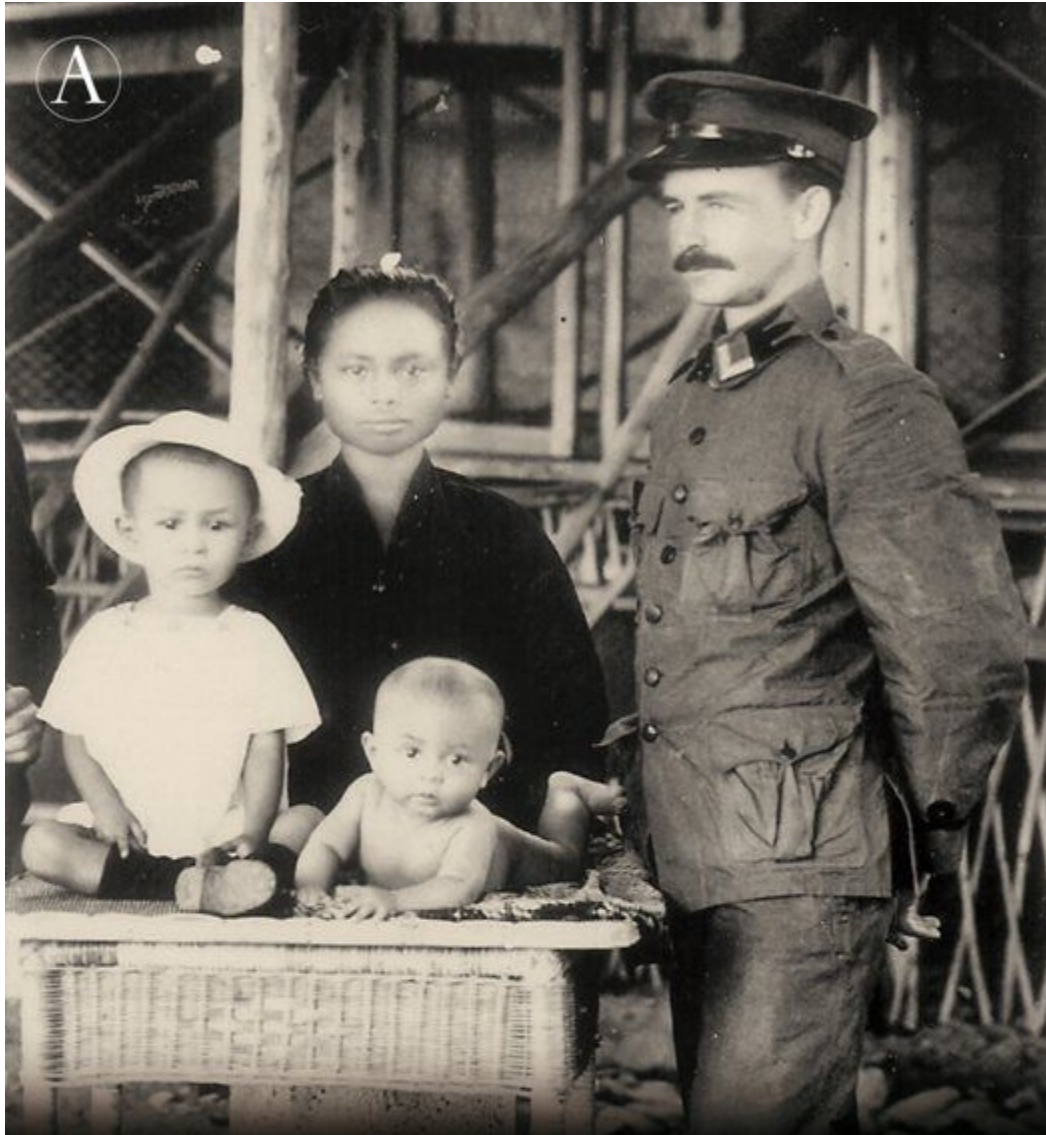


The *njais*, the forgotten women of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army: an analysis of the gender and race dynamics in the barracks-concubinage of the KNIL between 1878 and 1933.



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Abstract

The “Barracks-*njais*” were concubines living with soldiers in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). Despite some research on the concubines in the Netherlands Indies, there has not yet been an analysis of the gender and race dynamics in the barracks specifically. The fate of these forgotten women and their children was seen as secondary to that of the male colonizer. In order to acknowledge that using women was an integral part of colonial hierarchies, it is crucial to tell the story of how concubinage was essential to this royal army. This thesis argues that the KNIL barracks-concubinage between 1878 and 1933 was an institutionalized system flourishing on the idea that the native and the female status of a *njai* made her less than the male colonizer. This work is based on the male perspective found in articles published in the magazine of the army *Indisch Militair Tijdschrift* (IMT). The intersecting race and gender identities are analyzed by applying A.L. Stoler’s colonized/colonizer dynamic. This thesis starts with a critical reflection on why racial attitudes were more formative for hierarchies than class and reflects on what role the male perspective can play in analyzing gender dynamics. The second chapter shows how pro-concubinage arguments were filled with racist and sexist attitudes. The *njai*, a combination of a wife and a prostitute, was perfect to use for the benefits of the male colonizer. The third chapter analyzes how interference of authorities in the private life grew. The belief grew that christian marriage was the way to hold onto morals, whereas interracial relations made it harder to define what was European. Moreover, concubinage was linked to the creation of a pauper proletariat. Offspring of interracial relations was seen to disrupt white supremacy. The growing belief in racial boundaries between “us” and “them” became apparent in gender-specific conventions. The last chapter analyzes how the army tried to gradually root out the barracks-*njais*, when concubinage was no longer believed to be a sustainable system. The restrictions on marriage had to be lifted and there was a need for more private physical spaces in the barracks, to make a life with a *real family* a possibility for soldiers. How slow barracks-concubinage disappeared, shows how deeply rooted this system was. Analyzing the pro and contra *njai* arguments, show the intersecting racial and sexist dynamics between “the colonizer” and “the colonized”. The analysis of the barracks-*njais* is in line with Stoler’s notion that racial boundaries, in itself a flexible construct, intersect with gender dynamics.

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Introduction

"A *njai* is a replacement for a European woman. She is a housekeeper that has the unnatural duty to sexually please her owner."

On the 1st of July in the year 1900 the quote above was published in *Het Indisch Militair Tijdschrift (IMT)*. The *IMT* was the magazine of the military in the Netherlands Indies that discussed subjects related to the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). The author above argued that since fusiliers had to stay unmarried and going to brothels for sexual relief was seen as immoral, there was a need for another solution: the *njai*.¹ A *njai* was a concubine in the Netherlands Indies, an indigenous woman in between a wife and a prostitute. Even though the author saw the *njai* system as a "fraud against nature" from a moral standpoint, it was a necessary evil in order for the army to prosper. His moral and practical beliefs were contradictory. Even though authors in the *IMT* saw *njais* staying with soldiers as morally wrong, the consensus that having barracks-concubines was a sustainable option prevailed for many decades. When the *IMT* was first published in 1878 the Suez Canal was only open for about a decade. The creation of this canal in 1869 was formative for the gender dynamics in the Netherlands Indies.² Before 1869, the long journey caused there to be hardly any European women in the colonies. The last time the *IMT* mentions anything about concubines was in 1933, nine years before the Japanese capitulation, a time that completely changed the dynamics between the indigenous and the European. However, within this timeframe the dynamics of gender and race also evolved. The view on barracks-*njais* evolved with it.

The *njais* have been given some attention by historians. However, it is not a generally known subject. R. Baay, the author of the book *The njai*, refers to their story as the "story of the forgotten women".³ The *njais* were mentioned over 180 times in the military magazine, but are no longer a frequently talked about phenomenon in Dutch military history. To be true to history, the black pages of a royal army cannot stay unnoticed. Hence, the fate of these forgotten women and their offspring should be acknowledged. Baay did dedicate a specific chapter to the barracks-*njais*, but his book solely gives an impression of what life was like for the *njais* but does not put it in a broader academic perspective of gender and colonialism. There has been some academic attention to the concubines in the Netherlands Indies. A.L. Stoler has done work on race and sexual morality in the 20th century colonial cultures. In her work "Making empire respectable" she analyzes the dynamic of the male colonizer and the female colonized.⁴ She argues that racial and sexist attitudes shaped the relationship between these two. Furthermore, she argues that the state wanted to protect "cultural hygiene" through controlling aspects of the private life, such as sexuality and interracial relations. However, she did not specifically

¹ M.H., "Over venerische ziekte", *IMT*, (1 July 1900), 507-522. Translated from "De *njai* is een vervangster voor de Europese vrouw. De huishoudster heeft het onnatuurlijk doel uitsluitend den sexueelen hartstocht te bevredigen"

² E. Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state: Essays on gender and modernity in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. Amsterdam University Press, (Amsterdam, 2000), 18-19.

³ R. Baay, *De njai: het concubinaat in Nederlands-Indië*, Singel Uitgeverijen, (Amsterdam, 2008).

⁴ A.L. Stoler, "Making empire respectable: the politics of race and sexual morality in 20th-century colonial cultures", *American ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989), 634-660.

apply her argument to the *tangsi*.⁵ The Netherlands Indies' army was a culture in itself.⁶ Therefore it is important to see if Stoler's colonized/colonizer dynamic still holds up in the *tangsi*. The rest of society saw people who joined the army as the underdogs. This created a structural exclusion of these soldiers from everyday life in colonial society. Firstly, their underdog status might have influenced their belief of and behavior towards another marginalized group. Secondly, European women played a crucial role in Stoler's analysis, while this group is not part of the life in the *tangsi*.

Because of the lack of the combination of taking broader gender and race dynamics into account while focusing on the *tangsi*, an analysis of the barracks-*njais* with Stoler's colonized/colonizer dynamic will be an addition to the academic debate about the ways in which the indigenous and the gender status of people affected their role in society. A case study on the barracks-*njais* can show in what way using women was an integral part of colonial hierarchies. The main question of this thesis is the following: To what degree did the KNIL barracks-concubinage between 1878 and 1933 become an institutionalized system flourishing on the idea that the native and the female status of a *njai* made her less than the male colonizer?

This *honours thesis*⁷ will use Baay and Stoler, and is furthermore based on secondary sources that give a broader perspective on the race and gender dynamics. In order to put Stoler's notion of the state controlling sexuality into a broader perspective authors that look at the legal perspective on interracial relations will be used, like the passages on marriage law in the book *Women and the colonial state* by E. Locher-Scholten.⁸ Furthermore, two sources that form critique on Stoler's dynamic are used. Stoler argues that racial attitudes were crucial for the hierarchy R. Raben & U. Bosma believe class was the biggest indicator for social hierarchies in the Netherlands Indies.⁹ Stoler thinks looking at the male perspective on females can be very fruitful for research on gender dynamics. Historian J. G. Taylor disagrees and argues that in historiographical research the women should be analyzed as an active agent.¹⁰ Stoler's way of looking at colonial hierarchies is central in this thesis.

My method to analyze the race and gender dynamics is to focus on how the *njai* system was viewed from the white male perspective. If we want to know the male colonizer's point of view, the *IMT* is an excellent source. The *IMT* was a magazine of the military in the Netherlands Indies that was distributed monthly for a period of over 70 years. It discussed subjects related to the colonial military and contained diverse issues that the KNIL faced in the Netherlands Indies. These issues were not only strategic problems but also moral dilemmas regarding the private life of soldiers, such as topics regarding their sexual relationships. The targeted audience was men in the Indies, but it was also read in the motherland. The framing in this source is an important element, since it shows the perspective of the male colonizer.

⁵ "Tangsi" is the Malay word for "Dormitory" in the context of the KNIL it can be defined as the army barracks.

⁶ Baay, *De njai* 120-174.

⁷ To make my work into an *Honours Thesis* I have decided to write a thesis with academic depth. I analyse primary sources that show the story of the *forgotten women* in the Netherlands Indies.

⁸ E. Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state: Essays on gender and modernity in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942*. Amsterdam University Press, (Amsterdam, 2000), 18-19.

⁹ U. Bosma and R. Raben. *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: A history of creolisation and empire, 1500-1920*. No. 116. nus Press, (Singapore, 2008), 24-25.

¹⁰ J. G. Taylor, *The social world of Batavia: Europeans and Eurasians in colonial Indonesia*. Second Edition. Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, (2009).

