

Romeo and Julius in the Tropics: The 1938 *Zedenschandaal* as a Case Study of the Intersection between Colonialism and Homosexuality in the Dutch Indies

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Note on title: The use of Romeo and Julius here is a reference to the song “Sorry dat ik besta” by Willem Nijholt (written by Annie M G Schmidt for the 1977 musical *Foxtrot*). The song describes the life of homosexuals in the Netherlands during the late 1930s, and highlights the atmosphere of scandal and taboo surrounding this topic.¹

Note on cover illustration: This is the sketch *Four Young Balinese with Fighting Cocks* by Walter Spies, one of Spies’ most explicitly erotic male works.²

¹ “Willem Nijholt – Sorry dat Ik Besta,” YouTube, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anhsvDSwGBw>.

² “Walter Spies: Four Young Balinese with Fighting Cocks, 1927,” MutualArt, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Four-young-Balinese-with-fighting-cocks/49A5F75572305CD8>; Gary Atkins, *Imagining Gay Paradise: Bali, Bangkok, and Cyber-Singapore* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 75.

Abstract

In this thesis, the 1938 *Zedenschandaal* is analyzed in the light of the exportation of the Dutch gender regime and colonial ideologies of European superiority. During the *Zedenschandaal*, a large number of European men with high positions in the Dutch Indies elite were exposed as homosexuals. News reports mainly focused on these European arrestees. The research question for this thesis is: “Why was public judgement focused on the arrest of European men during the 1938 *Zedenschandaal* in the Dutch Indies?” This question is answered with an analysis of the exportation of the Dutch gender regime to the Dutch Indies in civilizing projects; an analysis of the influence of colonial and orientalist ideology on the Dutch Indian homosexual context; and an analysis of Dutch Indian newspaper articles which covered the *Zedenschandaal* and which also mentioned “Natives”. Although the exportation of a Dutch gender regime, in the form of e.g. the Ethical Policy, framed “Natives” as a source of a lack of (sexual) morals, a focus on “Native” arrestees in the *Zedenschandaal* would clash with colonial ideas of European superiority. “Natives” were already framed as morally deviant, thus “Native” homosexual behavior did not shock Europeans as much as European homosexual behavior. Furthermore, “Native” men had continuously been framed as feminine, passive, and submissive, in opposition to European men who were framed as masculine, active, and dominant. This role division was transferred to the framing of “Natives” within homosexual context. Therefore, “Native” men were not highlighted as the main perpetrators in the *Zedenschandaal*. Thus, this thesis demonstrates that the focus of public opinion on European arrestees can be explained as a logical continuation of colonial ideology.

Key words: *Zedenschandaal*, colonialism, homosexuality, gender, orientalism

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Introduction

Mid-November 1938 the police of the Dutch Indies were given a tip that a certain Mr. Van Eyndthovens was entertaining underage boys in the hotel room where he resided.³ This sparked an investigation into the man's homosexual behavior, resulting in his arrest at end of November. During a search of the suspect's hotel room a large collection of signed letters to and from other homosexual men in the Netherlands and the Dutch Indies was found. This letter collection, and the interrogation of Mr. Van Eyndthovens, was seen by the main leader of the Dutch Indian government as a starting point to tackle the "homosexual problem" of the Dutch Indies: the Dutch Indies had developed a reputation condoning homosexuality, which arguably even attracted Western homosexuals who did not feel at home in Europe.⁴ As Van Eyndthoven's interrogation brought a bigger network of homosexual relations into view, the police were ordered to start a large scale operation.⁵ In the period between December 1938 and May 1939 at least 223 men were arrested, and 171 of them were found guilty.⁶ As Dutch Indian newspapers extensively reported on the developments of this operation, the people of the Dutch Indies were kept up to date on an a daily basis, and the array of events that took place in this period soon became known as "het Zedenschandaal" (the moral scandal).⁷

What makes this event so striking is not only the large number of arrests, but also the ethnic composition of the arrestees: the large part of men arrested were European. Moreover, these European men were often part of the Dutch Indies ruling elite, working as high ranked civil servants. On the one hand the *Zedenschandaal* clarified that the Dutch Indies' colonial government condemned homosexuality, and that their mission to "civilize" Dutch Indian society included the eradication of homosexuality. On the other hand, the fact that so many men accused in the *Zedenschandaal* were of European descent shattered the image that Europeans had created of themselves as being "more civilized" than non-Europeans, thus highlighting the shallowness of the constructed hierarchy central to colonial ideology.

³ Marieke Bloembergen, "Rein Zijn Is Sterk Zijn: De Massale Vervolging van Homoseksuelen in Nederlands-Indië," in *Bewaar me voor de waanzin van het recht*; *Homoseksualiteit en strafrecht in Nederland*, ed. G. Hekma and T. van Meer (Diemen: AMB, 2011), 113 – 114.

⁴ Atkins, *Imagining Gay Paradise*, 93.

⁵ Frans Leidelmeijer, "De Vervolging van Homoseksuelen in Indie in 1938," *Indische Letteren* 22, no. 1 (2007): 52.

⁶ Bloembergen "Rein Zijn Is Sterk Zijn," 109.

⁷ Gosse Kerkhof, "Het Indisch Zedenschandaal: Een Koloniaal Incident" (PhD diss., Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1982) 36 – 54.

Therefore, in this thesis, I want to research the paradox between Dutch colonial ideas on European superiority and civilization projects targeting “Natives”, and the arrest of European men during the 1938 *Zedenschandaal*. In the eyes of the Dutch, “Natives” lacked sexual moral and tolerated homosexuality, and thus were seen as the main source of indiscretions.⁸ Yet, in the 1938 *Zedenschandaal* Europeans themselves were heavily highlighted as perpetrators of homosexuality. My quest to understand this apparent contradiction between the colonial mindset regarding “Natives”, and the portrayal of “Europeans” during the *Zedenschandaal* leads me to the following research question: “Why was public judgement focused on the arrest of European men during the 1938 *Zedenschandaal* in the Dutch Indies?” This is will be answered with the help of the following three sub questions: “How did the cultural exportation of a Dutch gender regime create an image of “the Native” as effeminate, passive and submissive?”; “How did the colonial and orientalist mindset impact homosexuality in the Dutch Indies?”; and “How did newspapers in the Dutch Indies portray “Natives” that were involved in the *Zedenschandaal*?”

Historiography and Theoretical Framework

The recent rise of postcolonialism and gender theory has cultivated a focus on the topic of gender and colonial history. These two topics are often studied together, and authors like Ann Laura Stoler and Philippa Levine have shown how multilayered and intertwined gender and colonialism are.⁹ Gender in the Dutch colonial has been researched extensively by Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, and the most recent publication of the Yearbook of Women’s History also focusses on Dutch empire and gender.¹⁰ Yet, in the research on colonialism and gender, the topic of homosexuality is often left out. Gender is of course an incredibly broad topic, but even in academic work on sexuality and colonialism the focus is mainly on heterosexuality and heterosexual sex. Homosexuality was a topic surrounded by shame and scandal until quite recently, and that makes it more difficult to

⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (November 1989): 635.

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Elsbeth Locher – Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State: Essays on Gender and Modernity in the Netherlands Indies, 1900 – 1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000); Nancy Jouwe, *Gendered Empire: Intersectional Perspective on Dutch Post/Colonial Narratives*, (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 2020).

find solid sources on it. Robert Aldrich also commented on this lack of academic work about this topic in the introduction of his book “Colonialism and Homosexuality”, one of the first works on homosexuality in a colonial context.¹¹ It covers homosexuality and colonialism within a broad spectrum, but Aldrich does not specify to one colonial context. This means that there is still a lack of academic research on homosexuality in the context the Dutch Indies.

