population."⁸⁸ On the other hand, Van Vollenhoven also stated that it was the Dutch government's responsibility to prevent the local masses from overruling Indonesia's autonomy.⁸⁹ Both the conservative ideals that had acquired a lot of influence, as well as those that increasingly condemned the colonial relationship between the Netherlands and the Indonesian region, were understood as heading towards a revolution.⁹⁰ This led Snouck Hurgronje to ultimately call upon strong enforcement of authority by moral means, against all forms of extremism.⁹¹

Ultimately, this shows that the progressiveness of the ideas underlying these supposedly progressive perspectives was limited. The perception of the desires of the local population, underlying the belief of having to act upon these demands, was in itself not a neutral interpretation. The fragility of the old discourse justifying colonialism was slowly starting to show, as othering notions were increasingly abandoned. Nevertheless, the ultimate position taken by Leiden's professors shows that the ideas attached to these notions were still being adhered to.

⁸⁴ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 10-11.

⁸⁵ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 10-11.

⁸⁶ Colenbrander, *Nederland's betrekking tot Indië in verleden en toekomst*, 10-11.

⁸⁷ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 10-11.

⁸⁸ "Men behoeft geen anti-kapitalist te zijn om de gevaren, waarmee de inlandse bevolking eener kolonie door het Westersche kapitaal bedreigd wordt, zeer ernstig in te zien."

Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 41.

⁸⁹ Van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden*, 12.

⁹⁰ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 37

⁹¹ Snouck Hurgronje, *Colijn over Indië*, 44.

Chapter IV: The Conservative Perspective of the University of Utrecht

Although the establishment of Utrecht's Faculty of Indology was a response to the ethical orientation of Leiden's Indology program, the curricula of both programs had much in common. Both universities taught the same courses that had been designated as mandatory parts of the Indology program by the government. Moreover, the works of Leiden's professors, who were leading scholars in their field, were incorporated into Utrecht's teachings.⁹² Nevertheless, there was room for different interpretations of the colonial relationship with Indonesia. Publicly, the two centres of Indology studies therefore came to oppose each other. This chapter analyses the theoretical underpinning of Utrecht's Faculty of Indology by examining the justification for its establishment and ideology that advocated maintaining the colonial bond between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Ultimately, it aims to gain insights into the underlying anthropological perspectives on the Indonesian population expressed by its conservative ideology.

A Defence Against Leiden

The newly established centre for Indology studies in Utrecht caused concern among Leiden's professors. The loss of their monopoly was answered in a text called 'De aanslag op Leiden,' written by Van Vollenhoven and signed by some of his colleagues, which questioned the justness of the newly established Indology faculty.⁹³ In return, these accusations were refuted in *Onafhankelijk Hooger Indologisch Onderwijs* written by Treub, one of the central figures behind Utrecht's new faculty. This text revolved around the main concern arising from the newly established faculty: the relationship between higher education and private interests.

Treub responded to questions about the justifiability of higher education financed by private individuals by pointing out the impossibility of pure objectivity in science.⁹⁴ By calling out attention to the inseparable relationship between the judgement of scholars and their teachings, especially in the humanities, he showed that neither Leiden nor Utrecht provided knowledge that was free from the political and personal orientation of the scholar. Thereby, objections could be made against government-subsidised institutions such as Leiden just as much as to privately funded institutions as Utrecht.⁹⁵ He therefore argued that the value of Utrecht's education was not at risk as long as its professors acquired the same freedom as state university professors.

Treub referred to the many educational institutions in the USA and other countries that would not be able to uphold their name if education was to be judged based on its financing. Rather than

⁹² Utrechtsche Indologen-vereeniging, "Handboekje voor de studie in de vereenigde faculteiten der rechtsgeleerdheid en der letteren en wijsbegeerte" (Indologen-vereeniging, 1931), Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht.

⁹³ Kuitenbrouwer, *Tussen oriëntalisme en wetenschap*, 134.

⁹⁴ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 6.

⁹⁵ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 3-4.

disapproving of the Dutch private investments in education institutions, he regretted that Dutch capitalists did not show more interest in the value of higher education.⁹⁶ He rejected the argument that business interests influenced Utrecht's teaching methods as he believed that self-respecting individuals would act according to their own convictions rather than act to please their bosses.⁹⁷ The importance attached to entrepreneurship and the underlying suggestion of the importance of being a strong authority make Treub's justification of Utrecht's Indology faculty fit well within the Dutch conservative ideals of his time.