The primary source research starts by strategically looking for *IMT* articles that talk about the concubines, to furthermore focus on what they tell about the race and gender dynamics. To see what publications are most relevant the search engine on the digital version of this magazine is used. This tool shows in which articles specific words appear. Certain words or queries were "concubine" "njai" and "housekeeper".¹¹ A further text analysis of the *IMT* regarding the topics of intimate relations and marriage between soldiers and non-European women is done by close reading. In what way the combination of race and gender dynamics made the barracks-*njais* an integral part of the *tangsi*, becomes apparent in the way the *IMT* sources talk about these women. Firstly, the sources tell us something about how the *njais* were treated. Secondly, it shows the framing of these native women. This analysis is both done on pro and anti concubinage narratives in the *IMT*.

The first chapter shows the academic (conceptual) debate surrounding race and gender, in order to set the ground for an analysis of the barracks-*njais*. According to the intersectional theoretical framework, discrimination against individuals or groups occurs on the base of ones intersecting social identity.¹² In order to justify the approach of using Stoler's colonized/colonizer dynamic, two discussions are important. It is important to highlight the debate around the use of "race" and the debate on using sources with the male perspective to gain knowledge on gender dynamics. Stoler emphasizes the importance of analyzing gender and race dynamics when looking at the colonized versus colonizer dynamic. In this chapter the critique of Raben & Bosma on the focus on racial identities, rather than realizing the hierarchy was based on class, is discussed. Stoler argues that class hierarchies are not necessarily not based on race, because race in itself is a flexible social construct. Taylor's argument that it is important to see women as social agents in historical research, is put to the test by Stoler's idea that you can also make conclusions about gender dynamics through the frame of the male colonizer. Analyzing the white male perspective to get an idea of their interaction with the native female is the method used in this thesis.

In the second chapter the arguments of contemporaries on why concubines should be part of the barracks in the KNIL is analyzed. *Njais* were believed to have a positive influence on soldiers that were struggling with "the two big evils on the moral spirit of a soldier": alcoholism and prostitution. The popular view in the army was that when a soldier had a *njai*, she would be able to keep him in check. She would give the men a sense of a home, without needing what a European wife would ask for. Allowing barracks-concubinage was also believed to be the perfect remedy against venereal diseases, since men would no longer have to go to brothels. These concubines had to live a life in service of the soldiers. Following pro-concubinage arguments shows that the racial and gender status of the indigenous women is what makes the *njai* system into a system the army can profit from.

In the third chapter the changing moral beliefs on family life and the state in the Netherlands Indies is discussed. The Dutch state gradually saw a bigger role for itself in the private life of their citizens both in the motherland and in the colonies. The state believed that it should protect "cultural hygiene".¹³ A monogamous Christian marriage was seen as

¹¹ Because the *IMT* is a Dutch publication the Dutch words "concubine", "njai" and "huishoudster" were used.

¹² According to K. Crenshaw who coined the term "intersectionality", it is important to analyze discrimination against individuals or groups by taking into account that people's social identity is formed by intersecting features such as their race and gender. (K.W. Crenshaw. "Race, gender, and sexual harassment", *Southern California Law Review* 65, (Los Angeles, 1989).

¹³ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

the most proper way to live. Another factor that played a role was the pauper question. Pauperism was seen as caused by concubinage. The *njai* system was literally seen as a breeding ground of the poor proletariat. The colonizer/colonized dynamic appeared in the overall changing role of the state in marriage and family life in the Netherlands Indies.

In the fourth chapter, the battle of the KNIL against concubinage is discussed. Analyzing the *IMT* shows that abandoning barracks-concubinage was a long process. When the opinions surrounding the *njais* first started to change, the army realized that it needed to invest in a mentality change of its soldiers. To gradually get rid of the *njais*, soldiers had to be able to marry, but the KNIL realized that lifting restrictions on marriage was not enough. There was a need for more physical spaces. This need shows that in contra-concubinage arguments, the racist and sexist views were still prevalent. Having formal wives meant a need for better living conditions, whereas *njais*, being indigenous subordinate women, just had to stay behind a curtain.

This thesis argues that the KNIL barracks-concubinage between 1878 and 1933 was an institutionalized system flourishing on racist and sexist beliefs. The intersecting subordinate identity of being female and being indigenous was reflected in both pro and anti concubinage arguments. Even when the system was slowly being abandoned, this did not necessarily mean that the *IMT* authors changed their sexist and racist views, but the role of the state in family life and the consequences of the pauper proletariat made the system slowly crumble. This analysis of the *IMT* sources show that the colonizer/colonized relationship, based on race and gender dynamics as identified by Stoler, made the barracks-*njais* an integral part of the army that was hard to rout out once morals changed. This case study is in line with the notion that repressing native women, such as the *njais*, was a formative part of the colonial hierarchies. In order to do justice to this story, it is important to acknowledge that colonial structures could only flourish exploiting the colonized.

Chapter 1 - The academic debate on race and gender in the Netherlands Indies

In order to delve into the life of the *njais* it is important to delve into the academic debate on race and gender in the Netherlands Indies. Life as a concubine meant living a life as a woman in service of men. The barracks-*njais* in the Netherlands Indies were native women. The indigenous women in the Netherlands Indies were infected by both their skin colour and their gender. Not all *njai* owners were white, but these women were of a different race than the white people who were most powerful in the colonies, and than the white authors of the *IMT*. They furthermore always had a different gender than the soldiers. They could be identified as "the other" in two ways. The purpose of this chapter is to argue why Stoler's colonized/colonizer dynamic is a good framework for looking at a primary source from the male perspective to argue why the concubine system was an integral part of the KNIL. A useful concept to get a better understanding of the life of the *njais* on the *tangsi* is "intersectionality". The term intersectionality in this context was coined by scholar K.W. Crenshaw in 1989.¹⁴ According to this theoretical framework, discrimination against individuals or groups occurs on the base of an individual's intersecting social identity. This concept is useful in analyzing how in the case of the Netherlands Indies the intersections of the social identities "race" and "gender" influenced the concubinage and the position the females had within this system.

"Race" versus "class" as a defining factor for hierarchy

Within academic research on the Netherlands Indies there is not a consensus on the role of race in the colonial society. Baay wrote in his book on the *njai* the simplified idea that in the Netherlands Indies, the world had two kinds of people: white people and brown people.¹⁵ Raben and Bosma, authors of "Dutch in the Indies", argue that "class" rather than "race" was the most important indicator in what people's role in society was. However, Stoler in her work "Making empire respectable" and "Along the archival grain" emphasizes that it is important to focus on race and racial identities.¹⁶ Raben and Bosma agree with Stoler on the idea that what was meant with "European" is an important question, but they see this as a class difference. They argue that before 1920 racial differences were not a defining feature of the hierarchies in the Indies.¹⁷ In their argument they emphasize that class solidarity was more important than racial differences. The hierarchy in the Netherlands Indies' society was mostly based on social connections. Race in itself was not a determinant for status or opportunities.¹⁸ Stoler argues that for academic analysis of the dynamics within the Netherlands Indies, it is important to focus on the construction of racial identities.

Bosma defends their focus on class over race by arguing that Stoler does not acknowledge the fact that the Eurasians were at higher levels of society than just the

¹⁴ K.W. Crenshaw. "Race, gender, and sexual harassment", *Southern California Law Review* 65, (Los Angeles, 1989)

¹⁵ Baay, *De njai*, 55.

¹⁶ A.L. Stoler, *Along the archival grain: Epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*. Princeton University Press. (2010). 44-45

¹⁷ Bosma, "Indiëgangers. Verhalen van Nederlanders die naar Indië trokken." (Amsterdam, 2010) 214-233.

¹⁸ Bosma "Indiëgangers." 13-107.

pauper level. He argues that mixed ancestry does not cause all Eurasians to have similar life experiences. However class was also affected by racial status. Bosma argues that being called "Indo" instead of "European" was a name for people who were of a lower status. The question is however, is it not the fact that they were of the "Indo race" that they had a lower status. In her analysis of the debate scholar S. Protschky puts it in the following way "The circularity of Bosma's contention seriously limits its persuasiveness."¹⁹

A counter argument for Stoler's primacy of race in creating social hierarchies in the colony, is the idea that "race" is not a stable identity. "Race" is an ambiguous social construct. She argues that someone's race identity cannot be separated from someone's class or gender. The terms "Eurasian" "Indisch" "Indo-European" "Mestizo/Mestiza" were terms used as contemporary ways to identify people. The debate on class/race is thus not solely an academic debate after the fact, and it depends on the context these social constructs were used in.²⁰ It is often believed that in the era of the *scientific construction of racism*, from the mid 19th till mid 20th century, negative eugenics did not find as much support in the Netherlands Indies as in the French and British societies and their colonies.²¹ However, Dutch colonial authorities themselves used race as the overarching framework of social hierarchies.²² "Race" and "class" were sometimes interchangeable markers of social difference in the colonial period.²³

Sexism analyzed by male framing versus by women as social agents

In order to analyze the gender and race dynamics of the *njai* living within the army structure, it is important to get a grip of the role of gender and sexuality in the Netherlands Indies society in general. Stoler identifies the changing view the motherland had on colonial governance as "cultural hygiene" of colonialism. Controlling sexuality was the way to keep nationalism and civic duty in the colonies. According to the *Nederlandsch-Indisch Eugenetisch Genootschap*, the degeneration of "our mother people" was to be prohibited.²⁴ Stoler sees the women and children as the creators of colonial debates on sexuality, race and morality.²⁵ The growing belief in racial boundaries between "us" and "them" became apparent in gender-specific conventions. The gender norms and their consequences were both fundamental for the hierarchy inside European colonial societies and a defining factor for the boundaries of what is and was not seen as European.²⁶ As defined by Stoler the categories of "colonizer" and "colonized" were guaranteed by racial boundaries, and these racial boundaries were constructed in terms of the sexes.²⁷ Stoler argues that women were mainly seen as the protectors of morals, who became scrutinized by colonial authorities when their importance was solely in the fact that they were fertile beings that could reproduce.

The primary source used in this thesis, the *IMT*, is a source that shows the perspective of the male colonizer. The source material of the *njais* themselves is scarce.

¹⁹ Susie Protschky. "Race, class, and gender: Debates over the character of social hierarchies in the Netherlands Indies, circa 1600–1942." *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 167, no. 4 (2011) 543-556.

²⁰ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

²¹ *Ibidem*

²² *Ibidem*

²³ Protschky. "Race, class, and gender" 543-556.

²⁴ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

²⁵ Stoler, *Along the archival grain*, 44-45

²⁶ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

²⁷ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

Even though the *IMT* can be used to learn more about gender and race dynamics it is crucial to realize that this source is framed from a certain perspective. J.G. Taylor argues that Stoler's research lacks in portraying the social hierarchies because she does not show the agency of the women as individuals. Taylor and Stoler agree that women were important barriers of culture. However, Taylor's method focuses on seeing women as social agents. Stoler argues that looking at how women were acted upon by the male colonizer, can tell a lot about the gender dynamics. In the *tangsi* it were not only two cultures that lived together, but also two sexes.²⁸ These categories were in the *IMT* defined as *Jan*, the European Soldier, *Kromo*, the indigenous soldier and *Sarina(h)*, the indigenous woman.²⁹ According to Stoler's approach it is effective to read a source written by white males, because the way people frame "the other" can be analyzed in order to get a closer idea of what the life of the out-group was like. It is not only necessary to keep the perspective in mind because it shows how "the other was framed", as S. Protschky argues, in order to get a better grip of gender dynamics, it is also important to get a better understanding of the role of masculinity in society.³⁰

The intersectionality of race and gender in the KNIL is analyzed according to Stoler's colonizer/colonized dynamic. This thesis is in line with Stoler's idea that gender and race dynamics can be analyzed by looking at the perspective of the one portraying these intersecting identities as "other". The male perspective found in the *IMT*, is used to come as close as possible to portraying the story of how the barracks-*njais* were seen as subordinate because of their intersecting native and female identity. It is important to see how gender, class and race became salient markers of social distinction.³¹

²⁸ Baay, *De njai*, 126-129.

²⁹ Anonymous, "Javaan en Ambonees", *IMT*, (1 March 1914), 28.