The *Zedenschandaal* has been researched before, including the works of Marieke Bloembergen and Gosse Kerkhof, but these works have focused mainly on the cultural context of the *Zedenschandaal* and the timeline of events.¹² I want to connect the *Zedenschandaal* to broader theories on gender, homosexuality, and colonialism: I will research how racism and colonial ideas on ethnic hierarchy played a role in the *Zedenschandaal*. This angle has previously been neglected, even by Bloembergen and Kerkhof. Furthermore, I will analyze how the *Zedenschandaal* can be placed in the bigger phenomenon of exporting Dutch gender norms to colonial context, and how the homosexuality central to this scandal plays into that gender regime exportation.

Connected to the above, the theoretical framework for my research is based on several theories. Firstly the concept of intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw first introduced this term in 1989 to describe the multiple angles of oppression that black women face in American society, in particular in the context of the legal system.¹³ Black women stand at the intersection of racism and sexism, but this complexity is often overlooked. Now, intersectionality is also used to understand how multiple aspects of a person’s identity define their place in society. In my research, an intersectional approach is required to understand the extent to which colonialism, homophobia, and racism are intertwined. I would like to find out why the focus of public outcry was so much on the European men arrested in the *Zedenschandaal*, even though the intersection of racism and homophobia played a big role in the colonial discourse on homosexuality at that time.

Furthermore, Edward Saïd’s orientalism is essential for my topic.¹⁴ Orientalism describes the process of the West creating and reproducing a certain image of non-

¹¹ Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹² Bloembergen, “Rein zijn is Sterk zijn,”; Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal.”

¹³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 139-167.

¹⁴ Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

Western societies in order to affirm their understanding of their own identity as civilized, developed and rational. Essential here is the recurring representation of the Orient as the opposing “other”, which included being savage-like and uncivilized.¹⁵ Saïd originally focused his research on the image Europeans had constructed of the Middle East, but he was aware of the fact that this theory could be applied to a much broader context.¹⁶ Saïd’s critics argued that orientalism as a theory was too binary (West versus East).¹⁷ However, orientalism might be best understood as a framework through which to analyze the world, not a theory set in stone. Thus, it can be applied to an array of topics, each of which has its own nuances and contradictions.¹⁸ Saïd did not specifically apply orientalism to colonialism and homosexuality. Yet his theory on the formation of identity mirroring an “other” applies to the formation of the Dutch identity reflecting both the colonial context and homosexual men in that context. Furthermore, every European, including homosexuals, in the Dutch Indies were inevitably influenced by orientalist ideas. This resulted in the framing “Native” men as effeminate (in opposition to “masculine” European men) and had a big effect on the interaction with “Native” men.

Method

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will look at the cultural exportation of a Western gender regime in order to analyze how an image of “the Native” as effeminate, passive and submissive developed in the eyes of the Dutch colonizers. In the second chapter, I will delve into the influence this colonial and orientalist mindset had on homosexuality in the Dutch Indies. In the third chapter, I will take a closer look at the case study of the *Zedenschandaal*, combining the findings of the previous two chapters. I will analyze Dutch Indian newspaper articles about the *Zedenschandaal* that were published between December 1938 and June 1939, and that mention variations of the word “Inlander” or the word “Inheems” (Dutch for “Native”).¹⁹ These articles mainly expressed the public opinion of the European and Dutch speaking population of the Dutch Indies, which most likely stood in line with the perspective of the colonizer. The nine different newspapers from which I have deduced these articles all represented different perspectives within this European population. Furthermore, there were nuances and slight differences

¹⁵ Saïd, *Orientalism*, 1-12.

¹⁶ Saïd, *Orientalism*, 25 – 28.

¹⁷ Joseph Massad, “Edward W. Said and Joseph Boone’s: The Homoerotics of Orientalism,” *Cultural Critique* 98 (December 2018): 237 – 240.

¹⁸ Massad, “Edward W. Said and Joseph Boone’s: The Homoerotics of Orientalism,” 240 – 242.

¹⁹ See appendix for a schematic overview of these newspaper articles.

between their reporting on the *Zedenschandaal*.²⁰ However, there are also many common themes and narratives in the reporting on the *Zedenschandaal*, certainly when focusing on the “Native” population. I will focus on these commonalities in my analysis of the articles, as I want to understand what the general opinion expressed in these articles was. With these newspaper articles I aim to highlight how the European public looked at the role of “Natives” in the *Zedenschandaal*. This will shed light on the civilizing mission in connection to the exportation of a gender regime; the portrayal of “Natives” as passive versus Europeans as active; and ideas of Dutch superiority. Consequently, I will answer my research question by debunking the idea of a paradox and explain how the lack of accountability placed upon the “Native” male population in the *Zedenschandaal* is in fact a logical consequence of Colonialist ideology.

Some Notes on Terminology

In the Dutch Indies, the population was hierarchically categorized into “European” (Europeanen), “Native” (Inlanders), or “Foreign Oriental” (Vreemde Oosterlingen). On the surface, these legal categories seem to be unrelated to race, as the foundation of these categories were based on cultural factors such as class, education, language proficiency, or lifestyle.²¹ Furthermore, the boundaries between these categories appeared to be quite flexible: it was theoretically possible to legally move between categories.²² However, it is important to keep in mind that the apparent cultural categorization of the population of the Dutch Indies was compiled in a context of racial thinking that included scientifically endorsed racism. It was therefore related to a colonial mindset in which racism played an important role.²³ A good example of this shallow colonial avoidance of race is the legal inclusion of mixed race children into the category of European. A requirement for inclusion was the legal recognition of the child’s European father. This was based on the idea that children would grow up in a European environment, but in practice, no one enforced or checked up on this cultural argumentation.²⁴ Still, the term European cannot be seen as a synonym for white, neither is “Native” a synonym for “colored”. Due to its colonial associations, the term “Native”, or more specifically the term “Inlander” which

²⁰ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 58 – 72.

²¹ Bart Lutikhuis, “Beyond Race: Constructions of ‘Europeanness’ in late-colonial legal practices in the Dutch East Indies,” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 20, no. 4 (2013): 541.

²² Lutikhuis, “Beyond Race,” 547 – 552.

²³ Ann Laura Stoler, “Archival Dis-Ease: Thinking through Colonial Ontologies,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010): 218.

²⁴ Lutikhuis, “Beyond Race,” 544.

is the Dutch translation of the word “Native”, has become controversial.²⁵ As I want to describe the colonial context of the Dutch Indies as accurately as possible, I have decided to keep using the term “Native”. However, I will use quotation marks when referring to the term “Native” in order to indicate my awareness of the controversy surrounding this term. I have decided to use the term European without quotation marks as it does not necessarily have a negative colonial connotation yet is in line with the colonial terminology.

Moreover, I will use the term homosexuality in this thesis. It can be difficult to use terminology relating to sexual orientation, as the most commonly used ideas on sexual orientation are often considered to be a Western construct.²⁶ Furthermore, it is unwise to label someone with a term that they never explicitly used to identify themselves: the agency of identification should remain in the hands of the person it concerns. Still, I need to use a term to describe the men who had sexual relations with men in the Dutch colonial context. The literature and primary sources mainly refers to these men as homosexuals, and therefore I will also be using these terms. I am avoiding terms like gay and queer because these do not fit the historical context I am referring to in this thesis.²⁷

Whenever I use the term gender regime, I am referring to R. W. Connell’s definition of a gender regime. Connell argues that gender relations make up a social structure, and a gender regime is the “structural inventory of a particular institution.”²⁸ This gender regime therefore reflects the state of gender relations in a certain institution, or as I use it, in a certain time and space.²⁹ More concretely, sociologist Sevil Sümer explain this definition of gender regime as “a complex of rules and norms that create established expectations about gender relations, allocating different tasks and rights to women and men.”³⁰ Whenever I am describing the Dutch gender regime in this thesis, this regime is specific to the context of 1930s the Netherlands, where religion played a

²⁵ Olaf Heyblom, “Racisme in ons taalgebruik: ‘Witte Nederlanders moeten elkaar corrigeren’,” *Het Parool*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/nederland/racisme-in-ons-taalgebruik-witte-nederlanders-moeten-elkaar-corrigeren~b9cc690b/>.

