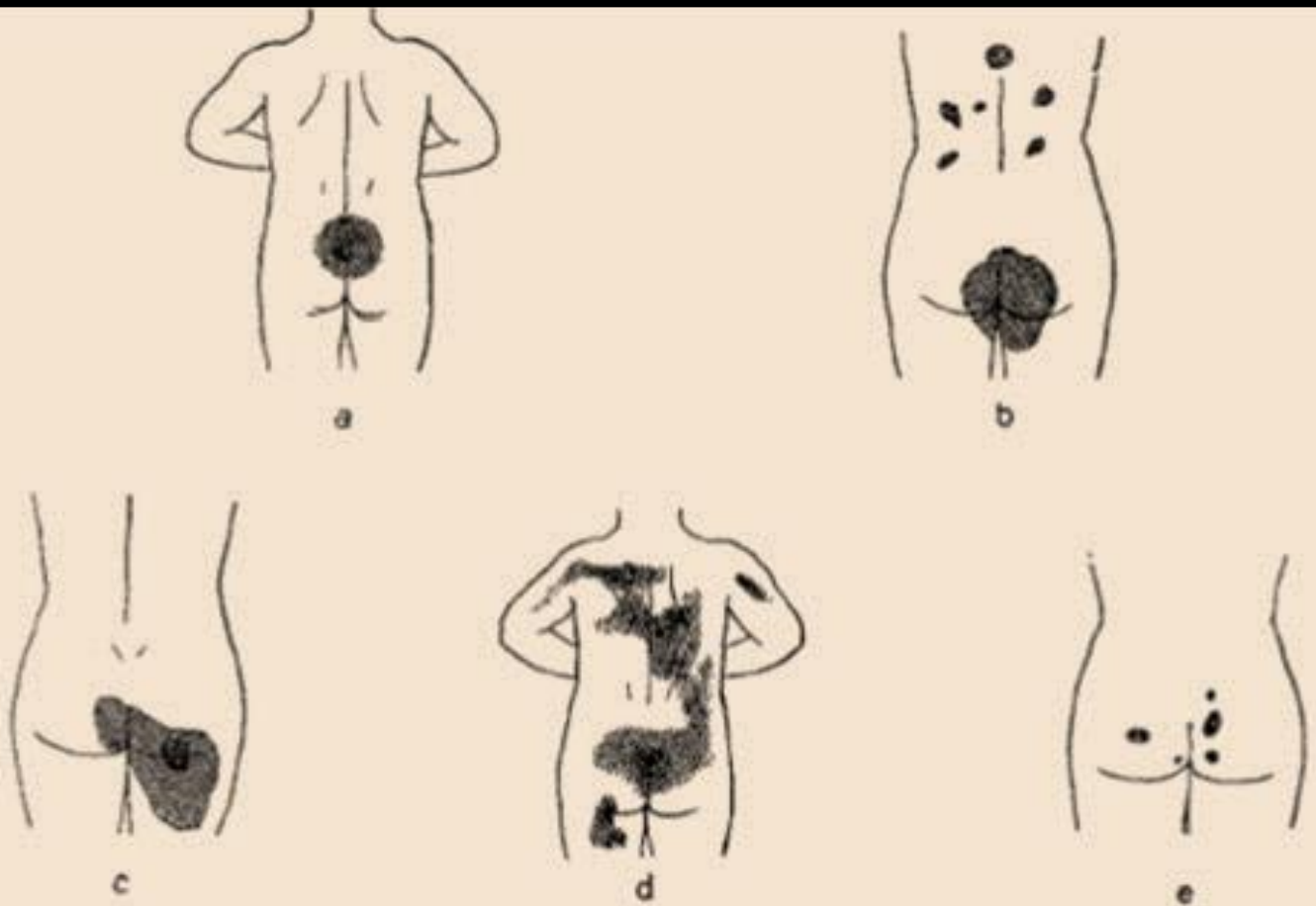


UNTANGLING THE “MONGOLIAN SPOT”

The legacy of colonial Indonesia’s racial science on
Dutch parenting websites



I.K.T. Grünewald



Utrecht
University



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Name: I.K.T. (Inge) Grünewald