³⁰ Protschky. "Race, class, and gender" 543-556.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

Chapter 2 - Concubinage as an integral institution of the KNIL

2.1 Comparing the social identity of the indigenous women to the European women

The arguments pro-concubinage show how the white male colonizer viewed the *njai*. Analyzing the debate shows that it were the racist and sexist dynamics that made contemporaries believe concubinage was a great way for the army to flourish. In the *IMT* debates on whether concubinage was beneficial for the army, the words "concubine", "housekeeper" and "*njai*" were the most commonly used terms in this magazine. In order to decide whether living with a *njai* would be good for soldiers, the authors of the *IMT* reflected on what a woman should provide for a man, and whether indigenous women would be sufficient to do so. When analyzing these sources discrimination on the basis of gender and race in the KNIL become apparent. Indigenous women living with soldiers were defined as most definitely not angels.³² They were viewed as often lacking proper European manners and could be sleazy. On the other hand, it was said that they were caring and had a sacrificing love, just like all women. So even these *inlanders*, a word used for the indigenous people, with their rough edges, would be able to behave because they were women after all. The intersecting gender and race identity is a crucial aspect of the *njai* in an analysis of this system in the Netherlands Indies. Analyzing the debate shows that it were the racist and sexist dynamics that made contemporaries believe barracks-concubinage was a great way for the army to flourish.

The contemporary views on what it meant to be a woman in the colony depended on race. A European wife was seen by the army as an ideal but scarce option. In the Netherlands Indies the European women had different obligations than the men. One important duty was to bear children.³³ It was also believed that these women should prevent their husbands from sexual contact with the colonized indigenous. The burden of the degeneration of "our mother people" was on the shoulders of the white women.³⁴ Furthermore, the sexual constraint of European women was believed to be medicine against downhill going morals.³⁵ However, people often believed that European women should not be part of the Netherlands Indies' society. The fear that they would lose their fertility in the tropical climate, was one reason why women were advised against going to the East.³⁶ Because of the scarcity of eligible bachelorettes of the European race, getting a European wife was not possible for everyone.

The intersecting gender and race identity is a crucial aspect of the *njai*. The indigenous women were seen as the less desired but the more accessible option. They were framed very negatively in the Netherlands Indies and in the Dutch motherland as well. Opinions on "the indigenous woman" were rooted in stereotypical and often contradictory beliefs. On the one hand they were believed to be less beautiful and desirable than the

³² Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat", *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-670.

³³ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

European women.³⁷ On the other hand, they were seen as dangerously seductive.³⁸ The Netherlands Indies' media often proclaimed their fear for the hereditary characteristics in the indigenous race. They called this process "indo-degeneration". According to Stoler, the cultural racism of the Dutch was not less than the French, it was just less outspoken.³⁹

Even though she was flawed, the indigenous woman could be the perfect *njai*. Raben and Bosma identify racial attitudes but they argue that these did not stop interracial relations.⁴⁰ However, the racial identity of the *njai* seems a crucial part of why she was seen as a sustainer of the army. A European woman needed more maintenance than a *njai*.⁴¹ The latter was seen as a strong individual. Another word for *njai* was "moentji", this was a corruption of the dutch word "mondje" which is the diminutive of the dutch word for mouth.⁴² This name was derived from the Dutch saying "niet op haar mondje gevallen" which means that somebody is not afraid to say what he or she is thinking. *Njais* were seen as women with a sharp tongue and strong character. There were believed to be many *njais* who decided their own fate. Concubinage was their way out of poverty. "Beroepsmoentji" translates to "Career-moentji". According to the male perspective, these were the *njais* that saw it as their long term way of living. These moentji's were seen as "masculine". The barracks-*njai* was not the complaining type.⁴³ *Njais* even fought next to the men when the *benteng*⁴⁴ had to be protected.⁴⁵

The sexist and racial dynamics connected with the concubinage system, were prevalent in the social status *njais* had. In the Netherlands Indies' society both the soldiers and their *njais* were seen as scum.⁴⁶ Even though the KNIL was not that strict in recruiting soldiers, the *njai*, however, had to get official proof of character.⁴⁷ She had to be accepted by army officers to be allowed to live in the *tangsi*. When becoming a *njai*, the status women could gain depended on their race. Indo-European *njais*, both the ones born in the *tangsi* and in civil society, often had a higher status than *njais* with only indigenous roots.⁴⁸ Age was another factor for how desirable a *njai* was. *Njais* were often between 12 and 35. Indo-European *njais* were often a bit older than 12 when they became a concubine. A *njai* was already seen as old and thus less desirable at 30. Around 30 she would thus often get her *soerat lepas*, a (sometimes metaphorical) letter of resignation.⁴⁹ When a *njai* was no longer welcome in the *tangsi*, she could often barely find her place back in the indigenous society. Especially if she was muslim and decided to live with a *kafir* (unbeliever) this had great consequences for her place in Indonesian society.⁵⁰ "Sacrificing love" was earlier discussed as a positive identifier of the indigenous women, and the social implications of

³⁷ Baay, *De njai*, 73-92.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

⁴⁰ U. Bosma and R. Raben. *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: A history of creolisation and empire, 1500-1920*. No. 116. nus Press, (Singapore, 2008), 24-25.

⁴¹ Baay, *De njai*, 187.

⁴² J. J. M. van Dam "Jantje Kaas en zijn jongens. Bijdrage tot de kennis van de Ned.-Indische soldatentaal in de 19e eeuw." In: Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land- en volkenkunde 82 (1942), afl. 1, 62-209. via DBNL (2006).

⁴³ Baay, *De njai*, 154-160.

⁴⁴ "Benteng" means "forth" in Malay, in the context of the KNIL army it can be defined as a temporary military base.

⁴⁵ Baay, *De njai*, 138-144.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

becoming a *njai* show that these women did indeed have to make sacrifices. It was their lack of other options that seemed to have made them choose for a life as a *njai*.

2.2 The *njai* as a substitute wife

Barracks-concubinage was in place for the male colonizer to flourish. The arguments why making an indigenous woman your *njai* was a great option, show the racist and sexist dynamics in the *tangsi*. Housekeepers were an integral part of the *tangsi*. Unlike other armies, the KNIL was not a male society but a very gender mixed one.⁵¹ In the barracks there was a network of little toko's (shops).⁵² Women and children were part of the daily life of the army, and thus also lived within the military structure and its rules.⁵³ The dynamics among the *njais* followed a similar pattern to the hierarchy of the soldiers. The higher the rank of the men, the higher the status of the *njai*. The army had a structured system of housekeepers. In this paragraph the framing of the "*njai* as a substitute wife" is discussed. The *njais* were framed as a lesser, possibly temporary, option until a man would be able to marry a European woman.

The composition of the army caused concubinage to be seen as a sustainable system. Soldiers in the KNIL were often seen as people with questionable morals.⁵⁴ In the 19th and 20th century the popularity of becoming part of the colonial army in the Netherlands Indies gradually decreased.⁵⁵ It was quite a commitment to fight in the *KNIL*, especially since the minimum time one had to sign was six years. The recruitment of European soldiers happened at Harderwijk from 1830 till 1909. In certain times such as during the war in Atjeh on Sumatra many soldiers were needed at once. This caused the selectors not to be too picky. Recruited soldiers were often seen as "the drain of Europe".⁵⁶ The soldiers recruited in Europe became part of an army where around two third of the soldiers were *inlanders*. The indigenous men often brought their women, even though it was against army policy to allow too many married men for each battalion. It was believed that, mostly due to practical reasons, not all soldiers should be allowed to have a wife.⁵⁷ In indigenous society arranged marriages were very common, so many indigenous soldiers had a wife at a young age. However, these marriages were seen as inherently different from European marriages and it was believed that these wives were treated like concubines. In 1887 General A. Haga secretly declared to the Minister of Colonies L.W.Ch. Keuchenius, that if indigenous soldiers were recruited, allowing concubinage was inevitable.⁵⁸ The allowing of *inlander's* marriage had the consequence that European men also had to get permission to live with a concubine.⁵⁹ An article that was published in the *IMT* of the first July of 1901 is called "Het Kazerne concubinaat", which means the *njai* system in the military barracks.⁶⁰ The author argues that the concubinage system cannot be prohibited easily because of the

⁵¹ Baay, *De njai*, 130-140.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ S. Meuwese. "Twee eeuwen dienstplicht, discipline, dienstweigeringen en desertie: deelnemen (of niet) aan de Nederlandse krijgsmacht in rechtshistorisch perspectief." Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers, (2017).

⁵⁶ Baay, *De njai*, 123.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat" *IMT* (1 July 1901), 663-679.

⁵⁸ Baay, *De njai*, 129.

⁵⁹ Anonymous, "Voorkomen van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1901), 569.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat", *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 472-670.

composition of the army.⁶¹ The two thirds of the army that is indigenous will be likely to refuse taking service, if females in the barracks are prohibited. This author argues that if indigenous soldiers were allowed to keep women, the concubinage system was necessary for the European soldiers as well. If they would not have the *njais*, they would simply have relations with women brought in the *tangsi* by the *inlanders*.

Concubinage was thought to be a way to avoid the sorrows a formal marriage would cause, while still having a woman to take care of you.⁶² In the article "Military Zigzag", of 1891 the benefit of having a concubine for a soldier's daily life was discussed.⁶³ That another word used for *njai* was housekeeper, was because household tasks were often overtly spoken of as her main duties.⁶⁴ Indigenous women were perfect to take care of the household. If she was not a match, she was just replaced with another one. *Njais* provided a feeling of home for soldiers.⁶⁵ People in the KNIL believed that having a *njai* and children would give soldiers a homely atmosphere. It was believed that concubinage had great benefits for the army. The soldiers that lived in concubinage were still "free men" and if they had to go into battle, they could just stop with their temporary household. The *IMT* sources confirm what Baay states in his book: that *njais* were often transferred to other soldiers when that seemed like a logical thing to do.⁶⁶ For a soldier starting a new household somewhere else was not a problem. Compared with this, having a *real family* would be a liability.⁶⁷ With *njais* the army had their men still available to leave whenever it was strategically beneficial. The author of "Het Kazerne concubinaat" argued that concubinage was not only a necessary evil, but had its benefits for soldiers.⁶⁸ Marriage was just one way to satisfy sexual desires. A woman could put a soldier on the right track in his otherwise lonely life. A lonely life would have possibly resulted in alcohol abuse. The author does note that for *intellectual men* having a concubine could make him lose his good European morals and even have him stray more towards the enjoyment of simple pleasures like sex and alcohol. However, on less intellectually developed young men, which the army was, according to this author, full of, these women could have a positive influence.⁶⁹ This argument can also be found in an article of the 1st of January 1901.⁷⁰ Soldiers were tempted by alcohol, and it was the *njai* that could be used as a substitute wife and thus prevent soldiers from getting too drunk.

Having an indigenous female *njai* was an exploitative practice, that was framed positively. In the KNIL these indigenous women could be used to support households, while in the European motherland one would have to pay for having a housekeeper. This was one of the financial benefits used as a pro-argument for concubines in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.⁷¹ Stoler argues that the *njai* system in the army was a way to keep the salary of colonial armies low. In the *IMT* edition of 1894 the duties of *njais* as housekeepers in the traditional sense of the word were discussed.⁷² Soldiers with

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Anonymous, "Militaire Zigzag", *IMT*, (1 January 1891), 458-465.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ Baay, *De njai*, 164.

⁶⁶ Baay, *De njai*, 120-174.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat", *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 472-670.

⁶⁹ Ibidem.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, "Voorkomen van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1901), 569.

⁷¹ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

⁷² Anonymous, "Soldatenmenages", *IMT*, (1 July 1894), 195-198.

housekeepers had their meals personally prepared for them. Soldiers from lower ranks had their food from the common kitchen, but *njais* were able to provide their men with specific dishes.⁷³ In an *IMT* article in 1903 the *njai* system was described as the perfect situation for both parties involved.⁷⁴ The soldier that got his meals prepared was not only the lucky one. According to this source, becoming a housekeeper was a wanted job for women too. Since these women would otherwise just loiter around in poverty. This assumption is an example of a way the source lacks in formulating the female colonized perspective.