²⁶ Richard Parker, “Sexuality, Culture, and Society: Shifting Paradigms in Sexuality Research,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 11, no. 3 (2009): 253 – 254.

²⁷ “History of the Word “Gay”,” PBS, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/video/history-of-the-word-gay-bcbiuu/>; Brent Pickett, *The A to Z of Homosexuality* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 156.

²⁸ R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 99.

²⁹ Connell, *Gender and Power*, 120.

³⁰ Sevil Sümer, *European Gender Regimes and Policies: Comparative perspectives* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 11.

big role and conservatism was on the rise. The nuclear family was central and women were expected to be good mothers and housewives. Men were expected to provide for the family and to be the hierarchical head of the family.

Chapter 1: Civilizing Projects and the Dutch Gender Regime

In this chapter, the exportation of a Dutch gender regime as part of a civilizing project will be explored. The idea of civilizing “the other” is intrinsically linked to Dutch colonialism during modern imperialism.³¹ Colonialism was built on a hierarchical structure in which Europeans thought of themselves as the most enlightened, the most civilized, the most developed. This was reflected in the way they treated their non-European subjects: In the Dutch Indies, only people born of Dutch descent were eligible for Dutch citizenship. The most common way for a person of non-Dutch descent to gain Dutch citizenship was through marrying a Dutch man.³² Europeans felt the desire to “bring civilization” to those “below them”. This also entailed an exportations of norms and values regarding the Dutch gender regime, including the gender norms that were formed by Christianity.³³ Civilizing projects had different concepts linked to it. In the British colonial context, “the white man’s burden” aptly described the white people’s “duty” to export civilization to those who had not yet developed it, which of course entailed non-white societies. The French labelled it as “mission civilisatrice”, which has a clear ideological or even religious ring to it.³⁴ In the Dutch modern imperialism context, the Ethical Policy is usually pointed to when discussing the civilizing project.

The Ethical Policy

Queen Wilhemina’s annual “Troonrede” speech of 1901 marked the introduction the Ethical Policy. She stressed the moral duty of a Christian nation like the Netherlands to support Christian mission to the Dutch Indies, and she called special attention to the situation of the “Native” people.³⁵ In practice this introduced policy reforms in multiple areas. Historian J. Touwen ordered them into three categories: welfare policies for “Native” people, increased education for “Native” people, and (limited) participation in

³¹ M. Bloembergen and R. Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het Nieuwe Indië, 1890 – 1950* (Leiden: KITVL Uitgeverij, 2009), 13 – 15.

³² Elsbeth Locher – Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 39.

³³ Bloembergen and Raben, *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief*, 8.

³⁴ Locher – Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 16.

³⁵ “Troonrede van 17 september 1901,” Troonredes.nl, accessed January 16, 2021, <https://troonredes.nl/troonrede-van-17-september-1901/>.

governing functions for “Native” people.³⁶ Furthermore, the Ethical Policy came paired with expansion of Dutch territory and economic reforms.³⁷

The true nature of the Ethical Policy is subject to debate. On the one hand, the focus of the Dutch Empire on expansion and control could be stressed, which would make the Ethical Policy just another step in Dutch modern imperialism.³⁸ On the other hand, the Ethical Policy also highlighted the importance of reforms “of the Dutch Indies, for the Dutch Indies.”³⁹ This stood in contrast with the previous policy of the Cultivation System (*cultuurstelsel*) in which the Dutch heavily exploited the Dutch Indies without much regard for the “Native” population.⁴⁰ Thus, it could be argued that there was a new focus on the care for “Natives.” Some even used the Ethical Policy to strive towards a level of increased independence once the colony had developed enough under the guidance of the Dutch. However, there was no true deadline for the civilization of “Natives.”⁴¹ Europeans continued to see themselves as superior and the “Natives” as underdeveloped, and thus in need of European control.⁴² Either way, it is important to keep in mind that the imperialist and civilizing motives behind the Ethical Policy cannot be separated from each other. Ethical motives appealed to the highly Christian Dutch Society of that time.⁴³ Yet, power and economic motives should not be understated, especially because the European population of the Dutch Indies profited from the reforms too, for example in terms of education, healthcare and infrastructure.⁴⁴ The moral discourse surrounding the policy did leave a big mark on the mindset regarding the Dutch Indies. The Ethical Policy grew to be more conservative in the 1930s, meaning there was less focus on the improvement of “Native” lives due to the financial crisis and unemployment under the European population. Still the colonial ideology of the civilizing project had left its traces in the mindset of the Dutch regarding “Natives.”⁴⁵

³⁶ Jeroen Touwen, “Paternalisme en Protest. Ethische Politiek en Nationalisme in Nederlands-Indië, 1900 – 1942,” *Leidschrift* 15 (December 2000): 73.

³⁷ Elsbeth Locher – Scholten, *Ethiek in Fragmenten: Vijf Studies over Koloniaal Denken en Doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische Archipel, 1877 – 1942* (PhD diss., Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1981), 187.

³⁸ Elsbeth Locher – Scholten, “Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago around 1900 and the Imperialist Debate,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 1994): 95 – 96.

³⁹ Locher – Scholten, *Ethiek in Fragmenten* 182 – 186.

⁴⁰ Touwen, “Paternalisme en Protest,” 67.

⁴¹ Locher – Scholten, *Ethiek in Fragmenten*, 184.

⁴² Touwen, “Paternalisme en Protest,” 68.

⁴³ Locher – Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 191.

⁴⁴ Locher – Scholten, “Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago,” 107; Locher – Scholten, “Ethiek in Fragmenten,” 200.

⁴⁵ Locher – Scholten, “Ethiek in Fragmenten,” 203 – 206.

Dutch Civilizing Projects and Gender

This colonial ideology based on the Ethical policy was characterized by the patronizing vision of the Dutch towards the “Natives”. It was the Dutch’s moral duty to help develop the “Native” population, but the gap between the civilized West and uncivilized East would never be fully closed.⁴⁶ Therefore, the Dutch saw themselves as guardians of the Dutch Indies: the colonizer represented a father-like figure, the intellectual and superior man. The colony represented the feminine, child-like subject, who was irrational, promiscuous and naïve.⁴⁷ Frances Gouda links this characterization to a wave of insecurity that hit European men around the end of the nineteenth century, partially due to the rise of first feminist wave and the increased independence of women in public life. The traditional position of men was under threat and therefore theories on women’s “natural” dependence on men developed. In colonial context, a racial element was added to these theories, framing non-European people as feminine and therefore dependent on a white males.⁴⁸ This gendered argumentation was an essential pillar in colonial regimes.⁴⁹ Furthermore, lifestyles of “Native” cultures were seen as clashing with European rationality and morality. Sex played a big part in this: “Natives” were associated with sexual deviance, and these “foreign” sexual behaviors were deemed a threat to European values, and therefore the Empire itself.⁵⁰ Thus, these “Natives” needed to be regulated and educated.

The civilizing project aimed to turn “Native” women into “proper” ladies, whose place was in the home. Ann Laura Stoler links this to the proliferation of European misogyny of the start of the twentieth century; the men who resisted female emancipation in Europe were often the same men who designed the new imperial projects.⁵¹ Furthermore, the sexualized image Europeans had about the tropics sustained the idea of the “Native” woman as promiscuous and lacking sexual morals.⁵² This characterization is linked to Orientalism, in which Europeans sexualized “the East” to establish their own

⁴⁶ Touwen, “Paternalisme en Protest,” 69.

⁴⁷ Frances Gouda, “Beelden van (on)Mannelijkheid in de Koloniale Cultuur van Nederlands-Indië, 1900 – 1949,” *Sociologie* 3 (2007): 77.