Development Along Historical Lines

While Treub justified the establishment of Utrecht's new faculty, Gerretson set forth the underlying line of reasoning that justified the institution's ideology. At the start of his speech during the opening of the Indology faculty in Utrecht, he set out the foundation of the new faculty: the development of the Dutch East Indies along historical lines.⁹⁸ Legally, it was determined that the Indology study programs taught two history courses. One in the so-called 'new' history of the Dutch East Indies, concerning the history of the region since the arrival of the Dutch, and one in its 'old' history, concerning the pre-colonial period. The latter, however, formed a problem for Gerretson and gave rise to a notion that consistently returned in his conservative perspective, namely the denial of an existence of a history of the Indonesian region before the arrival of the Dutch.⁹⁹ Gerretson argued that there was no reasonable concept of an 'old history' of the Dutch East Indies as, before the arrival of the Dutch, there was no 'essence' to the people living in the region:

The Dutch East Indies is not the territory of a state's people [*staatsvolk*]; even a *core* whose development from the earliest times would explain the present existence of this empire in any way is not traceable. The Dutch East Indies is only the name of certain countries and seas, which can be described in geographical coordinates on the world map and which are under the power range of the Netherlands. Or, to put it more clearly, historically, the Dutch East Indies is only the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Asia.¹⁰⁰

Thus, denying the Indonesian people a political history before its colonisation allowed Gerretson to reason that there was no Indonesia without the presence of the Dutch.

⁹⁶ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 7.

⁹⁷ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 6.

⁹⁸ C. Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar* ('s-Gravenhage: Van Stockum, 1925), 5-6.

⁹⁹ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ "Nederlands-Indië is niet het gebied van een staatsvolk; zelfs een *kern* wier ontwikkeling van de vroegste tijden af het huidig bestaan van dit imperium, op welke wijze ook, zou verklaren, is niet nawijsbaar. Nederlands-Indië is slechts de naam van zekere landen en zeeën, die met graden en minuten op de wereldkaart kunnen worden omschreven en die onder het machtsbereik van Nederland staan. Of, om het nog duidelijker uit te rukken, Nederlands-Indië is, historisch, slechts het Rijk van Nederland in Azië." Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 10-11.

Gerretson argued that the region had always been “a colonisation area, an area full of people’s struggles [*volkerenstrijd*] and conflict between the rulers and overruled.” The Dutch East Indies built on the tumulus of these previous forms of colonisation.¹⁰¹ According to Gerretson, a history of the region apart from its colonial history had never existed and would never be able to exist. To make these claims, Gerretson built on an argument already used by Friedrich Hegel to justify colonialism. In Hegel’s dialectical conception of history, absolute Spirit would only be able to unfold itself in Western Christian civilisation. Hegel conceived the ‘Oriental World’ as being in an early stage of history, still determined by the conditions of nature. Africa, however, was unhistorical. As a place where spirit had not yet developed, Hegel condemned Africans to be a people outside of history.¹⁰² Gerretson’s portrayal of the populations inhabiting Indonesia seems to have much in common with these representations of the non-Western world.

Conservative Relativism

Underlying Gerretson’s ideas was a belief in the importance of finding laws in history. Although he acknowledged the mistakes made by some of his predecessors who had confused history with natural sciences, Gerretson believed in the possibility of finding patterns in the rise and fall of states. Although certain aspects of his theory leaned on the ideas of Hegel, Gerretson did not adopt a Hegelian philosophy. Rather than taking on a teleological perspective on history, Gerretson argued for a circular development of history, which had consequences for notions of superiority in his ideas.

According to Gerretson, there was only one consistency to be found in history: the dualism of the legal order.¹⁰³ This dualism consisted of the opposition between government and subject, which he considered the engine of all change. He argued that every human society expressed this dualism. Even the most primitive societies had some form of political authority, often of a complex order. Functionally, the order of primitive states was not that different from those of the highest developed societies.¹⁰⁴ This led Gerretson to argue that one form of authority could not be considered of a lower or higher form than another, implying that the different relationships of domination a region experienced did not occur in a particular order. This perspective suggests a specific form of relativism in his theory.

It might be argued that, in this regard, Gerretson was closer to the cultural relativism that really took hold in figures like De Josselin de Jong than his Leiden colleagues. The perception of

¹⁰¹ “Indië is, niet alleen nu, maar ook oudtijds, altoos een kolonisatiegebied geweest, een gebied, vol van volkerenstrijd, van strijd tusschen overheerschers en overheerschten.”

Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 12.