"*Njais as substitute wives*" was a loophole that could prevail because of the race and gender dynamics. It was beneficial for the army if soldiers were not formally married to European women nor to the indigenous women they had as their *njais*. In the KNIL, there was a restriction on the amount of soldiers allowed to marry per battalion.⁷⁵ There were also great financial gains of not allowing marriage. With marriage, widow pensions had to be handed out and if children were acknowledged by their fathers they would have to be granted financial support too. On the 1st of July 1895 an article was published on the pensions of the next of kin of soldiers that had died in battle. It discussed in what case loved ones and children that survived soldiers would have to be granted pensions from the KNIL.⁷⁶ This article specifically talked about the European soldiers, and made an obvious distinction based on the race of soldiers. This showed that the appreciation of a *njai* depended on the race of her man. However, the status of the surviving party was also very relevant.⁷⁷ In this article it was mentioned that only through formal marriage the survivors could get pension by law. This would mean the *njai* and interracial children would be left without any income. That the author was fairly critical of this system becomes clear when on the next page he emphasized how a specific indigenous housekeeper was very loyal and self-sacrificing towards Toontje Poland.⁷⁸ She did not only take care of simple household tasks, but was next to her man at the Padri War. According to the author, this was a typical example of how devoted and loyal housekeepers could be. He used this example to criticize the fact that *njais* were not seen as eligible for pensions, even if they had supported their man for many years. It was not only the *njai* that was left out to dry after the soldier had died or had become handicapped, it were also the bastard children. This article shows that at that time it was financially beneficial for the army to have their soldiers live in concubinage, since having a *real family* would mean having to give women and children the pension they lawfully were entitled to.

2.3 The *njai* as a substitute prostitute

Next to providing wifely duties as a housekeeper, the indigenous female was also used to be a more manageable replacement for soldiers visiting prostitutes. In a society with a growing focus on hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) needed to be attacked.⁷⁹ In 1888 the Minister of Colonies Keuchenius called the behavior in the *tangsi* "onzedelijk", a Dutch

⁷³ Baay, *De njai*, 133.

⁷⁴ Anonymous, "De Garnizoensinfirmierie te Soerabaia", *IMT*, (1 July 1894), 247-253.

⁷⁵ G. J. Resink, "Conflictenrecht van de Nederlands-Indische staat in internationaalrechtelijke zetting." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 1ste Afl (1959), 1-39.

⁷⁶ Anonymous, "Pensioenen en onderstanden aan de nagelaten betrekkingen van in en door den dienst gesneuvelde, omgekomen of overleden europeesche landsdienaren", *IMT*, (1 July 1895), 212-229.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸ Toontje Poland refers to Theodorus Poland (1796-1857), who was a Colonel in the KNIL.

⁷⁹ Baay, *De njai*, 164-167.

term meaning “immoral” specifically where it concerns sexual behavior.⁸⁰ Seeing the *njai* as a remedy for STD’s indicates that the *njai* was more seen as an object instead of a person with agency. This can be seen as confirming Stoler’s notion that women were used as a tool to control sexuality. Moreover, this is in line with the idea that intersectionality of race and gender decided the fate of the *njai*: being seen as an essential part of the KNIL.

Gender dynamics become apparent in the negative ideas on masculinity discussed in the growing debate in the Dutch motherland on sexual morals of soldiers. One *IMT* source from 1901 shows that army officials wanted soldiers outside of marriage or concubinage to stop thinking they needed sex.⁸¹ Intellectuals needed to stop spreading the message that sexual pleasure was necessary for men. However, Baay argues that the overall consensus of Europeans was that sexual celibacy was not an option, because it would lead to hysteria, or eventually unnatural offensive sexual behavior.⁸² Religion was no longer enough to keep soldiers from sexual misbehavior.⁸³ In de *Indische Gids* it was argued that being without a woman was impossible for a healthy man.⁸⁴ It was seen as impossible to expect abstinence, especially if young men had not been trained to hold back their urges. The idea that it was inherent to a man to have to act upon his sexual urges, shows a toxic idea of masculinity.

When the army realized that it needed to get more control of sexual practices in order to combat the STDs, women were blamed for the spread of these diseases. That they were held accountable became apparent in how venereal diseases were often referred to as “women diseases” in the *IMT*.⁸⁵ There was a need for a disciplined system, in which the unmarried women would be under control of the KNIL.⁸⁶ One way to target the spreading of venereal diseases was giving *inlanders* policing duties to control prostitution.⁸⁷ The ultimate goal was to create a western police force that would take care of control of the brothels.⁸⁸ To target venereal diseases amongst prostitutes not only a police force was thought to be necessary, but also medical screening in order to keep both the disease and the people spreading it in check.⁸⁹ In 1899, an *IMT* article was published on the prevention of diseases caused by sexual behavior among the military.⁹⁰ *IMT* authors discussed that medical screening was not a watertight solution to finding the most decent *njais*. Firstly, it was believed that some women sneakily found ways to dodge medical screening. Secondly, *njais* were believed to often change from partner to partner.⁹¹ The realization that human beings were not the perfect remedy for a disease had a very condemning tone towards women.

The state of being a *njai* was officially administered, distinct from just being another woman in a soldier’s life.⁹² An *IMT* article from 1902 contained a list of different ways to target the spread of these venereal diseases. Upon discovery of infection, women were often put into custody.⁹³ The article of 1899 categorized different groups of women in order to distinguish the best way to get rid of STDs. In this categorization a distinction was made

⁸⁰ Ibidem.

⁸¹ Anonymous, “Het kazerne concubinaat”, *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

⁸² Baay, *De njai*, 63.

⁸³ Anonymous, “Het kazerne concubinaat”, *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

⁸⁴ Anonymous, *De Indische Gids* van 1881, via Baay, *De njai*, 236-238.

⁸⁵ Anonymous, “Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolg”, *IMT*, (1 January 1902), 218-241.

⁸⁶ Anonymous, “Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger”, *IMT*, (1 January 1902) 234-235.

⁸⁷ Ibidem

⁸⁸ Anonymous, “Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger”, *IMT*, (1 January 1902), 231.

⁸⁹ Anonymous, “Voorkoming van venerische ziekten bij militairen”, *IMT*, (1 January 1900), 571.

⁹⁰ Anonymous, “Voorkoming van venerische ziekten bij militairen”, *IMT*, (1 January 1899), 435-438.

⁹¹ Anonymous, “Het kazerne concubinaat”, *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

⁹² Anonymous, “Voorkoming van venerische ziekten bij militairen”, *IMT*, (1 January 1899), 435-438.

⁹³ Ibidem.

between women who were registered housekeepers and women who were not.⁹⁴ Medical screening was believed to be essential before women were allowed to live on the *tangsi* as registered *njais*.⁹⁵ According to an anonymous *IMT* author, in 1900 this made both the prostitutes and the concubines better candidates for sexual pleasure than common indigenous women, since the latter were not examined at all.⁹⁶ The registration of women can be seen as a way of viewing women as objects rather than people. This is in line with Stoler's idea of sexual control as part of the authorities' aim for "cultural hygiene".

It was the duty of the indigenous woman to keep men physically and mentally fit enough to commit them to their army duties, but this could only be done by governmental interference. The consensus grew that a government regulated *njai* system was the best solution to venereal diseases. The benefit of *njais*, according to contemporaries, was that they were a stabilizing factor for colonial health problems, including the public disorder caused by the spreading of STDs.⁹⁷ According to an *IMT* source in 1901, *njais* even were the only antidote, because if it was not for them soldiers would never stop visiting prostitutes.⁹⁸ There were two examples used in the *IMT* to emphasize why the government should be involved. One of them was the comparison between soldiers in the Netherlands Indies and in the British colonies. In an article published on the question of prostitution in 1902, the author called it the moral responsibility of government officials to handle the problems that occurred with STDs.⁹⁹ According to this *IMT* author, the government should realize that in the British colonies there were more venereal diseases and this was a direct result of the lack of concubines.¹⁰⁰ Another argument was made by an author in a later issue of the *IMT*. He argued that the difference between a low infection rate of indigenous soldiers and a high one among European soldiers was probably the dependency on concubines.¹⁰¹ He stated that barracks-concubinage had thus far been the only fruitful remedy for the lack of responsibility taken by the government. The amount of STDS was double for Europeans.¹⁰² The source of 1900, that was a continuation of the article of 1899 on the prevention of venereal diseases of soldiers, stated that both the European and indigenous soldiers with wives and *njais* were less found to have syphilis.¹⁰³ It was seen as crucial to show these figures in the annual colonial report.¹⁰⁴ Both authors claimed it was a necessity to realize the correlation between living without a female partner and a higher chance to get infected.

Except for policing sexual behavior and medically screening *njais*, it was furthermore considered necessary to create regulated living spaces for these women.¹⁰⁵ The arguments for women hangars showed the patronizing position taken towards these women. This was a way to regulate the women coming in, and thus at the same time preventing venereal diseases to spread.¹⁰⁶ As long as there were housekeepers there must have been huts for women only, but in 1885 the first official space for women inside barrack buildings was created. An *IMT* author expressed in 1901 that a place for women should be part of every

⁹⁴ Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolg", *IMT*, (1 January 1902), 435-438.

⁹⁵ Anonymous, "Voorkoming van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1900), 571.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

⁹⁸ Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat", *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

⁹⁹ Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolg", *IMT*, (1 January 1902), 218-241.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰² Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolg", *IMT*, (1 January 1902), 349-361.

¹⁰³ Anonymous, "Voorkoming van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1900), 569.

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolg", *IMT*, (1 January 1902), 356.

¹⁰⁵ Anonymous, "Voorkomen van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1901), 570.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

military base.¹⁰⁷ Firstly, in this way the women of the soldiers could be separated from the bad apples. A regulated system would prevent soldiers from being seduced by clandestine-prostitutes. Secondly, when women would get their own more comfortable place in the barracks the habit of *passargaan* would be decreased.¹⁰⁸ This meant that women would no longer stray away for a longer period of time.¹⁰⁹ If women would live in boredom they were thought to be more likely to turn to bad behavior, such as having sexual relations with other men. Giving women their own physical space would reduce the chances of them getting infected. The regulated system of medically screened *njais* living in specific areas on the *tangsi*, was seen as the way to combat venereal diseases.

If this procedure was followed, the *njai* was seen as the perfect substitute for a prostitute. Some incentive to create new living spaces sounds like it was important for soldiers to make the women more comfortable, but accommodating them happened so they could be used by men. The regulations show how the *njai* system was an integral government regulated way to use the indigenous female for the benefit of the army. Seeing the *njai* as a remedy for STD's indicates that the *njai* was more seen as an object instead of a person with agency. How the barracks-concubines were used is in line with Stoler's argument that the gender norms had their fundamental consequences on the hierarchies inside European colonial societies. Controlling sexuality was formative for the intersecting gender and race dynamics in the KNIL.

2.4 The *njai* as a necessary evil

The benefits of the *njai* system stated earlier in this chapter were also believed to have downsides, but moral questions regarding the well-being of females were rare. There was some contemporary critique on the fate of the women. Already on the first of July 1900 in the *IMT* the *njai* and her children were described as the *forgotten women and children*.¹¹⁰ In the *IMT* it was emphasized how a specific indigenous housekeeper was very loyal and self-sacrificing towards Toontje Poland.¹¹¹ She did not only take care of simple household tasks, but was next to her man at the Padri War. This example was used to criticize the fact that *njais* were not seen as eligible for pensions, even when they were devoted and had supported their man for many years.

However, critique on the lack of support for non-married relatives of soldiers, showed that the worth of a *njai* was based on the status of her man. An article in 1900 criticized: why do women of European soldiers that are not married by law enjoy less convenience than the wives of the indigenous?¹¹² It was only the *njai* and the children of mixed race that had the least support of the army authorities. It was the European soldier that was married that had the best financial support, but that was not the only group above the *njai*. When an indigenous soldier was in the hospital, his wife and children had enough to eat and the man himself got 4 cents a day, which was a lot for the indigenous person. However, a housekeeper of a European soldier, even if that soldier was of a rank as high as

¹⁰⁷ Anonymous, "Voorkomen van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1901), 570.

¹⁰⁸ "Passar" is the Malay word for "market". "Passargaan" in this context means going to markets and similar common places. The Pasar was a place where indigenous women would hang out for practical and social reasons.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, "Voorkomen van venerische ziekten bij militairen", *IMT*, (1 January 1901), 569.

¹¹⁰ Anonymous, "Voor de practijk", *IMT*, (1 July 1900), 273-274.

¹¹¹ Toontje Poland refers to Theodorus Poland (1796-1857), who was a Colonel in the KNIL.