⁴⁸ Gouda, “Beelden van (on)Mannelijkheid,” 72- 78.

⁴⁹ Kirsten Kamphuis, “‘The Javanese is Soft and Docile.’ Deconstructing Masculinities in Ethnography about the Netherlands Indies,” *Leidschrift: Historisch Tijdschrift* 30, no. 2 (2015): 178.

⁵⁰ Levine, *Gender and Empire*, 135 – 136.

⁵¹ Ann Laura Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th-Century Colonial Cultures,” *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (November 1989): 634.

⁵² Stoler, “Making Empire Respectable,” 635.

identity as pure and moral to confirm their superiority.⁵³ The framing of “Native” women as immoral can also be linked to the perception of certain parts of “Native” culture as improper in European measures, including traditions of polygamy and working women.⁵⁴ All these ideas reinforced the apparent difference between Christian European and “Native” women. The degree of civilization in the eyes of Europeans was linked to the likeliness of a “Native” woman’s lifestyle to a European woman’s lifestyle. Therefore, “Native” women were often taught Christian values: a civilized woman should be a good mother and wife who focused on domesticity, whose sexual moral stood in line with those of European women.⁵⁵

For “Native” men the Dutch colonizers used a framework of de-masculinization. European understanding of gender relied on a binary and complementary opposition between the feminine characterized as submissive, emotional, and passive, and the masculine consequently characterized as powerful, rational and active.⁵⁶ In the colonial context, masculinity was a powerful instrument for Europeans: as they established themselves as the superior man, there was not much room for “Native” masculinity. Therefore, the manliness of Europeans was reinforced by framing “Native” men as effeminate. This came to light in the representation of the “Native” elite versus the Dutch colonial elite, as Frances Gouda discusses: the colonial discourse on “Native” male clothes and traditions visualized “Native” male flamboyance and femininity for the Dutch.⁵⁷ Kirsten Kamphuis expands on the framing of “Natives” as effeminate. Firstly, she affirms that the Dutch indeed interpreted “Native” culture as effeminate, especially the Javanese dress habits. There was a less clear distinction between genders here, as both men and women wore items resembling skirts, both used products on their hair, both wore jewelry. This clashed with the gendered ideas on clothing and appearance of the Dutch. However, Kamphuis also shows that there were multiple versions of “Native” masculinity in the eyes of the Dutch: some groups were credited with quite a bit of masculinity as they were good fighters, like the men from the Moluccas and Aceh. Yet these masculine groups were seen as not as civilized as Dutch men, and thus their masculinity was

⁵³ Saïd, *Orientalism*.

⁵⁴ Kirsten Kamphuis, “Giving for Girls: Reconsidering Colonial Civilizing Missions in the Dutch East Indies through Charitable Girls’ Education,” *New Global Studies* 12, no. 2 (2018): 233; Locher-Scholten, *Women and the Colonial State*, 70 – 71 .

⁵⁵ Kamphuis, “Giving for Girls,” 218 – 219.

⁵⁶ Kamphuis, “The Javanese is Soft and Docile,” 168.

⁵⁷ Gouda, “Beelden van (on)Mannelijkheid,” 66 -67.

dismissed as low-ranked.⁵⁸ Other “Native” groups were seen as effeminate, like the Javanese. Javanese physical traits were labeled feminine because, according to the Dutch, they had a fine bone structure and little body hair. This was also applied to Javanese men, and added to a stereotype of a gracious, weak, hairless Javanese resembling the female side of the Western gender binary.⁵⁹

Furthermore, Javanese culture was seen as quite civilized, but the Dutch credited this to previous foreign rule, which could be seen as proof of Javanese submissiveness. The Dutch argued that previous foreign rule and Javanese elite rule had turned the lower Javanese classes humble and slavish, and the higher classes cruel.⁶⁰ This proved that the Ethical Policy was what the “Native” population needed: Dutch guidance but with regard to the wellbeing of “Natives.”⁶¹ After all, “Natives” were not fit for self-rule, as they lacked masculinity and fully developed civilization. Furthermore, “Natives” enjoyed a submissive role in society and needed the Dutch as a dominating force. These stereotypes were applied to both female and male “Natives”, but consequently, “Native” men were seen as weak, submissive, and effeminate.

Dutch Civilizing Projects and the Self

However, Europeans were not untouchable when it came to “Native” immorality. It was key to make sure Europeans who lived in the colonies did not get contaminated by local “Native” lifestyle. This fear of mixing and containment was central to the Dutch colonial ideology during the last period of Dutch imperialism. There was a focus on the protection of the European subjects, particularly European women, who had the duty of raising the future European population.⁶² This became even more important with the rise of theories like social Darwinism and eugenics.⁶³ Mixed race relations were seen as damaging for European authority and European racial supremacy.⁶⁴ Interracial sex was thus a central concern for Europeans, but there was also a fear of “Native” culture “rubbing off” on Europeans, captured with the phrase “verindischen” (going “Native”). Europeans were warned against exposing themselves too much to “Native” culture or to the tropical

⁵⁸ Kamphuis, “The Javanese is Soft and Docile,” 168 – 174.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 172 – 173.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 175.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 174 – 176.

⁶² Levine, *Gender and Empire*, 147.

⁶³ Pamela Pattynama, “Liplappen en Nonna’s: Presentatie van een Beoogd Onderzoek,” *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 54, no. 3 (September 2014): 403.

⁶⁴ Levine, *Gender and Empire*, 138 – 142 ; Pattynama, “Liplappen en Nonna’s,” 403.

climate, as this could negatively impact their Western norms and values.⁶⁵ The author Louis Couperus came to be one of the most predominant representatives of the this “verindischen” phenomenon. Couperus was born in the Netherlands, but grew up in the Dutch Indies. In his work, he discussed topics such as live in the “Dutch Indies”, the cultural identity of mixed race people, and relationships between Europeans and “Natives”.⁶⁶ Furthermore, his work embodied the sensuality of colonial life. Couperus became known as an exotic outsider in the Netherlands, a reputation that he himself embraced as he celebrated the ambiguity of a Dutchman in the Dutch Indies.⁶⁷

Thus, the Dutch living in the Dutch Indies must be seen as separate from the Dutch living in the Netherlands. They were more a middle group in between Europeans and “Natives”. They had to uphold the honor of the West, yet were in constant danger of lowering themselves to the immorality of “Natives”. Furthermore, they were highly influenced by the Western orientalist view of the Dutch Indies, yet at the same time they themselves were also the subject of exoticization from the Dutch in the Netherlands.

Chapter 2: Homosexuality in Dutch Colonial Context

Homosexual relationships in the early colonial context has mainly been connected to the lack of European women in early colonies. Often, the European men had relationships with “Native” women, but homosexual relationships between European men also took place. These men lived in a hypermasculine context, e.g. military outposts, and it is not hard to imagine how in such an isolated situation, away from Western society, a comradeship can turn into a sexual relationship.⁶⁸ With the rise of modern imperialism, and the rise of new ideas on gender and sexuality, the narrative of homosexuality and colonialism expanded.

Homosexuality and Orientalist Views of the East

Gender identity was closely connected to the Western understanding of sexuality, especially when homosexuality began to be understood as an identity instead of an act

⁶⁵ Pattynama, “Liplappen en Nonna’s,” 403 – 404.

⁶⁶ Susie Protschky, “Nature, Landscape and Identity in the Netherlands Indies: Literary Constructions of Being Dutch in the Tropics,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 164, no. 1 (2008): 18 – 20.

⁶⁷ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 119.