¹⁰² Ronald Kuykendall, “Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in The Philosophy of History,” *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 4 (June 1993): 572-3; Frederick G. Whelan, *Enlightenment Political Thought and Non-Western Societies: Sultans and Savages*, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought 65 (New York: Routledge, 2009), 121.

¹⁰³ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 18.

¹⁰⁴ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 27-8.

history as a circular movement completely undermined Leiden's ethical motivation for colonial intervention. Gerretson blamed the adherents of the *ethische politiek* for applying an oversimplified historical perspective that attached too much importance to written accounts of history.¹⁰⁵ He argued that beliefs in the ability to oversee the whole of human development, while in reality only taking written history into account, easily led to misconceptions that perceived the present not only as the endpoint but also as the peak of human development. Ultimately, this would lead to a glorification of the modern and give rise to what Gerretson called 'the widespread superstition of moral evolution.'¹⁰⁶ This way, Gerretson not only dismissed Hegel's belief in a linear development of history but also discredited the core of Leiden's ideology.

The relativism of Gerretson's theory had things in common with the cultural relativism that would form the foundation of the philosophy of cultural anthropology, which strongly questioned the (moral) superiority with which the West perceived itself. Nevertheless, cultural anthropology's understanding of culture as the determiner of a society's sense of the 'normal' and its rejection of the perspective of social development as linear were not expressed in Gerretson's ideas. Whereas cultural anthropology started to question the nature of concepts that had been strong determinants of the social-political order, such as race and gender, Gerretson stressed the essential dividedness of the world.¹⁰⁷ By arguing that ethnology was needed to acquire knowledge about the regions falling outside of political history, Gerretson argued that Indonesia was essentially different from its European counterpart.¹⁰⁸ Combining historical and ethnological perspectives was to bring the history of coloniser and colonised together. So, although Gerretson's particular theory on history gave rise to a form of relativism of a specific political nature, it also maintained and supported an essentializing perspective on the non-Western world.

Maintenance of the Colonial Bond

Although the circularity of history meant that Dutch rule over Indonesia could not be maintained forever, it also functioned as a justification for the continuation of the colonial bond. Despite acknowledging that the nature of Dutch rule over Indonesia was not necessarily better than any other form of authority, Gerretson did not argue for a right of self-determination for the Indonesian people in any way. He traced the opposition between government and subjects that stood central in his theory to the opposition between foreigners and locals, which he considered an absolute necessity for political communities. Therefore, the end of one stage of political domination would inevitably imply the start of another.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 24-6.

¹⁰⁷ King, *The Reinvention of Humanity*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁸ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 14-5.

¹⁰⁹ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 29-31.

Yet, Gerretson argued that fulfilling the role of foreign authority was not to be regarded as something bad. Being a ‘foreigner’ to society did not mean being indifferent or hostile to it. Instead, it was to be considered an expression of a high level of impartiality.¹¹⁰ The circular development of political states was not to prevent the government from supporting colonial development. However, a true understanding and acknowledgement of the government’s place in the colonial relationship was a necessity for providing genuine support. Gerretson believed that knowledge about the nature of history was essential for civil servants, as this would allow them to acknowledge the justness of the authority of their government and thereby enable them to fulfil their duty to the colony. Ultimately, this would testify to the truest possible form of ethics and love for the Indonesian people.¹¹¹

For Gerretson, the belief in the government’s legitimacy was crucial. He argued that the deepest cause for the fall of all authorities was never the resistance of subjects but always the consequential loss of a government’s power to act. He argued that progressive ideas pleading against the moral justification of a self-righteous government created an internal conflict for civil servants who started to question their own authority. As an authority that doubts its legitimacy cannot maintain itself, these convictions removed all its foundation, especially for that of the colonial state. Therefore, progressive claims that diminished the opposition between government and subject, in other words, between Eastern subjects and Western government, were considered the biggest threat to the existence of the Dutch colonial state.¹¹²

The Danger of Nationalist Fictions

An acknowledgement of Indonesian calls for increased autonomy did not fit well within this ideology. Gerretson emphasised the need for nations to be formed on a historical basis:

One cannot artificially turn groups of people who are strangers to each other and lack a shared consciousness into one people. Different nations and races can *grow* into one people through a gradually awakening solidarity and sense of *shared consciousness* that develops from within. From this course of development, they cannot be spared.¹¹³

This narrative denied any historical justification for Indonesian nationalism. Gerretson condemned Indonesian nationalism as fiction and argued that teaching a supposed ‘old history’ of the Dutch East

¹¹⁰ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 37.

¹¹¹ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 30-1.

¹¹² Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 23-4, 30-1.