¹¹² *Ibidem*.

a non-commissioned officer, would not get anything. The man would at most have gotten 10 cents per day, but that is not different from what he got if he did not have women and children to take care of. The fact that this author was touched by this wrongdoing becomes clear by looking at the language he used. He called the *njai* "the honorary woman that takes care of his children". Nonetheless, even the arguments trying to improve the fate of some *njais*, were of a racist nature. The author questioned how the family of the indigenous can ever be above the family of a European soldier. Furthermore, he did not make a point of the fact that indigenous soldiers only got half of what European soldiers earned. Even if he did argue for better support of some indigenous women, it was because they were the *njais* of the European men. In his eyes the appreciation of the *njai* depended on the status of her man.

Arguments that seemed to reflect concern for women, still undermined their state of being human beings. Articles that argued that the boundary between a *njai* and a prostitute was not always clear, on first glance seem concerned with the fate of these women. An IMT source states that some *njais* still resorted to prostitution because they owed their soldier money.¹¹³ Sometimes when soldiers had made a woman into their *njai*, she could still prostitute herself if she shared the money with her soldier.¹¹⁴ Having other men visit your *njai* for material gain, was a regular way of extra income for soldiers. However, even if a soldier did not specifically ask his housekeeper to sleep with other men, it was sometimes her last resort to become debt-free. Some soldiers provided *njais* with money to only ask for it back later. This would lead her to go either in *dobbelspel* (playing dice), or prostitution in order not to get beaten up by her man. Moreover, with stricter regulations, more women would be sacked as barracks-concubines. A woman that was no longer welcome in the barracks would loiter around in the kampong close to the *tangsi*.¹¹⁵ The chances she would be used in unregulated prostitution instead was believed to be high.¹¹⁶ Eventhough this source talks about women having to fall back in prostitution, the author does not seem to pity the fate of the women, but highlights the downside for the army when regulations surrounding concubinage were a stimulus for more prostitution.¹¹⁷ The way this source talked about soldiers having to be careful for "women diseases" reflects the lack of care for the fate of the females involved. Whether a woman was infected only seemed to be important because of the chances a soldier would become ill. In another source it was stated that women were treated as material possessions in the debates surrounding venereal diseases.¹¹⁸ However, later in the same source the solution to just find naïve women was mentioned. Women who did not know any better were perfect to use as *njais*.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolgd", IMT, (1 January 1902), 218-241.

¹¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹¹⁵ "Kampong" means "compound" or "village" and can be defined as a place where many Indigenous people lived in the Netherlands Indies' civil society.

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolgd", IMT, (1 January 1902), 218-241.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat", IMT, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

¹¹⁹ Ibidem.

Conclusion

An analysis of the pro-*njai* arguments show that the indigenous females were seen as subordinate because of their race and gender. The fate of the male colonizer was more important. Even though European women were seen as more desirable, the indigenous women were seen as a good fit to take care of the needs of KNIL soldiers. A *njai* did not cause the worries a European wife might cause, but did have the benefits of keeping a man focused on his duties. The *njai* was seen as a remedy to the spreading of venereal diseases, while she was still fulfilling the soldiers' sexual desires. The arguments show the dehumanization of the indigenous and the female. The intersecting identity of their gender and race, made their life subordinate to the male colonizer. The doubts expressed regarding the benefits set out in this chapter furthermore focused on the well-being of the army and its soldiers, rather than the fate of the *njais*. The fate of the male colonizer was seen as superior. Whether the colonized female had a good life was secondary at best, but in analyzing the racial and gender dynamics above, it seemed hardly relevant to the KNIL at the time.

This analysis of the pro-concubinage debate is in line with Stoler's focus on race rather than Bosma & Raben's view that it was classist dynamics determining the hierarchy. *Sarina(h)* in the *tangsi* was both specifically defined and implicitly treated by her racial identity. Furthermore, this analysis done from the perspective of the male colonizer shows that having sources that give women agency, as argued by Taylor, is not the only way to analyze gender dynamics. Firstly, the way sexuality of males is defined shows a toxic idea of masculinity. Secondly, the male colonizer is open about its beliefs because he lived in a time with a sexist *zeitgeist*. Lastly, the lack of agency given in the source is in itself a good way to reflect the lack of agency given in real life. The *njai* was seen as a tool to be used for the benefit of the army.

Chapter 3 - Authorities' views on family life in the Netherlands Indies

3.1 The need for interference in interracial relations

This chapter analyzes the changing view of the role of authorities in the private life in the Netherlands Indies, because the resentment of the state on concubinage caused a growing doubt in the army about the *njai* system. Putting the *njai* system in a perspective of changing morals on family life makes it possible to analyze the broader context of the gender and race dynamics in the *tangsi*. The Dutch state started to realize the importance of having good European morals in the colony. As mentioned before, the view of the KNIL from both the motherland and the rest of colonial society was negative.¹²⁰ It was believed that the *tangsi* was the place where men became immoral. It was no longer seen as acceptable that the "scum of society" was recruited for the KNIL. The recruitment depot in Harderwijk closed in 1909, because the state wanted to better regulate who became a soldier.¹²¹ A later development identified by Baay was in 1918 when the draft became part of the KNIL.¹²² According to Baay this made the *tangsi* a less isolated place, and thus the morals of civil society started to have a bigger influence on the KNIL after 1918. However, the influence of the state seems to be a gradual process. Around the turn of the century there seemed to be a general tendency of state interference in everyday life, both in Dutch society and their colonies. Already in 1890 Catholic parliament member B.R. van Vlijmen let the *Tweede Kamer*, the lower house in the Dutch Parliament, know about the bad side of concubinage.¹²³ Minister of Colonies Keuchenius was pressured by public opinion to also publicly broadcast doubts about the *njais* living in the KNIL community. One of the concerns that was expressed in the Hague (the city where the Dutch government is located) was that young boys between the age of 12 and 16 were already having sexual relations with *njais*.¹²⁴ It was stated that even homosexual activity in the army would be preferred over concubinage.¹²⁵ From 1890 forward it was a reappearing subject in the *Indische Begrooting*, the budget report about Netherlands Indies. The three consecutive Ministers of Colonies Keuchenius, A.W.F. Idenberg and E. de Waal Malefijt all saw concubinage as against christian morals.

The dislike of concubinage was even formulated in a speech coming from the Dutch Royal throne. In Wilhelmina's *troonrede* from 1901, she discussed the morals of soldiers in the Netherlands Indies.¹²⁶ She publicly spoke for more godly and moral behavior in the barracks. She saw it as the duty of the motherland to spread christian beliefs. In her speech the growing decrease in wealth and wellbeing among the indigenous people was also shortly addressed. In different branches of the government the need for interference in the private life in the colonies was expressed, but this turned out to be a very complex process.

¹²⁰ Baay, *De njai*, 157-165.

¹²¹ Ibidem.

¹²² Baay, *De njai*, 170-174.

¹²³ Baay, *De njai*, 164-167.

¹²⁴ Baay, *De njai*, 170-174.

¹²⁵ Ibidem.

¹²⁶ Wilhelmina, Queen. "Troonrede van 17 September 1901.", *Troonredes, Openingsredes, Inhuldingsredes 1814-1963*, (The Hague, 1964), 193-194. Troonrede is an annual speech, comparable to the state of union, in the Netherlands coming from the throne.

The importance of racial distinctions in the laws in the Netherlands Indies show the complexity of state interference in interracial relations.¹²⁷ "European" "Vreemdeling" and "Inlander" were seen as inherently different.¹²⁸ Interracial relations made these boundaries less obvious. In 1887 the problem of interracial marriage was discussed in the *Nederlands-Indische juristencongres*, a legal expert conference of the Netherlands Indies.¹²⁹ According to historian G. Resink, this was an influential conference on the view of interracial marriage in the Netherlands Indies. It was about 10 years later, in 1898, that a general covenant on not only interracial but also interreligious and interlocal marriage was set up. This covenant was formative for *intergentiel* laws.¹³⁰ It was decided that women could adopt the civil state of their husband. This meant that in interracial relationships between a European man and an indigenous woman, once married European law was applicable to the women. Interracial marriage thus had influence on what it meant to be European.

It was the protection of European morals that was the biggest argument for passing a law on monogamy.¹³¹ The debate on the adaptation of laws showed a bigger tendency of growing regulations on marriage and family life. It is important to realize that interracial laws were not set in place to protect the women in the KNIL barracks-concubinage. However, this process showed a growing government interference with interracial relationships in the Indies. Locher-Scholten states it in the following way "During the debate, the aforementioned grievance against the *njai* received a new stimulus."¹³² The question of monogamy was connected to the gradual disapproval and in the end the disappearance of the KNIL concubinage.

First interracial relations were seen as a way to be more privileged as European men, but soon it was seen as a practice that caused the privilege of the *homo europaeus* to decrease.¹³³ During critical moments in colonial society, the sexual etiquettes and the sexual moral beliefs were redefined. Western scientific and technological advantages caused discussions on nationality to grow.¹³⁴ Stoler's notion that racial boundaries became apparent in gender-specific conventions is relevant for the growing interference of the state in family life. Stoler's research on the debates on family formation show how moral beliefs on *njais* changed when in other colonial facets new challenges appeared.¹³⁵ Sexual control was a fundamental part of greater power relations, such as what it meant to be "European".¹³⁶ Government interference in the private lives influenced the opinions on concubinage.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the *njai* system was seen as a destruction of European morals. Concubinage was a matter of official debate for a while, but in the first half of the 20th century official government regulations surrounding interracial marriage

¹²⁷ G. J. Resink, "Conflictenrecht van de Nederlands-Indische staat in internationaalrechtelijke zetting." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 1ste Afl (1959), 1-39.

¹²⁸ Ibidem.

¹²⁹ Resink, "Conflictenrecht van de Nederlands-Indische staat" 1-39. See also C. Fasseur, "Hoeksteen en Struikelblok; Rasonderscheid en overheidsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië", *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 105 (1992), 218-242.

¹³⁰ Intergentiel laws can be defined as the laws spreading through different groups of society (Resink, "Conflictenrecht van de Nederlands-Indische staat", 1-39).

¹³¹ The law was not passed until the year 1937. However, because of the long lasting nature of this debate it is still relevant to this thesis' timeframe that lasts until 1933. The debate to intervene in marriage predated the final application of the monogamy law by decades.

¹³² Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state*, 180-202.

¹³³ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

¹³⁴ Ibidem.

¹³⁵ Ibidem.

¹³⁶ Ibidem.

started to appear. The *IMT* showed that in discussions about family life a distinction between the muslim and the christian KNIL-soldiers was made.¹³⁷ It was argued that concubinage and an islamic marriage were practically the same. With laws in general, but especially containing marriage, there was a different approach from the state towards indigenous people being christian and those that were muslim.¹³⁸ The marriage conditions of Indonesian family life such as marriage at a young age, polygamy, easy divorce, and arranged marriages were seen as unchristian. The moral beliefs surrounding family life in the Netherlands Indies changed more to western norms, when the power of the colonial state grew.¹³⁹

The fear *njais* would be a destruction of European morals was contradictory to the earlier idea that living with a *njai* would stir men away from immoral practices by providing them with stability. As mentioned, *IMT* sources discussed that it was a remedy against the two evils: alcohol and prostitutes. However, living with indigenous women meant eating their food, and being influenced by their cultural beliefs and practices. Stoler identifies the fear that this would lead to European identity loss.¹⁴⁰ Earlier in chapter 2.1, having an indigenous woman rather than a European one was already discussed. In Stoler's book she argues that with growing interference of the state, a growing belief in the benefits of having a European woman was emphasized.¹⁴¹ Dutch people who went back to the motherland were often believed to suffer from *Colonial Neurasthenia*, a condition with differing health symptoms that were believed to be caused by being in the colonies. Living outside of European civilization for too long was not recommended. The remedy was having European wives.¹⁴²

The state interference in family life in general, and interracial relations specifically, underlines Stoler's premise that racial hierarchy and sexual norms are inseparable. When there was a focus on the morals of European civilization, it was the European woman that should protect men from immoral deeds. Whereas interracial relations like those of a *njai* and her soldier disrupted the European identity. Chapter 4 will give insight on how the role the state started to play in the "bedroom" ended up having its consequences in the KNIL barracks.