⁶⁸ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 4; Gert Hekma, “Homosexual Behavior in the Nineteenth-Century Dutch Army,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2, no. 2 (October 1991): 285.

around the end of the nineteenth century. It was debated whether homosexuality was linked to racial factors. Some scientists understood homosexuality to be a “mixing of feminine and masculine characteristics,” and a homosexual man could be recognized for having feminine characteristics.⁶⁹ These included features, amongst others, such as a high voice, a small figure, a lack of muscles and (facial) hair, an interest in ‘feminine jobs’ and a tendency to be emotional and artistic.⁷⁰ The characteristics described here resemble the characteristics attributed to “Native” men as described in the previous chapter. Therefore, it is understandable that the Western vision of the East had a certain homoerotic layer glazed over it. After 1900, homosexuality was less seen as something linked to race: it surpassed boundaries and could occur in both Europeans and “Natives”.⁷¹ However, scientists still agreed that homosexuality was dangerous and even contagious. Furthermore, the association between the East and homosexuality was not erased from the public mindset. Non-Western cultures were seen as a context in which immorality could blossom.⁷²

The connection between the East and homosexuality was also visible in the orientalist view of the East, as Europeans stressed the exoticism and eroticism in their vision of colonies in order to reinforce imperialist ideals. Orientalism was present in visual art, although there was mainly an erotic vision of “Native” women used here, as to meet the expectations of the heterosexual male gaze.⁷³ A common place to find a homoerotic orientalist view is colonial literature, where European men expanded on their homosexual encounters in the East. Due to the orientalist associations, stories set in a colonial context offered a chance to write about homosexuality, albeit in a coded way.⁷⁴ Examples include the works of Louis Couperus. Although he did not explicitly write stories about homosexuality, some descriptions have a clear homoerotic undertone.⁷⁵ Aldrich describes Couperus’ travelogue *Eastward* as an example of this, referring to Couperus’ remarks on “muscular boatmen, robust young Dutchmen and bare-chested Balinese with flowers in their hair.”⁷⁶ All in all, orientalism created an image of the East

⁶⁹ Mary Kemperink, “Nederlandse Literaire Verbeelding van Oosterse Homoseksualiteit in Relatie tot het Westerse Wetenschappelijke discours,” *Negentiende Eeuw* 39, no. 3 – 4 (2015): 258.

⁷⁰ Kemperink, “Nederlandse Literaire Verbeelding van Oosterse Homoseksualiteit,” 260.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, 260.

⁷² *Ibidem*, 263 – 268.

⁷³ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 149.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, 106.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 120 – 122.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 120.

as more tolerant towards homosexuality and an image of “Native” men as “easily available” partners. This meant that a link between homosexuality and foreignness became deeply rooted in European minds, triggering feelings of both scandal and fascination.⁷⁷

The East as a Destination for European Homosexuals

As homosexuality became linked to identity than to just singular acts of sodomy, colonies became a refuge for homosexuals who were shunned in Western societies. Colonies seemed to be an attractive destination because of the persistence of ideas such as the “loose sexual morals” of the exotic East. Thus, the stereotypes that drove the civilizing projects were also what made the colonies an attractive destination for European homosexuals. They reinforced the idea that colonies could be an escape from European conventions and morals.⁷⁸ A good example of this exotified idea of the East as tolerant to homosexuals, is the island of Bali. As Bali had undergone little influence of Western society, the Dutch portrayed Bali as an pure and untouched paradise of which their unique culture must be preserved.⁷⁹ H. T. Damste , the Dutch governor of Bali, captured this sentiment quite strikingly: “Let the colonial administration ... treat the island of Bali as a rare jewel that we must protect and whose virginity must remain intact.”⁸⁰ As this quote suggest, the idea of the colony as a submissive feminine protected by the masculine Europeans prevailed. Remarkably, Christian missionaries were also denied access to the island in the effort to protect its unique culture.⁸¹

Soon, Bali was promoted as a living museum as a way to attract tourism.⁸² The fascination towards Bali was closely connected to the Western interpretation of Balinese gender and sexuality norms. Numerous accounts of Western visitors comment on the blurred lines between men and women in Balinese culture, and the open atmosphere surrounding homosexual sexual relations. Balinese men were regarded as highly effeminate due to their mannerisms, clothes and relationships to other men. Furthermore, age seemed to play a different role in sexual relations in the Balinese context compared to the European context.⁸³ All in all, Bali gained a reputation as exotic, sexually free and

⁷⁷ Ibidem, 144 – 145.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, 4.

⁷⁹ Atkins, *Imagining Gay Paradise*, 72 – 74.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, 96.

⁸¹ Ibidem, 96.

⁸² Ibidem, 73.

⁸³ Ibidem, 73 – 74.

morally dubious. Because of the relative tolerance regarding homosexuality on the island, Bali also became a refuge for Western homosexuals who wanted to escape European restrictions and who had been drawn to Bali by the orientalist view that was promoted by Europeans.

A key figure in this promotion is Walter Spies. Spies, born in Moscow but with German nationality, came to the Dutch Indies in 1923 and worked as musicologist, composer, and curator, but gained fame mainly as a painter. Spies settled in Bali and became enchanted with Balinese culture. He assumed an ambassador-like figure for the island as he published multiple books on it and his paintings of the island travelled over the world.⁸⁴ In Spies' representation of Bali, the diverging gender norms and performances of the Balinese people was highlighted. Although Spies' paintings are not overtly homoerotic, Spies' homosexuality was very possibly what inspired him to visit the exotic island and what made him feel at home there.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the mere fact that Spies was a homosexual himself added to Bali's reputation. Eventually, the European morality norms would catch up with Spies, as he was one of the men arrested during the *Zedenschandaal*.⁸⁶

The Role of the "Native"

In this view of the East as a utopia for homosexuals, the position of the "Native" should also be analyzed. As previously described, the Dutch viewed "Natives" as feminine and submissive. Consequently, men were demasculinized to establish European men as overpowering. When looking at homosexuality in the Dutch Indies, views on race and sexuality clearly intersected. Although the ideal of Dutch morality condemned both homosexuality and relations between Europeans and "Natives", relations between European men and "Native" men did regularly occur, as European homosexuals who left for the East as refuge were clearly attracted to exoticism.⁸⁷ As stereotypes placed male "Natives" in a submissive box, power relations in a relationship between European men and "Native" men mimicked the relation between Europeans and "Natives". Of course, there might have been exceptions in which Europeans and "Natives" treated each other as equals, but in general the "Native" was pushed into the submissive and feminine box.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 162 – 164.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 164 – 165.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 163 – 164.

⁸⁷ Kerkhof, "Het Indisch Zedenschandaal," 28; Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 4.

⁸⁸ Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 9.

This stereotype of dependency on the Europeans was reinforced by the age gaps between Europeans and “Natives”. Relations between adult “Native” men and adult European men took place too, but the relations between underage “Native” men and adult European men were illegal and thus the most common kind of relationship in public knowledge.⁸⁹

Furthermore, prostitution of “Native” men also reinforced the power disbalance between homosexual Europeans and “Natives”. In a society based on a system of inequality where one group is subjected to another, sex is a common way to gain certain privileges for the subjected group. Thus, it can be difficult to draw a strict line between prostitution and a smart use of seductive skills.⁹⁰ In the Dutch Indies, it was very common for European men to give material gifts as sign of appreciation for “Native” men.⁹¹ Profound relationships on equal bases between “Native” men and European men were not common in the Dutch Indies. Historian Gosse Kerkhof pinpoints the reason for this: “A class (and color) conscious society like the Dutch Indies made it impossible to keep contacts with Indonesians other than quick and unpersonal contacts.”⁹² Therefore, prostitution was often the most common way for European men to have a sexual relationship with “Natives”. This prostitution was performed by both European and “Native” men, and also both by men over and under the legal age of consent.⁹³ As prostitution was illegal, the prevalence of it in the homosexual subculture of the Dutch Indies added to the disapproval of homosexuality.⁹⁴ It combined multiple angles of transgression of Christian and Dutch norms: sex in exchange for money, sex with men, sex with someone who was often underage, and interracial sex.