¹¹³ “Men kan elkander vreemde volken, aan wie een gemeenschappelijk volksbewustzijn ontbreekt, niet kunstmatig tot 1 volk *maken*. Verschillende naties en rassen kunnen door een geleidelijk ontwakend gevoel van saamhorigheid, door een van binnenuit zich ontwikkelend *volksbewustzijn* tot één volk *groeien*. Hun dien ontwikkelingsgang besparen kan men niet.”

Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 21.

Indies as an organic whole would feed the misconception of a pre-existing Indonesian 'nation-in-the-making' before the arrival of the Dutch.¹¹⁴

In this debate, Utrecht and Leiden took clear opposing stances. Generally, Utrecht was blamed for diminishing regional diversity in Indonesia. However, Treub argued that it was precisely the narrative of “the oppressed ‘Indonesian’” that caused Leiden to neglect this diversity.¹¹⁵ He considered the concept of ‘the Indonesian people’ as nothing but “a preconceived theoretical dogmatic construction,” created to fit Leiden’s ideological system.¹¹⁶ Treub argued against Snouck Hurgronje’s justification for nationalism, as mentioned in the previous chapter, by reckoning the circumstances of nation-building in Europe and Indonesia as incomparable. In addition to the lack of solidarity felt in the Indonesian region, the differences between “tribes, races, and peoples” in levels of civilisation in the Dutch East Indies were, according to Treub, too substantial to be regarded as one nation.¹¹⁷ He compared the suggestion of an Indonesian nation to proposing that the whole of Europe should become one unitary state. The only basis on which such a claim could be made, according to Treub, was the unity of race. This, he claimed, would be ridiculous.¹¹⁸ Therefore, this argument could not be used for the Indonesian region either and would be even more ridiculous in this context because of the variety in the levels of its development. This again demonstrates the importance attached to the concept of race and the supposed development of civilizations in the way other societies were perceived.

Ultimately, these ‘fictions of unity’ were considered to make Leiden dangerous. In the first place not so much because it would influence Indonesian students, but more so because of the illusion it brought to future Dutch civil servants.¹¹⁹ As a powerful minority in a country of over 50 million inhabitants, civil servants were a decisive factor in the well-being of colonial society.¹²⁰ As made clear by Gerretson, their belief in the legitimacy of their own authority was considered essential. In addition, Treub argued that Leiden indirectly gave rise to extremism by its expressions in the media, which worsened the mood of their Indonesian students and likely many others.¹²¹ He argued that the ‘far-left’ attitudes of Leiden’s professors on matters of Indonesian autonomy deteriorated attitudes towards the Dutch in Indonesia and cultivated a rebellious spirit among Indonesian students studying in the Netherlands.¹²² As the professors publicly expressed the limitations of the Dutch government,

¹¹⁴ Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 11-2.

¹¹⁵ “Den verdrukten ‘Indonesiër’”

Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 15-6.

¹¹⁶ “Een vooropgezette, theoretische dogmatische, constructie.”

Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 16.

¹¹⁷ “Stammen, rassen en volken.”

Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 17-18.

¹¹⁸ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 16-17.

¹¹⁹ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 18.

¹²⁰ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 42-3.

¹²¹ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 29-30.

¹²² Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 23, 27-9.

they had little authority to encourage their Indonesian students, who in addition were supposedly more expressive because of their southern character, to take a calm and moderate approach.¹²³ Ultimately, this could only lead to revolt and the complete undermining of the development of the Dutch East Indies along historical lines.

A Realistic Alternative to Immature Idealism

Both Treub and Gerretson argued that Leiden's idealistic optimism lacked a sense of reality.¹²⁴ The "immature idealism" it planted in the minds of future civil servants and the danger this posed to authority were argued to endanger both the Netherlands and the colonised region.¹²⁵ Utrecht's Faculty of Indology, on the other hand, portrayed itself as standing "at the bottom of reality," making it a desirable counterweight to the 'hyper-ethical' character of Leiden's Indology studies.¹²⁶ It presented itself as a representative of not only Dutch entrepreneurship but the general interests of both Indonesia and the Netherlands.¹²⁷ Thus, while Leiden posed itself as the only moral option between extremes, Utrecht portrayed itself as the realistic alternative to senseless idealism.

This notion was also expressed in the works of other professors associated with Utrecht's Faculty of Indology, such as I.A. Nederburgh.¹²⁸ In principle, Nederburgh argued for the gradual abolishment of the separation of Western and adat law in the Dutch East Indies, which he disfavoured and referred to as "legal racial segregation."¹²⁹ Nevertheless, he stated that it was not yet the time to step away from this structure as he claimed that the distinction was still connected to existing differences. Ultimately, he declared that one could not simply look at what would be *desirable* but also had to take into account what would be *possible*.¹³⁰ This makes Nederburgh's ideas a clear example of how the conservative perspective portrayed itself as a necessary sensible perspective on colonial matters.