Furthermore, Stoler's idea that race in itself was a flexible social construct becomes apparent in the legal importance of being "European" "Vreemdeling" and "Inlander". The racial distinctions in the law, undermines the idea of class being the most important decider of hierarchies. The importance of gender dynamics, and its connections to racial boundaries, becomes apparent in the fact that a woman's status is influenced by her husband's. Moreover, when the state's interest in family life grew, it was the burden of the European women as creators of colonial debates on sexuality, race and morality that grew with it.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Asymptoot, "Concubinaat... of huwelijk?", *IMT*, (1 September 1914), 44-56.

¹³⁸ Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state*, 180-202.

¹³⁹ The Dutch first feminist wave was from 1850 till 1940. This had its influence on the concubinage in the general society. (Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state*, 180-202). However, the conversations on feminism were mostly among the elites and are thus not identified in this thesis as a direct consequence for the changing view on the barracks-njais in the tangsi.

¹⁴⁰ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

¹⁴¹ Ibidem.

¹⁴² Ibidem.

¹⁴³ Stoler, *Along the archival grain* 44-45.

3.2 Interracial children and the pauper-problem

Analysing the authorities views on family life shows not only the growing resentment of the *njai* system because of interference in relationships, but also the growing aversion against the consequences of these interracial relations: the mixed children. This paragraph analyses the concern for a pauper proletariat. There was a growing pauper population in the Netherlands Indies, in particular among the Indo-European.¹⁴⁴ The idea that concubinage would easily be a part of the KNIL, could no longer be upheld by the state when the fate of children of these interracial relations was considered.¹⁴⁵ Fathers would often not take care of their offspring, and these neglected *tangsi* children grew up to be people living in poverty.¹⁴⁶ The bastard children were not able to integrate into regular society. Neither being European nor indigenous, their place in the Netherlands Indies was unclear.¹⁴⁷ The Dutch government expressed its concerns for this phenomenon.

The children of the *njais* symbolized the racial classification problem and hence interfered with white supremacy.¹⁴⁸ Interracial relations, even if marriage was not a part of it, could make racial distinctions less obvious because interracial children disrupted this hierarchy. Relations between the *njais* and European soldiers lead to a disruption of racial categories, because of their offspring of mixed race.¹⁴⁹ Stoler identification of "cultural hygiene" as the view the motherland had on colonial governance is relevant in the growing resentment towards barracks-concubines. There was a fear of racial degeneration in the context of race specific sexual norms. In the earlier days of the colony, the first impulse was never to prohibit interracial relations. European men and colonized women having offspring, was at first not seen as something negative. First of all, if men would stay in the colony for a long time, getting children was a way to keep colonial heritage in trustworthy hands. Second of all, the government thought that it would be damaging to the prestige of the white elite if most European men in the colonies were single. It would be bad for white supremacy if white men were seen as not financially capable of starting a proper household. As mentioned in chapter 2.2, when starting a family with a European woman was not possible for most people in the KNIL, creating a household with a *njai* was seen as a sufficient alternative. However, when the *njai* system was linked to the pauper-problem it ended up being identified by contemporaries as the biggest struggle for racial hierarchy. The troubling growth of interracial bastards influenced the consensus of authorities that prohibition of the *njai* system was needed.¹⁵⁰ The *njai* system was not as financially and politically beneficial as policy makers had hoped for. It was seen as the social and biological cause of race degeneration and thus the cause of political turmoil.

Growing ethical politics were prevalent in the growing debate on the immoral fate of these "pauper children". There were many young interracial children, mostly girls, who ended up in prostitution. One man that went down in history as a father to many neglected, often interracial, children is Pa Johannes van der Steur.¹⁵¹ He was also mentioned in the *IMT*

¹⁴⁴ Baay, *De njai*, 157-165.

¹⁴⁵ Luit. kol. der Inf. 326 H. A. Kooy, "Het soldatenkind", *IMT*, (1 april 1914), 40-48.

¹⁴⁶ Baay, *De njai*, 157-165.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁸ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

of the 1st of January 1911.¹⁵² Pa van der Steur was a missionary that was touched by the fate of these children in the Netherlands Indies. His orphanage was located in Magelang from 1893 onwards.¹⁵³ Magelang had been a military post since the era of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Many "Steurtjes", a name for the children living under Van der Steur's care, were the bastards of KNIL soldiers. When Van der Steur's orphanage grew rapidly his anti-concubinage sentiment grew with it.¹⁵⁴

A major point of critique on the growing pauper proletariat made by *IMT* sources, is the lack of responsibility taken by both individual soldiers and the authorities. When the carelessness of the army is questioned, this shows how the gender dynamics allowed men initially not to take care of their children. Within the army the barracks children were seen as a troubling phenomenon.¹⁵⁵ Soldiers often saw these children as a burden. In 1881 it was decided that children within a marriage in the Netherlands Indies should have the nationality of their father.¹⁵⁶ However, children of *njais* had to be recognized by their father. This was thus a conscious choice fathers had to take. There was critique in the *IMT* on these children living in poverty.¹⁵⁷ The KNIL worried about *njais* causing generations of neglected children. In the *IMT* it was also expressed that the government was not taking its responsibility. If a society wants to have a working army, they should also deal with the negative consequences. "Lusten betekent lasten" was expressed in the *IMT*. This translates to: if one enjoys the pleasures one should also cope with the burdens.¹⁵⁸ If society wanted to have a well-functioning army, it was also society's duty to take care of these children. Already on November the 25th in 1898 Governor-General of the Netherlands Indies, C. Pijnacker Hordijk, argued that these are not regular orphans but military orphans, and thus should be taken care of by the state.¹⁵⁹ If one does not want to abandon barracks-concubinage, one should realize that interracial offspring without a doubt will keep on being born. What was especially seen as troublesome, was that for girls nothing was done. Being abandoned as a girl meant an even worse fate. Male pauper children would be able to enlist in the army.¹⁶⁰ Whereas girls would often have to result to prostitution, if they did not become part of the *njai* system themselves.¹⁶¹ In the article of 1902 on prostitution, the offspring of concubinage was said to be the moral responsibility of army and government officials.¹⁶²

Even though it takes two parties to create a child, individual men were held less responsible than females were. Even though critique on men was expressed, an analysis of the *IMT* sources shows that individual soldiers were not held as much accountable as the

¹⁵² Anonymous, "Werving en legerreserve", *IMT*, (1 January 1911), 479.

¹⁵³ V. van de Loo, "Pa: Johannes "Pa" van der Steur (1865 - 1945): zijn leven, zijn werk en zijn Steurtjes" Tong Tong Stichting, (Amsterdam, 2015), 1-129.

¹⁵⁴ Baay, *De njai*, 161.

¹⁵⁵ Bosma & Raben *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 244-245.

¹⁵⁶ Resink "Conflictenrecht van de Nederlands-Indische staat", 25-27.

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous, "Het kazerne concubinaat", *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁰ Anonymous, "het kazerne concubinaat", *IMT*, (1 July 1901), 663-679.

¹⁶¹ A phenomenon called "Bloempje uit eigen tuin", meaning "Flower from your own garden" is discussed by Marion Bloem in her book. (Marion Bloem, *Indo: Een persoonlijke geschiedenis over identiteit* De Arbeiderspers (Amsterdam, 2020).). This phrase stands for the alleged phenomenon that men in the Netherlands Indies, out of convenience, had their sexual desires fulfilled by the daughters of their *njais*. These girls were thus their own direct offspring. This incestuous practice needs to get more academic research. However, the academic analysis of the *njai* gives sufficient evidence that at least some KNIL soldiers did not shy away from exchanging underage daughters among other soldiers.

¹⁶² Anonymous, "Prostitutie vraagstuk in het indisch leger vervolg" (1 January 1902), 218-241.

njais were. Even though women had hardly any control over getting pregnant since there was no proper contraception, giving birth to a child drastically changed the life of *njais*.¹⁶³ The IMT mentions that if a *njai* was abandoned by her former soldier, she was less worth something if she had a child. It was policy at the time of this budget report in 1904 that when a *njai* got pregnant she was ought to leave the *tangsi* after a few months of giving birth.¹⁶⁴ Only if the soldier formally acknowledged that he was the father of her child, a *njai* was allowed to live in an army facility. Sometimes only the children were taken and sometimes only the *njai* was, depending on which scenario seemed more convenient to soldiers.¹⁶⁵ The amount of children being acknowledged by their fathers was low enough to create a societal group of poor people of mixed race.¹⁶⁶

The fear of a poor proletariat seems to emphasize the importance of class over race, however race was a prevalent part of the discussion surrounding this phenomenon. Bosma & Raben's argument that it is the classist divides that shape the hierarchy within the Netherlands Indies seems to be prevalent when talking about a pauper proletariat. However, the race of these children is inherent to the reason they end up in this hierarchy. Furthermore, it is the reason why this growing societal group was seen as dangerous. Stoler argues that there was a fear the mixed children of *njais* would turn into "father killers". It was feared that if children lived as paupers, they would develop a hatred towards white society. If the father did not take on the care, orphanages needed to prevent this hatred towards the white population. Growing up among their poor indigenous family relations, was feared to cause resentment towards their European fathers. A patriotic loyalty was the way to the hearts and minds of the interracial offspring.

Conclusion

The view on concubinage changed around the turn of the century when the authorities' role in family life changed. The intersectional hierarchy of racial and sexual norms created the belief that concubinage was an undesirable system. A christian marriage was seen by the Netherlands Indies authorities as the most desirable way to create a family. The interference of the state in family life showed that religion mattered. Furthermore, the growing pauper proletariat was seen as a direct result of soldiers and their *njais*. The racial boundaries did not only become less obvious if interracial marriage was involved, the offspring of interracial relations also disrupted white supremacy. The bastards of soldiers and *njais* often lived in extreme poverty and these interracial pauper children created political turmoil. These findings are in line with Stoler's argument that race in itself was a flexible social construct. The categories "us" and "them" were challenged and the arguments against the concubinage were filled with the idea that the indigenous woman was subordinate and her offspring was problematic. Not everyone saw the *njai* system as pure evil, but the overall consensus became that it should be abandoned.

¹⁶³ Baay, *De njai*, 157.

¹⁶⁴ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands-Indie voor het dienstjaar 1904", IMT, (1st of July 1903), 645.

¹⁶⁵ Baay, *De njai*, 222-252.

¹⁶⁶ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands Indië voor het dienstjaar 1904", IMT, (1st of January 1903), 171-177.

Chapter 4 - The battle against the *njai* system in the KNIL

4.1 The barracks-*njai* was no longer preferred to a formal wife

When the realization in the army came that the system could no longer be upheld, it became even more apparent how the concubines were an essential part. The process of outrooting shows how integral the racist and sexist beliefs underlying the barracks-*njai* system were. The necessity of the *tangsi* to become a place with "cultural hygiene", showed that the fate of the colonizer and general society was more important than the fate of the *njai*. In the arguments against the *njai* and in the practical solutions to get rid of her, gender norms and racial norms became apparent.¹⁶⁷ According to an *IMT* article in 1913, concubinage was a deep rooted system.¹⁶⁸ *Njais* had become an integral part of the KNIL because of governmental stimulations. Allowing concubinage was taking pragmatic businesslike considerations more into account than christianity. It was stated in the *IMT* that ethical reason should prevail over practicality.¹⁶⁹

The growing resentment towards barracks-concubinage resulted in a discussion about a proper alternative for the KNIL. As mentioned in chapter 3.1 most contemporaries believed that only a christian marriage could allow men to live with a woman. In the civil society of the Netherlands Indies the amount of marriages increased and with it concubinage decreased.¹⁷⁰ However, using formal marriage as a tool to combat *njais* was not an easy practice in the army. The commander in chief, the council of Netherlands Indies and the General all believed that it was hard to completely abandon the concubinage system in the KNIL. In 1905 they argued that the first step was to prohibit living with a *njai* out in the open.¹⁷¹ They believed that *intra muros* nothing was to be prohibited.¹⁷² They did identify a sentiment change in the army. The belief that concubines were no longer in line with the times gradually gained more support among soldiers. As mentioned in chapter 2.1, Baay identifies the draft in 1918 as a reason the morals in the *tangsi* were influenced more by the morals in civil society. Nonetheless, putting concubinage above marriage was already in 1905 believed by most to no longer be a sustainable opinion. In 1917 the *IMT* published an article about the dangers of going to Indië as a single man.¹⁷³ The consensus that developed in the army was that formal marriage had to be encouraged.