Homosexuality and the Law

These Dutch gender and sexuality norms are also reflected in the legal situation of homosexuals in the Netherlands and in the Dutch Indies. The 1911 article 248bis changed the legal age of consent in homosexual context from sixteen to twenty-one.⁹⁵ The age of consent for heterosexual acts remained sixteen, and although the law also applied to women, the focus was more on male homosexual behavior than lesbian behavior.⁹⁶ The

⁸⁹ Ibidem, 10.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, 4.

⁹¹ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 29.

⁹² Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 31. All translations in this thesis are by me, the author.

⁹³ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 30.

⁹⁴ Ibidem, 29.

⁹⁵ Atkins, *Imagining Gay Paradise*, 95.

⁹⁶ Theo van der Meer, “De Invoering van Art. 248bis Sr. in Historisch Perspectief,” *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 22, no. 3 (2019): 250.

idea that homosexuality was transferred through seduction was central to this article, and it highlighted the fear of homosexuals seducing minors. This image was reinforced by the centrality of prostitution in scandals surrounding homosexuality.⁹⁷ Prostitution was not something exclusive to homosexuals. Although there were often underage boys involved with homosexual prostitution, conclusions about homosexual preference for minors should not be drawn too quickly here. A subject prejudicially defined by discourse of sin and shame, like homosexuality, is often merely represented by its public scandals which does not reflect the wider reality.⁹⁸ However, the lawmakers of Article 248bis were less hesitant to connect the homosexual prostitution of young boys to the supposed immoral nature of homosexual acts. Thus, Article 248bis was implemented to simultaneously to protect children and to punish homosexuals for the seduction of minors. It added to the centrality of monogamous, romantic, heterosexual and age appropriate relations as the only morally approved relations for the Dutch.⁹⁹

From 1918 onwards, the whole population of the Dutch Indies followed a legal code based on the Dutch model. Article 248bis was implemented as Article 292.¹⁰⁰ Again, this law was a way to convert the moral judgement of homosexuality into a legal matter.¹⁰¹ However, if an arrest concerned a “Native”, colonial authorities often struggled to determine whether they were under or above the legal age of consent. This was both due to the lack of registration of “Natives” in civil records and clashes with *Adat* laws, a separate law system that was also used for “Natives”. *Adat* law linked adulthood to sexual maturity, or to marriage in a more practical sense. Furthermore, someone who was not the perpetrator, but the victim of “lewd” actions, could not be fully held accountable for these misdeeds.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Ibidem, 263.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, 265.

⁹⁹ Atkins, *Imagining Gay Paradise*, 95.

¹⁰⁰ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 26. Article 292 differed from article 248bis in a few ways. In the Dutch Indies, the maximum penalty for breaking this law became five years instead of four, and the age of consent for girls became fifteen instead of sixteen.

¹⁰¹ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 25 – 26.

¹⁰² Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 26.

Chapter 3: A Closer Look at the *Zedenschandaal*

Homosexuality in the Dutch Indies had been a topic of concern already in the run up to the *Zedenschandaal*: In 1936 and 1937 political parties expressed their worries about the sexual deviance of Europeans and urged police to tackle this problem.¹⁰³ The scandal began in earnest in November 1938 when W. G. van Eyndthoven was arrested in Batavia after the police received a tip about Van Eyndthoven hosting young men in his hotel room.¹⁰⁴ The collection of letters found in Van Eyndthoven's hotel room was the reason why the *Zedenschandaal* could grow into the scandal it became: it provided the police with other names to investigate, and it gave some insight into the jargon and code used in the homosexual subculture of that time and place.¹⁰⁵ Arrests were made, and subsequent interrogations were followed by more arrests. Consequently, people lost their jobs, which often were for or related to the Dutch colonial authorities, marriages broke down, and some accused men committed suicide.¹⁰⁶ The arrests spread to other parts of the Dutch Indies, and eventually, the whole colony was forced to face a topic that instigated shock and scandal.¹⁰⁷ Although the police investigation was supposed to be conducted in secrecy, news about the *Zedenschandaal* got out already in the middle of December 1938.¹⁰⁸ During the winter and spring of 1938/1939, the *Zedenschandaal*, was a daily subject in the news of the Dutch Indies.¹⁰⁹

For this chapter, newspaper articles published in the Dutch Indies between December 1938 and June 1939, which mention variations of the word “Inlander” or the word “Inheems”, will be analyzed. This selection has been put in place in order to zoom in on articles that discuss the racial tension between “Natives” and Europeans in the context of the *Zedenschandaal*. At my time of research, 85 newspaper articles from the relevant time frame mention the *Zedenschandaal* in combination with a variant of the word “Inlander” or a variant of the word “Inheems” on the Delpher online archive.¹¹⁰ As these articles were all published in newspapers related to the European community of the Dutch Indies, they mainly represented public opinion from a European and Dutch speaking perspective. This perspective largely coincided with the general perspective of

¹⁰³ Bloembergen “Rein Zijn Is Sterk Zijn,” 112 – 113.

¹⁰⁴ Ibidem, 113 – 114.

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, 114.

¹⁰⁶ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 3.

¹⁰⁷ Bloembergen “Rein Zijn Is Sterk Zijn,” 117 – 119.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, 117.

¹⁰⁹ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 3.

¹¹⁰ See appendix for a schematic overview of these newspaper articles.

the colonial power.¹¹¹ Still, the newspapers did differ slightly when it came to which perspective within the European they represented. Consequently, their reporting on the *Zedenschandaal* was not fully identical.¹¹² However, in this chapter, the common themes and narratives on these articles will be highlighted, as to get an insight in the general representation of the “Native” men versus European men involved in the *Zedenschandaal*. From this, two major reasons for the focus on public opinion on European arrestees in the *Zedenschandaal* can be deciphered.

The Zedenschandaal as a Purge of Europeans

The newspaper articles on the *Zedenschandaal* describe homosexuality as something dirty that needed eradication from Dutch Indian society. This is apparent when looking at the titles used for articles reporting on the scandal. On the December 23, 1938, *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* gave a *Zedenschandaal* related article with the following title: “The Rotten Spot in Our Society.”¹¹³ Furthermore, the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* continuously used titles referring to “the Cleansing Process”.¹¹⁴ “The Big Cleanup” was another term regularly used by an array of newspapers.¹¹⁵ Thus, as the *Deli Courant* states on December 27, 1938, the aim was to “eradicate the evil with root and branch.”¹¹⁶

However, this purification was not directed to the Dutch Indies society as a whole, but focused on European subjects in particular. This focus on Europeans comes to the surface when looking at the way newspapers reported men arrested during the *Zedenschandaal*. Whenever a European was arrested, or even was merely associated with the scandal, they were often named by their initials, and usually occupation was also added. For example, on January 3, 1939, *De Sumatra Post* reported a house search at the place of residence of “dr. L. S. A. M. von R., a specialist in nervous and spiritual

¹¹¹ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 58; Gerard Termorshuizen, *Realisten en Reactionairen: Een Geschiedenis van de Indisch-Nederlandsche Pers 1905 – 1942* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Dtinmar, 2011).

¹¹² Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 58 – 72.

¹¹³ “De Rotten Plek in Onze Samenleving,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, December 23, 1938.

¹¹⁴ “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, December 26, 1938; “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, December 31, 1938; “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, January 9, 1939; “Het Reinigingsproces: Een Gemêleerd Gezelschap,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, January 17, 1939; “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, January 19, 1939; “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, January 20, 1939.

¹¹⁵ “De Opruiming in Indië’s Groote Steden,” *De Locomotief*, December 29, 1938; “De Groote Schoonmaak,” *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 9, 1939; “Schoonmaak in Bandoeng,” *De Locomotief*, January 9, 1939; “De Groote Schoonmaak,” *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, January 21, 1939.