As opposed to the supposedly radical nature of other views, the conservatives argued for the calm and gradual development of the Dutch East Indies.¹³¹ This development of Indonesia 'along historical lines' was interconnected with the belief that the well-being of Indonesia and the Netherlands relied on the power of the unity of the empire.¹³² Therefore, Utrecht considered portrayals

¹²³ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 31-2.

¹²⁴ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 39-40.

¹²⁵ "Een onvoldragen idealisme"

Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 44

¹²⁶ "Op den bodem der realiteit."

Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 5-6.

¹²⁷ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 47-8.

¹²⁸ Fasseur, *De indologen*, 410.

¹²⁹ "Wettelijk rassenonderscheid."

I. A. Nederburgh, *Tegenstellingen en samenwerking in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 6-7.

¹³⁰ I. A. Nederburgh, *Tegenstellingen en samenwerking in Nederlandsch-Indië* ('s-Gravenhage: Belinfante, 1925), 6-7.

¹³¹ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 38.

¹³² Gerretson, *De historische vorming van den bestuursambtenaar*, 40-1.

of its conservative ideals as standing opposed to the interests of Indonesia problematic. As Van Vollenhoven's text mentioned at the beginning of this chapter claimed to defend itself against its 'opponent' (referring to Utrecht and its supporters), it portrayed the dispute between Leiden and Utrecht as a battle against two separate ideologies.¹³³ According to Treub, however, this not only cornered conservative points of view but also incorrectly presented these ideological differences as a conflict between those that defended the interests of the Dutch East Indies (themselves) and those that stood for the interests of capital (the opponent).¹³⁴ However, as the conservative ideals of Utrecht were argued to cater to the calm development of the Dutch East Indies, both parties ultimately argued to serve the same purpose. In the end, regardless of their different approaches or intentions, both perspectives remained part of a discourse that ultimately allowed for the continuation of the colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia.

¹³³ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 10.

¹³⁴ Treub, *Onafhankelijk Indologisch hooger onderwijs*, 15.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The sending of *Indologen* to the colony was put to an immediate halt after the German occupation of the Netherlands during the Second World War. Although the study programs continued teaching during the war, this was the beginning of the end of Indology. After the war, there was no longer any need for educated Dutch civil servants in Indonesia. Others have suggested that if there ever was a winner to the debates between Leiden and Utrecht, Leiden would be proven right. But, of course, none of these perspectives was proven right in the end.

Nevertheless, the debates between these two perspectives during the Interbellum show that their discourse was on the verge of a transition. While Leiden expressed a progressive appreciation of Indonesia, it held onto notions of Western superiority. Although it stepped away from the past, it remained dependent on a conviction of a fundamental dividedness of the world in terms of civilization and race. Despite the potential it saw in Indonesia, it was never acknowledged as an equal. On the other hand, a suggestion of relativism was able to take hold within the conservative perspective. Although it was essentially to justify the maintenance of the colonial relationship, it undermined the notion of the moral superiority of the *ethische politiek*, on which Leiden strongly relied. This suggests that, in this very particular aspect, it was a step ahead of Leiden in the shift that would fully take place in scientific approaches to cultural and societal differences across the world a few years later. Nevertheless, at the same time, this perspective firmly held on to a strongly essentializing perception of the non-Western world.

What this analysis ultimately shows is the many layers that existed in both perspectives. The progressive and conservative schools showed evident differences in how they presented Indonesia and its colonial bond with the Netherlands, as they perceived these from different angles on the basis of different motivations. Nonetheless, both relied on and maintained an academic discourse that justified colonial intervention. Rather than arguing that Leiden positioned itself in a grey area between Utrecht's conservatism and Indonesian nationalist demands, this thesis argues that Leiden and Utrecht's centres of Indology were ultimately two sides of the same coin. As such, it aims to show that serious objections can be made against presenting Leiden as the 'winner' of this dispute.

This thesis calls for further elaboration on the place of the Indonesian perspective in this debate. To strengthen the conclusions of this thesis, future studies could focus on how Indonesians studying in the Netherlands engaged with these debates and found their way into this discourse. In addition, more research into the specific experience of the small number of Indonesian students who studied Indology would enrich existing knowledge on this part of the history of the colonial relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

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