The army saw educating their soldiers on moral beliefs as one solution to the *njai* problem. In a budget report by the Dutch state in 1903 for the following year, the importance of giving soldiers an education on the intimate parts of their societal lives was discussed.¹⁷⁴ Soldiers, mostly of lower ranks, were believed to have a negative socialization process because they were segregated from European civilians in the colonies.¹⁷⁵ Because interacting with indigenous women was seen as bad for European values, officers needed to

¹⁶⁷ Stoler, "Making empire respectable", 634-660.

¹⁶⁸ Anonymous, "Begrooting van D. Indië voor het dienstjaar 1914 Indisch ontwerp", *IMT*, (1 augustus 1913), 96.

¹⁶⁹ Asymptoot, "Concubinaat... of huwelijk?", *IMT*, (1 September 1914), 44.

¹⁷⁰ Anonymous, "De legervereeniging", *IMT*, (1 April 1918), 68-72.

¹⁷¹ Anonymous, "Varia", *IMT*, (1 January 1905), 276-277.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*.

¹⁷³ Anonymous, "Indië weerbaar", *IMT*, (1 September 1917), 49-52.

¹⁷⁴ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands Indië voor het dienstjaar 1904", *IMT*, (1st of January 1903), 171-177.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

have moral prevalence over lower ranking people in the army. It was their duty to be a tutor on sexual morals. If marriage was not a possibility for all and if concubinage was indeed abandoned, there had to be good education on morals for the KNIL soldiers.¹⁷⁶ The army had to take its responsibility and turn these often young men into well behaving soldiers.¹⁷⁷ Getting rid of the KNIL-*njais* was not just possible by changing regulations, a change in mentality was needed. Since *njais* were no longer seen as a way to keep a male on track, lower ranking soldiers had to be kept busy, to change their mentality.¹⁷⁸ It was a priority to find things to distract the body and mind of soldiers. This was seen as the way to prevent them from behaving immorally. The concern for the sexual urges of soldiers in “their prime time” is another example of the idea that sexual desire is part of masculinity. To combat the *njais*, it was believed that the KNIL needed to invest in the mindset of their soldiers.¹⁷⁹ This is in line with Stoler’s notion that authorities wanted to control sexuality.

Lifting the restrictions on marriage in the KNIL, was seen as another way to gradually get rid of the concubines. The budget report of 1904 was one of the first sources that mentioned fighting the *njai* system by raising the number of married soldiers.¹⁸⁰ This was a response of the authorities to comments made by the pauperism-commission. This commission linked concubinage to the growth of the poor population in the Netherlands Indies.¹⁸¹ The pauper problem discussed in the previous chapter was part of the argument in 1903 as well.¹⁸² This author believed that to attack the growing number of paupers in the Netherlands Indies, christian marriage had to replace the concubine system.¹⁸³

In the IMT it is mentioned that with a lack of European women, marrying an indigenous or Indo-European woman was better than having her as a *njai*.¹⁸⁴ Concubinage had long been a system in parts of society where respectable marriageable girls were scarce.¹⁸⁵ In the first IMT of 1911 it was stated that compared to other European colonies, the Netherlands Indies authorities lacked in supporting the immigration of women.¹⁸⁶ Parliament members and Ministers spoke of their dislike for the concubinage system, but the European men in the KNIL did not get the facilities to be able to marry a European woman. Moreover, marrying a non-European was also not made easy. European men would only be allowed to marry their *njai*, if she was approved by army authorities.¹⁸⁷ Approval would only occur if she already had children from him or was up to the behavioral standards of the KNIL officers.

In making the disappearance of the *njai* system work, it was believed to be most efficient to start with the rank of non-commissioned officer (NCO). It was not *Jan Fuselier*, the soldier of the low ranks, that was the first target in the battle against concubinage. Nor was it the officer, since he was likely to already be married to a European. It was the man in

¹⁷⁶ Anonymous, “Varia”, IMT, (1 January 1905), 276-277.

¹⁷⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁸ Anonymous, “Nota van antwoord van de Regeering (Uittreksel)”, IMT, (1 July 1918), 64-76.

¹⁷⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁰ Anonymous, “Begrooting van Nederlands Indië voor het dienstjaar 1904”, IMT, (1st of January 1903), 171-177.

¹⁸¹ Anonymous, “Varia”, IMT, (1 January 1905), 276-277.

¹⁸² Anonymous, “Begrooting van Nederlands-Indië voor het dienstjaar 1904”, IMT, (1st of July 1903), 635-645.

¹⁸³ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁴ Anonymous, “Uit de pers”, IMT, (1 July 1909), 188.

¹⁸⁵ Anonymous, “Varia”, IMT, (1 January 1905), 276-277.

¹⁸⁶ Anonymous, “Wervingen en legerreserve”, IMT, (1 January 1911), 467.

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous, “Uit de pers”, IMT, (1 July 1909), 188.

between these ranks that was first targeted.¹⁸⁸ Firstly, this way the NCO could lead by example. If they stopped participating in the *njai* system, it was believed it would discourage lower ranking soldiers from having sexual intercourse outside of a christian marriage. Some *IMT* voices went against the idea of government interference with family life. They often agreed with prohibiting NCOs to live with a *njai*. However, they thought that for lower ranking soldiers concubinage was still acceptable, since these men already lacked good morals. The idea that it was not the state's duty to rule over marriage of ordinary men was still expressed in 1918.¹⁸⁹ Secondly, the NCOs would have better financial possibilities to sustain a married life. They were seen as financially stable enough to take care of a European christian wife and children. Whereas for low ranking soldiers it would be hard to provide for a household financially. Children coming from a christian marriage, specifically European children, were seen as more deserving of having a fatherly figure in their lives than the children of mixed race that lived as bastards in pauper conditions.

That concubinage had become essential for the army-structure is shown when it is expressed that the amount of married NCOs should only grow as much as was necessary for the army to flourish.¹⁹⁰ A report in an *IMT* of 1904 shows that in order to attack the barracks-*njai* system the opportunity to marry was indeed granted to a bigger portion of the NCOs than before.¹⁹¹ However, the budget report of January 1905 showed that the government was still being questioned on the prohibition of *njais* for the NCO. This meant a formal prohibition had not yet taken place, even though the *IMT* had mentioned actions would be taken at the short term.¹⁹² These doubts surrounding different strategies made the abandonment process very slow. This can be seen in statistics published in the *IMT*. On the first of January in 1918, when the KNIL army was discussed in the Dutch Parliament, the following statistics from a colonial report were used: For the 9103 soldiers that were below the officer level 377 were married and 2268 lived with a *njai*. The other 6458 were living without a wife or *njai*.¹⁹³ A year later the need to keep holding track of the women and children of soldiers was stressed.¹⁹⁴ Only that way proper regulations could be made. It was believed that having a *real* family would be hard to combine with strategically moving around.¹⁹⁵ The author believed that the NCOs would not be able to give a proper upbringing to their children. The reason NCO-marriages were seen to endanger the mobility of the KNIL, again shows that the fate of the *njais* and her children were secondary.

Getting soldiers to find a European woman instead of keeping a concubine or marrying their *njai* was seen as a worthy investment. On the 14th of november 1914 it was

¹⁸⁸ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands Indië voor het dienstjaar 1904", *IMT*, (1st of January 1903), 171-177.

¹⁸⁹ 1918 was the year the First World War ended. In this thesis a direct link between this war and the view on concubinage is not analyzed. However, it is important to acknowledge that the four year lasting Great War must have had consequences for military structures and for gender dynamics. (A. Vernon, "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway." *The Hemingway Review* 22, no. 1 (2002), 34-55). In order to keep this thesis contained, the influence of this war is not specifically analyzed. However, it is important to mention that this war falls in the time period discussed in this thesis. Analyzing the role the war specifically had on changing morals surrounding concubinage could be a fruitful question for further academic research.

¹⁹⁰ Anonymous, "Varia", *IMT*, (1 January 1905), 276-277.

¹⁹¹ Anonymous, "Uitgaven in Indië", *IMT*, (1 January 1904), 109.

¹⁹² *Ibidem*.

¹⁹³ Anonymous, "Het Indische leger in de Tweede Kamer", *IMT*, (1 January 1908), 789.

¹⁹⁴ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands-Indië voor 1920 - memorie van antwoord", *IMT*, (1 July 1919), 48-61.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

argued that men in the military should be allowed a six month period of leave to find a European wife.¹⁹⁶ Soldiers needed a leave of absence to find themselves a decent woman to marry. When people in the KNIL came back after a few years, they were not completely estranged from their old home. According to this *IMT* article, they were thus likely to find an old acquaintance they could marry and bring to the East. This source does state that how long men had to serve before they were allowed a leave should depend on their rank. A sergeant should have been given a leave after six years, a corporal after eight and a fuselier after ten. Another addition mentioned in this article was that if soldiers would get a baby from these marriages, there should be a raise in monthly pay of 0,24 cents.¹⁹⁷ Getting a child with a European woman was thus seen as inherently different than getting a child from an interracial relationship. A leave was seen as a great way to combat *njais*. It would cost money but was seen as an investment in the future of the KNIL.

In general the *IMT* articles show that the fate of the male colonizer and the army as an institution were the primary concerns. The consensus in the *IMT* became that if the KNIL did not facilitate the possibility for soldiers to marry and start a family, concubinage would never leave the KNIL.¹⁹⁸ A source from 1914 states that christian corporals and christian soldiers of lower ranks should no longer get permits for new concubines.¹⁹⁹ However, no one should be made to send a concubine away. This could be identified as one of the few times that in the process of getting rid of *njais*, the well-being of females was considered. However, what becomes clear when analyzing the *IMT* articles, is that for the sake of the army the deep rooted *njai*-system had to be taken down gradually. It was argued that a proper alternative had to be found in order to abandon barracks-concubinage.²⁰⁰

4.2 Creating proper physical spaces for soldiers' families.

When morals surrounding family life changed, the authorities realized that additional physical spaces were needed. In chapter 2.3 it was mentioned that over time the *njais* got their own separate women barracks. However, this was mainly because it made it easier to control the concubines and thus prevent STDs from spreading. The barracks created then, were not spaces suitable for families to live united. In the *IMT* sources it was argued that the lack of private places soldiers could live with their wives and possible children was an obstacle in getting rid of the *njai* system.²⁰¹ For the time that the *njais* were still living in the *tangsi*, there also needed to be spaces reflecting the *zeitgeist*. One article, in 1918 stated that since a few years all christian NCOs, both indigenous and European, were no longer allowed to have *njais* in the barracks. In 1918 it had been a while since this rule also counted for non-christian indigenous soldiers who had the rank of NCO.²⁰² While concubinage was still a part of the army, the source from 1918 states that it was best to keep the *njais* behind moveable bulkheads in a separate part of the room. One reason being that this way the practice of having a *njai* was not promoted. The Analysis in this paragraph shows that racist beliefs are reflected in the physical spaces. In the army the hierarchy of

¹⁹⁶ D.Slijboom, "Smeedt het ijzer als het heet is", *IMT*, (1 november 1914), 46-48.

¹⁹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁹⁸ Anonymous, "Wervingen en legerreserve", *IMT*, (1 January 1911), 467.

¹⁹⁹ Asymptoot, "Concubinaat... of huwelijk?", *IMT*, (1 September 1914), 97.

²⁰⁰ Ibidem.

²⁰¹ Anonymous, "Begroting van D. Indië voor het dienstjaar 1914 Indisch ontwerp", *IMT*, (1 augustus 1913), 96.

²⁰² Anonymous, "Nota van antwoord van de Regeering (Uittreksel)", *IMT*, (1 July 1918), 64-76.

ranks is important, allowing different material possessions was not solely based on this class difference, but also based on race.