¹¹⁶ “Het Optreden tegen de Zedenmisdrijven,” *Deli Courant*, December 27, 1938.

illnesses”.¹¹⁷ This invasion of privacy caused some debate at the time, as people quickly lost their anonymity in the tightly-knit communities of Europeans in the Dutch Indies as their reputations were irreversibly damaged.¹¹⁸ In stark contrast to this, information on “Native” men arrested was rarely mentioned, even if their arrest was reported in the same article as the arrest of a more explicitly identified European.¹¹⁹ The same *De Sumatra Post* article of January 3, 1939 exposing dr. L. S. A. M. von R. also mentioned that “thirty Native lads” were arrested. This anonymity of “Natives” was not only used when discussing large group arrests: For example, on December 29, 1938, *De Locomotief* mentioned the interrogation of “a Native young man”, but at the same time exposed “the Bandoeng ear, nose and throat doctor H. N. No...n” as a person suspected to be involved in the *Zedenschandaal*.¹²⁰

One way to interpret this hyper focus on Europeans is by arguing that the revelations of the *Zedenschandaal* damaged European’s moral reputation, thus shocking and worrying Europeans. The *Deli Courant* of December 31, 1938 stated that “the Western prestige has been damaged by that of what has currently been revealed.”¹²¹ The involvement of European men in the *Zedenschandaal* clashed with the European civilizing mission, as *De Koerier* argued on April 14, 1939: “Many of our fellow-countrymen who came to this beautiful country unfortunately were not culture bearers but culture destructors!”¹²² Thus, the *Zedenschandaal* was truly seen as a “crime against the society,” as the *Soerabajiasch Handelsblad* of December 29, 1938 put it.¹²³ At the same time, Europeans had low expectations for “Natives” when it came to irradicating homosexuality. The reputation of “Natives” in the *Zedenschandaal* was not particularly damaged, as Europeans had already continuously framed them to be sexually deviant in colonial discourse. “Natives” were the ones in need of civilization, after all: “We have

¹¹⁷ “Nederl. Indië: De Zedenmisdrijven,” *Deli Courant*, January 4, 1939.

¹¹⁸ Kerkhof, “Het Indisch Zedenschandaal,” 3.

¹¹⁹ “Ned.- Indië: Zedenschandaal Werkt als een Olievlek,” *De Locomotief*, January 2, 1939. “Steeds meer Arrestaties,” *De Locomotief*, January 4, 1939; “De Zedenmisdrijven,” *Deli Courant*, January 4, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal,” *De Koerier*, January 6, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal,” *De Koerier*, January 7, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal: Het Verdere Onderzoek,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 13, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 16, 1939; “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, January 19, 1939; “De Zedenmisdrijven,” *De Indische Courant*, January 24, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 25, 1939; “De Zedendelicten,” *De Indische Courant*, January 27, 1939.

¹²⁰ “De Opruiming in Indië’s Groote Steden,” *De Locomotief*, December 29, 1938.

¹²¹ “Zedenschandaal,” *Deli Courant*, December 31, 1938.

¹²² “Het Eiland der Démonen,” *De Koerier*, April 14, 1939.

¹²³ “Zuivering en Taak der Pers,” *Soerabajiasch Handelsblad*, December 29, 1938.

the heavy responsibility towards the population of these countries, which many of us unfortunately take too little into account,” *De Koerier* reminded the European population on April 14, 1939.¹²⁴ “No trivializing comparison with similar situations in a purely Eastern society can erase this stain [on Western prestige]” the *Deli Courant* added on December 31, 1938.¹²⁵ Thus, Europeans mainly feared that their own people would be degraded to the level of “Natives”. Therefore, “Native” suspects were not deemed to be as newsworthy as European suspects.

The Zedenschandaal as a Way to Establish “Native” Passiveness

Furthermore, this focus on European men in the reporting of the *Zedenschandaal* could be a reflection of colonial relationships between Europeans and “Natives”. As previously discussed, this relationship entailed an interaction between the “Natives” as uncivilized and the Europeans as civilizers. However, this relationship also entailed an interaction between an (effeminate) passive and a (masculine) active party. In this way, the colonial discourse on “Natives” versus Europeans was translated to the context of homosexuality. European men involved in the *Zedenschandaal* were often in sexual relationships with “Native” men. In this relationship, the European is seen as the active actor, while the “Native” as the passive actor. *De Locomotief* literally states on December 24, 1938: “On the passive side there are both adults and minors involved, almost exclusively natives.”¹²⁶ This passiveness is reinforced by the lack of initials used for “Natives” that were arrested, as described earlier on, and by reports of these “Natives” being taken by police only to give a witness statement. For example, on December 29, 1938, *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië* reports on “the interrogation of witnesses, for the biggest majority Natives.”¹²⁷ The same newspaper mentions that “numerous witnesses, mostly Natives, were called” on January 13, 1939.¹²⁸

Moreover, these unbalanced relations between Europeans and “Natives” are reaffirmed when analyzing how often “Native” men were described as being very young. The word “minor” is frequently used.¹²⁹ “Youngman” is another common indicator for

¹²⁴ “Het Eiland der Démonen.” *De Koerier*, April 14, 1939.

¹²⁵ “Zedenschandaal.” *Deli Courant*, December 31, 1938.

¹²⁶ “De Zedenmisdriften te Batavia: Weer Vijf Aanhoudingen,” *De Locomotief*, December 24, 1938.

¹²⁷ “Het Zedenschandaal,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, December 29, 1938.

¹²⁸ “Het Zedenschandaal: Het Verdere Onderzoek,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 13, 1939.

¹²⁹ “De Zedenmisdriften te Batavia: Weer Vijf Aanhoudingen,” *De Locomotief*, December 24, 1938; “Arrestaties te Medan,” *Deli Courant*, December 29, 1938; “Ontstellende Bijzonderheden over het

“Natives”.¹³⁰ The term “knapen”, best translated to “lads”, is also often associated with “Native” men.¹³¹ On January 9, 1939, the *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië* even mentions the term “knapen” in combination with the expression “bij hun jasje gegrepen”, which is a casual expression for to catch or to arrest.¹³² This combination of expressions gives the illusion of young boys who got picked up by the police for some innocent mischief, not of the arrest of sexual predators. The term “katjongs” is used in the same *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië* article, and is repeated multiple times by other newspapers after this first mention.¹³³ “Katjong” is a typical Dutch-Indian word. It is derived from Malay and refers to a young, often “Native” boy.¹³⁴ The newspapers even phrase it as “Lanterfanterende katjongs”, meaning young boys who are just lounging or goofing around. On February 20, 1939, the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* confirms the Dutch tendency to classify “Natives” as young men: “A Native can look like someone aged eighteen, but he can be twenty-five.”¹³⁵ All in all, Europeans clearly did not see “Native” men as the main predators in the *Zedenschandaal*, but as young boys who happened to get caught up in a scandal. Furthermore, homosexuality and the *Zedenschandaal* “formed a highly dangerous threat for the youth, regardless whether they are from European or Native descent,” as the *Deli Courant* confirmed on December 27, 1938.¹³⁶

Zedenschandaal,” *Deli Courant*, December 30, 1938; “Strafzaken, Voetangels, en Klemmen: Moeilijkheden bij Vaststelling der Minderjarigheid,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, February 20, 1939.

¹³⁰ “Huiszoeking te Medan in Verband met het Zedenschandaal,” *Deli Courant*, December 28, 1938; “De Zedenmisdriften,” *De Koerier*, December 29, 1938; “De Opruiming in Indië’s Groote Steden,” *De Locomotief*, December 29, 1938; “Ook te Medan,” *De Indische Courant*, December 29, 1938.

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¹³¹ “Zedenschandaal te Batavia,” *Deli Courant*, December 28, 1938; “Arrestaties te Medan,” *Deli Courant*, December 29, 1938; “Zedenmisdriften,” *Deli Courant*, December 31, 1938; “Het Zedenschandaal op Java,” *De Sumatra Post*, December 31, 1938; “Het Reinigingsproces,” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, December 31, 1938; “Zedenmisdriften,” *Deli Courant*, January 3, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 3, 1939; “Verdere Arrestatie Inzake het Zedenschandaal,” *De Sumatra Post*, January 3, 1939; “De Zedenmisdriften,” *Deli Courant*, January 4, 1939; “De Groote Schoonmaak,” *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 9, 1939; “Het Zedenschandaal,” *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 16, 1939.

¹³² “De Groote Schoonmaak.” *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 9, 1939.

¹³³ “De Groote Schoonmaak.” *Algemeen Handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 9, 1939.

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¹³⁴ “Wat is de Betekenis van Katjong?” *Ensie Encyclopedie*, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.ensie.nl/betekenis/katjong>.

¹³⁵ “Het Reinigingsproces.” *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, January 20, 1939.

¹³⁶ “Het Optreden tegen de Zedenmisdriften.” *Deli Courant*, December 27, 1938.

The Representation of “Natives” upholding European Masculine Superiority

The way newspapers represented “Natives” reaffirmed the dominance of Europeans. Firstly, Europeans felt they were morally superior. Although the *Zedenschandaal* challenged this illusion by highlighting indecent elements in Europeans society, the buildup of colonial discourse surrounding “Natives” had established “Natives” as much more morally corrupt. European reputations were under threat, but “Natives” had not much of a reputation to lose from the start. Newspapers emphasized this by using language related to purification; by emphasizing the danger of losing Western prestige; and by focusing their gaze on European arrestees. Secondly, according to newspapers reports, “Natives” involved in the *Zedenschandaal* were mainly anonymous, passive and young. This can be explained by a general European disinterest in the “Native” story, but it can also be related to the traditional divisions in interactions between Europeans and “Natives”. Throughout colonial discourse, Europeans had established themselves as the masculine active party, and “Natives” had been framed as the feminine passive party. This representation is mirrored in the representation of “Natives” in the *Zedenschandaal*, where “Natives”. In this line of reasoning, it is logical that there was little focus on “Natives” as predators. Even in the context of homosexuality, which Europeans heavily condemned, the European actor needed to be the active party. “Natives” came from a morally corrupt culture, but they could not be given much agency. A “Native” as active predator in this story would clash with the illusion of European masculine superiority.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have approached the *Zedenschandaal* in the light of the cultural exportation of a Dutch gender regime, and through that lens I have explored the reasons behind the focus on European arrestees during this scandal. At first, the fact that the majority of arrestees were Europeans seemed to clash with colonial discourse and ideology on the differences between “Natives” and Europeans. As is evident when studying the Ethical Policy, the Dutch saw themselves as more civilized and developed than “Natives” and aimed to civilize the population of the Dutch Indies by exporting their norms and values. These norms and values also reflected the Dutch gender regime: Christianity played a big role, just like the nuclear family and traditional gender roles. However, the Ethical Policy mainly reflected the hierarchical difference between Europeans and “Natives”, and “Natives” would never be able to truly rise to the Dutch level of civilization in this system. The Dutch envisioned themselves as a father figure for the “Natives”, who were framed to be naturally dependent on their colonizers. Moreover, the implementation of a Dutch gender regime mainly resulted in the framing of “Natives” as effeminate, passive, submissive, and emotional, as opposed to masculine, active, dominant, and rational Europeans. It justified the European men as superior, and affected “Native” men in particular, as they were demasculinized in this process.

Aside from the effeminate and submissive image of “Natives”, the Orientalist perception of the East emphasized the eroticism and taboo nature of the region. The Dutch Indies in particular were framed as a paradise for sexual indiscretion, proliferated with effeminate and submissive “Natives”. Furthermore, a connection between homosexuality and the East was easily made because the image created of “Native” men resembled the Western stereotypes of homosexuality. “Native” cultures were also interpreted as having looser sexual morals and being more tolerant regarding homosexuality. All in all, this made the Dutch Indies an attractive destination for European homosexuals who wanted to escape the restricting gender regime at home, which again added to the view of the Dutch Indies as homosexual breeding ground. However, these European homosexuals had also been influenced by Orientalism. They regarded “Native” men as feminine and submissive, and power relations between homosexual Europeans and “Natives” were fundamentally exploitative and off balance. The idea that the “Native” depended on the European was reinforced by the frequency of age gaps and prostitution within homosexual relations between “Natives” and Europeans.

This is the larger cultural context within which the *Zedenschandaal* took place. When analyzing the language used to refer to “Natives” in Dutch Indian newspaper articles that describe the *Zedenschandaal*, the focus of public judgement on European arrestees is actually in line with the general colonial discourse that was dominant at the time. “Natives” were continuously framed as having a lack of morals in their culture, as chapter one describes. The lack of focus on “Native” arrestees during the *Zedenschandaal* appear to be in paradox with these ideas. However, the *Zedenschandaal* was extra painful for Europeans due to the tarnishing of their self-given moral superiority over “Natives”. The Europeans’ reputation was at stake. “Natives” did not risk losing their reputation, as the involvement of “Natives” in the *Zedenschandaal* merely confirmed what Europeans already “knew” about them. Furthermore, “Natives” were also framed to be feminine passive, and submissive. As chapter two also confirms, this orientalist view of “Natives” played a significant role in homosexual relations between “Natives” and Europeans. Giving “Natives” some sort of agency in the *Zedenschandaal* would not stand in line with ideas surrounding male European superiority. Thus, the question “Why was public judgement focused on the arrest of European men during the 1938 *Zedenschandaal* in the Dutch Indies?” must be answered by centralizing colonial ideas on European moral superiority, and colonial framing of the European as active, dominant, and masculine.

Despite this answer to my research question, there are still some factors that I would like to explore further in the future. Firstly, I have decided to concentrate on the cultural exportation of gender regimes as motives behind the *Zedenschandaal* in this thesis. Reasons for the course of events during the *Zedenschandaal* that relate to the legal systems of the Dutch Indies have been less focused on. Still, this is an important and worthy angle to analyze. The topic of race can also be implemented in this approach, as Europeans and “Natives” were not treated fully in the same way in the legal system of the Dutch Indies. Moreover, in a bigger research project I would like pay more attention to the different perspectives newspapers represent, as this might reveal more details on how a newspaper’s position influenced its view on the *Zedenschandaal*. Moreover, I have now mainly included newspapers for the Dutch community within the Dutch Indies, but it would be very interesting to delve into the “Native” press too.

Lastly, this thesis is mainly written from the perspective of Europeans, and thus neglects “Native” perspective. This is because the literature I used and the primary sources that were available to me focused on the European perspective. Sources on the

“Native” perspectives are more difficult to find. The Dutch colonizer had the upper hand in whose perspective was valued most at the time, but also what was later archived as valuable voices. Still, an effort should be made to rediscover “Native” perspectives in order to restore their side of the story, for example by analyzing the public opinion represented in the “Native” press. It is important to value the agency of “Native” voices in order to prevent a repetition of colonial ideas on “Natives” as passive and submissive. Adding to this lack of diverse perspectives regarding the *Zedenschandaal*, this research could be extended to also analyze other perspectives in Dutch Indian society. I have now focused on the relations between Europeans and “Natives”, but “Foreign Orientals” and “Indos” (mixed race people from European and “Native” descent) should also be included in this story to give a more accurate representation of life in the Dutch Indies.

In summary, this thesis has shed a new light on the *Zedenschandaal* with an intersectional approach and a focus on the role of race. I have placed the *Zedenschandaal* in a context of the cultural exportation of a Dutch gender regime, and I have revealed the role of orientalist colonial ideology in the homosexual subculture of the Dutch Indies. For a long time, homosexuality in the colonial context has been left undiscovered. There are still many stories that are unheard. In our efforts to bring these stories to light, we must be aware of the intersections between homophobia and colonialism, and we must actively refuse to repeat the oppressive narratives of the past.

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