Better housing was seen as essential for a new army structure with more married soldiers. However, what was considered good housing depended on a soldier's class and racial status. When building new barracks the new *zeitgeist* had to be considered. Changing views on mass housing, and changing views on family life had to be directly incorporated. In the budget report of 1921 the Governor-General said in his opening word that a reduction of the *njais* was a primary topic on the agenda, but that he would later discuss the specific actions that needed to be taken.²⁰³ Six months later the issue of there allowed to move outside of the camps. For low ranks it would be encouraged to marry by financial stimulus in order to take care of their family.²⁰⁴

The *IMT* specifically discussed the more concrete ways the *njai* system was going to be diminished. As mentioned in 4.1, opening up marriage was a way to combat *njais*. In this article it is pressed that all restrictions on marriage for NCOs and lower ranks that were capable of marrying should be lifted.²⁰⁵ The goal mentioned after, showed the new idea of what it meant to provide the possibility for a soldier to marry. The goal was to give married soldiers under the NCO rank benefits so that all married couples could get their own individual home. They no longer had to be part of a communal household. European NCOs wnguished between the European and the non-European members of the KNIL. In one article about the degeneration of the proletariat it was stated that non-European corporals' and soldiers' children should be put behind curtains in a part of the room.²⁰⁶ In another article it was criticised that children and women of indigenous soldiers did not have normal sleeping places.²⁰⁷ Sometimes two men and one woman were sleeping on a *sleeping table*. The *IMT* author argued that this practice did not fit modern times and that *Kromo*, his women and their children should have a proper sleeping place.²⁰⁸ However, an upgrade to one table for all of them to sleep on was considered fine.²⁰⁹ Another solution mentioned in the *IMT* was a gradual introduction of barracks on the kampong for non-European soldiers. So indigenous soldiers, with their women, would no longer be in the *tangsi*.²¹⁰ The army realized that no matter the rank or race of the soldier, it was necessary to create space for the otherwise neglected children. However, what was seen as a sufficient place to live for a family, was not equal for all soldiers.

Race of a soldier mattered in how much possessions he could own. Since giving soldiers different living conditions was one way to combat concubinage, it is relevant to look at how the race of a soldier's woman mattered. In the edition of the 1st of January 1909 it is discussed how much personal belongings each soldier may own.²¹¹ The author argued that the size of a soldiers' storage box depended on what kind of woman he was living with. For housekeepers the smallest space was believed to be fine. Lin Scholte, a woman that lived in

²⁰³ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands-Indië voor 1921", *IMT*, (1 July 1920), 63.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁵ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands-indie voor 1921", *IMT*, (1 september 1920), 63-68.

²⁰⁶ Anonymous, "Begrooting van Nederlands-Indië voor 1920 - memorie van antwoord", *IMT*, (1 July 1919), 61.

²⁰⁷ Anonymous, "Het slapen van de inlandse militairen met hun vrouwen en kinderen in de kazerne.", *IMT*, (1 april 1913), 113-114.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁰ Anonymous, "Verkort jaarverslag over 1918 van de legervereeniging Aid Preanger", *IMT*, (1 January 1919), 175-176.

²¹¹ Anonymous, "Nagekomen stukken: Het particulier bezit van den man", *IMT*, (1 January 1909), 211-213.

the *tangsi*, declared that getting married meant getting more supplies.²¹² The article of 1909 mentioned that per race the space that was seen as necessary was different.²¹³ It would be plausible to assume that if racial discrimination was occurring, an indigenous woman would be given less space than a European woman. Regulations were based on the intersection between sex and race. As discussed in chapter 2.1, the indigenous women were seen as inherently different from the European women in the colony. The articles on possessions show that the latter were believed to deserve better living conditions than the former.

Not only racist but also sexist attitudes were expressed in the articles on the modernization of physical spaces. One article argued that the only duty of a wife was to keep up the household, just like the housekeepers did.²¹⁴ As mentioned, the possibility of starting a *real family* was seen as a means to abandon the *njai* system. Being married to a soldier was, in the sense of the duties, for women not different than being his *njai*. That a woman's main role was providing for her soldier, was also shown in the argument that there needed to be specific sheds for women.²¹⁵ They called those places "separate kitchens", which reflects the role the women had in their marriages. Another article that reflected the submissive role women had, was an article published in 1925.²¹⁶ This article said that women, both the *njais* and the formal wives, were good for providing a homely atmosphere.²¹⁷ The article further stated that all women had to endure physical abuse, whether they were a wife or a concubine. Violence was believed to never be the fault of men, European or indigenous. It was encouraged that men punish their women if they misbehave. This shows that becoming a soldiers' wife did not necessarily mean your circumstances improved in all facets of life.

The married life of indigenous women was influenced by their intersecting racial and gender identity. According to the source of 1925, especially if the beating was done to an indigenous soldiers' woman it was often well deserved. The percentage of housekeepers of European soldiers being beaten was low. This source argued that this showed that European men cared less about faithfulness if they lived in concubinage. European soldiers cared more if their formal wives were unfaithful. The level of jealousy of non-European soldiers did not seem to differ between men in formal marriage and concubinage.

In 1933 the word "concubine" was mentioned for the last time in an *IMT* article.²¹⁸ This article stated that there were still men living with women in concubinage in the Netherlands Indies.²¹⁹ This article argued for stricter government control and government discouragement of concubinage. The state needed to make posters warning men of the dangers of living with a *njai*.²²⁰ Only that way, the *njai* system could be completely abandoned. In 1933 it was stated that indigenous women were not really that strict with

²¹² Baay, *De njai*, 131-132.

²¹³ Anonymous, "Nagekomen stukken: Het particulier bezit van den man", *IMT*, (1 January 1909), 211-213.

²¹⁴ Anonymous, "Soldatenmenages", *IMT*, (1 July 1894), 195-198.

²¹⁵ Anonymous, "Nota van antwoord van de regering", *IMT*, (1 July 1918), 52-64.

²¹⁶ Dr. L. Balner, 1st class, "Karakterschetsen van den Indischen soldaat, benevens praktische voorstellen tot verbetering der Keuringsresultaten.", *IMT*, (1 January 1925), 18-33.

²¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*

²¹⁹ This article mentioned "morianen", this was a term for black people. There were also black KNIL soldiers. These Black people in the Netherlands Indies were called the Blanda Hitam. The article mentions that the Blanda Hitam in the KNIL also had *njais*. (Anonymous, "Geneeskundige dienst: In het kader van venerische ziekte", *IMT*, (1 August 1933), 79-81).

²²⁰ Anonymous, "Geneeskundige dienst: In het kader van venerische ziekte", *IMT*, (1 August 1933), 79-81.

marital fidelity, so they were seen as the source of venereal diseases.²²¹ This is contradictory to one of the reasons why these indigenous women were once used, as a less risky way of fulfilling men's sexual desire. Whether the colonized women were part of formal marriage or not, in the *IMT* sources they were often blamed for health issues. The racial and sexist prejudices continued to exist in a time where the *njai* system was no longer a system encouraged by authorities.

Conclusion

Analyzing the *IMT* articles show that arguments contra concubinage, just like the arguments pro concubinage, were filled with both racism and sexism. Getting rid of the barracks-*njais* was a very hard process because these women were such an integral part of the KNIL. There was not one specific moment in history, like the draft in 1918, that caused a mentality change. Around the turn of the 20th century, most *IMT* authors started to realize that the *njai* system was no longer better than marriage. A toxic idea of sexuality becomes apparent in the idea that *njais* can only disappear by educating soldiers on sexual morals. An important way to gradually abandon the *njai* system was to lift restrictions on marriage. When marriages started to become more regular, this did not mean that women outgrew the negative gender dynamics, they were still not seen as your husband's equal. The burden of the women to fulfill her man's needs stays. Although the treatment of European and Indigenous wives was not the same. The changing morals resulted in the necessity for private living spaces. The racial attitudes towards the indigenous females and their offspring are overt in the way more European women meant more investment in proper homes. Her racial status influenced both her allowance for possessions, and the way she was treated by her soldier.

That the ranks of NCO's had different regulations could be seen as in line with the idea that class forms hierarchy. However, the articles on living spaces show that there was a segregated way of living based on the race of the soldier. This is in line with the prevalence Stoler's analysis gives to racial attitudes. The race of a woman's men, whether she was his *njai* or his wife was important. This shows again the idea that the worth of a woman depended on her husband's status. The discussed measures to get rid of concubinage thus shows the importance of the intersecting role of gender and race. Changes made show that wellbeing of the male colonizer, both the individual soldiers and the army as an institute, was still more important than that of "the other".

²²¹ Anonymous, "Geneeskundige dienst: In het kader van venerische ziekte", *IMT*, (1 August 1933), 79-81.

CONCLUSION

Concubinage was an institutionalized system flourishing on the idea that the native and the female status of a concubine made her subordinate to the male colonizer. Analyzing how the concubinage of the KNIL developed between 1878 and 1933 shows that the *njai* system was an integral part of the army. The gender and race dynamics were deeply rooted. Even when the system was slowly being abandoned, this did not necessarily mean that the IMT authors changed their sexist and racist views, but the view from outside the *tangsi* and the consequences of the pauper proletariat made the system slowly crumble. The intersectionality of race and gender was analyzed according to Stoler's colonizer/colonized dynamic. In the pro-concubinage arguments the sexist beliefs of the contemporaries become apparent by how the women's existence is in service of the soldiers. At first, having *njais* in the *tangsi* was seen as a perfect way to keep soldiers on track. A *njai* was seen as somewhere in between a wife and a prostitute. She did not cause the worries a (European) wife would cause, while keeping the soldiers away from alcohol and prostitution.

However, the idea that concubinage was a good system turned out to be an unsustainable standpoint. The colonizer/colonized dynamic appeared in the overall changing role of the state in marriage and family life in the Netherlands Indies. When the authorities started to interfere more in the private sphere, the view on concubinage became more negative. The paternalistic idea arose that the European morals had to be further spread across the Indies. A monogamous christian marriage was seen as the most proper way to live. The Dutch state gradually saw a bigger role for itself in the marital life of their citizens both in the motherland and in the colonies. The state believed that it should protect "cultural hygiene". Another factor that played a role was the pauper question. Pauperism was seen as caused by concubinage. The *njai* system was literally seen as a breeding ground of the poor proletariat. A focus on class in the term "pauper-proletariat" could have been an argument for Bosma & Raben's notion that class, not race, was the defining factor of the hierarchy. However, that race mattered becomes clear in the way the soldiers do not take care of their mixed children. These children lived in poverty because they were the offspring of the interracial relations between *njais* and soldiers.

The reasons the state wanted to change the concubinage system shaped the way the army changed its regulations in order to root out the system. When the consensus arose that the *njais* should no longer be a part of the KNIL, the long abandonment process shows how much the internal functioning of the KNIL and the *njai* system were intertwined. IMT sources show that the army wanted education to change the mentality of the soldiers and the officers. It was believed that sexual desire was part of a masculine identity. One way to get rid of the *njais*, often mentioned in the army magazine, was to increase formal marriages. However, the *njai* system was such an integral element in the fabric of the army, that it was hardly self-evident for a soldier to change to a formal marriage. To gradually abandon the *njai* system, the restrictions on formal marriage had first to be lifted for the NCO's. In order to sustain marriages in the barracks, the creation of better living spaces was advocated. What it meant to have a proper home for a soldiers' family, depended on the racial category of both the soldiers and the women. This shows that the belief in the subordinate status of the indigenous and of the women had not gone away when concubinage was no longer seen as sustainable.

This analysis of the *njai* system shows how the categories of “colonizer” and “colonized” were guaranteed by racial and gender boundaries. The analysis of the *IMT* did not give a concrete end date of when the concubines *de facto* had to leave the barracks. However, the *IMT* did show the gradual realization that the *njai* system was not a feasible system. In the arguments pro and contra the *njais* the racial boundaries between “us” and “them” became apparent in sex-specific conventions. Having a housekeeper was once motivated by racial and sexist beliefs. When concubinage was no longer seen as a sustainable system, there was still discrimination between the male colonizer and the female colonized. All things considered, getting rid of the *njai* system did not mean getting rid of the discriminatory dynamics in the Royal Dutch East Indies Army. This case study is an argument for the notion that using women was an integral part of colonial hierarchies.

For possible further research on the gender and racial dynamics within the KNIL, I have a few comments that should be considered. Firstly, as discussed before, the *IMT* is a source from the perspective of the male colonizer. I stand by Stoler’s argument against Taylor’s claim that women have to be social agents in sources in order to analyse gender dynamics. The framing done by men can be used to analyse gender dynamics. Nonetheless, I would still highly stress the importance of telling stories from the perspective of the colonized. In the case of the *njai*, this material is unfortunately scarce. The *IMT* was a fruitful source, to get a better understanding of the role of masculinity and of how women were acted upon by the male colonizer. Secondly, in this thesis there was not given much attention, except for a footnote in 3.2, to the black soldiers in the KNIL. These soldiers also participated in the *njai* system. The racial and gender dynamics within these relations could make for interesting further research. For now at least the story of these forgotten women and children is brought to light.

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