Student number: 5931142

Supervisors: Dr. A. (Abigail) Nieves Delgado and Dr. R.B. (Robert-Jan) Wille

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Abstract

This thesis explores the legacy of colonial racial science in contemporary Dutch society by studying the presentation of the “mongolenvlek” on informational parenting websites. The research question of this thesis is: What is the meaning of the “mongolenvlek” and its association with Indonesian heritage in the context of Dutch parenting websites and Dutch colonial history? It explores the historical context of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia and the racial identities that emerged from it. Through an analysis of the informational parenting websites and their forums, racial terminology and assumptions are identified. These racial terminologies and assumptions directly connect CDM to racial heritage. In this way, the construction of the “mongolenvlek” becomes a racial marker by which racial identities are determined. However, reconsidering the history of racial science shows that these racial identities are based on social constructions known as the *racialised common sense*. Moreover, exploring the Dutch colonial history through the narratives of Indo-Europeans shows that these racial identities were imposed through identifying racial markers on physical appearances and maintained through oppression and violence. Revisiting the representation of CDM on parenting websites with these findings, we find that the “mongolenvlek” is a contemporary uncontested racial marker. This uncontested acceptance is due to the fact the Dutch colonial history is “unremembered” and thereby absent from the collective body of Dutch history. Thus, this thesis demonstrates the need for a greater historical awareness and a critical examination of racial thinking to identify colonial biases and create a more inclusive society.

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Introduction

The Dutch selectively commemorate their colonial history: research concerning formal school education shows that Dutch history lessons are extremely Eurocentric. They lack multiperspectivity in which more perspectives than the white European perspective is considered.¹ This is Eurocentric in the sense that the history lessons exclusively consider the white European perspective. Consequently, Dutch citizens are mostly unaware of their colonial history. This thesis looks at this notion of colonial Eurocentrism in the communication and public understanding of medical information presented on the internet. Also here, the Dutch Eurocentric perspective dominates. “Caucasian” or “blank” remains the medical norm.² Consequently, people who do not fall within these racial categories are considered racially divergent.

Through a case study, this thesis shows that the presentation of the “mongolenvlek,” medically known as Congenital Dermal Melanocytosis or CDM, on Dutch parenting websites is a prime example of this Eurocentric view. I argue that the understanding of the “mongolenvlek” as presented on the parenting websites shows historical ignorance as opposed to historical awareness of the Dutch colonial history. To better understand this Eurocentric view, my research question is: What is the meaning of the “mongolenvlek” and its association with Indonesian heritage in the context of Dutch parenting websites and Dutch colonial history?

I focus on the Indonesian heritage as I first encountered the phenomenon of CDM while exploring the Indo-European heritage. Indo-European, or Indo for short, is a term used for people who are the offspring of an Asian and European ancestor in colonial Indonesia (the Dutch-Indies). After the declaration of independence in 1949, Dutch citizens in Indonesian repatriated to the Netherlands. Also, Dutch citizens of mixed heritage settled in the Netherlands. With 390.000 people, the group of repatriates is the largest to have ever settled in the Netherlands.³ They are one of the few minorities to already have a third or even fourth generation in the Netherlands. The first being the generation that had grown up in Indonesia and then settled in the Netherlands. The second being their children. Currently, a third and fourth generations are formed. The concept of CDM being a racial marker, first came to my attention while reading the novel *Indo* (2020) by the well-known Dutch-Indo author Marion Bloem: "A blue spot can be seen around the tailbone of the Indo baby shortly after birth. This reveals that the baby is not a full-blooded white person, but a mixed-blooded one."⁴ Also seeing that the

¹ Berkel, M Van. *Welk Verhaal Telt?* 2017.

² Helberg-Proctor, Alana, Amade M'charek, and Eelco Meesters. “‘Ras’ Speelt Ten Onrechte Rol in Klinische Besluitvorming.” *Medisch Contact*, no. April (2019): 25.

³ De Vries, ‘*Indisch is een Gevoel: De tweede en derde generatie Indische Nederlanders* (2009), 17.

⁴ Dutch: Rond het stuitje van de Indische baby is, vlak na de geboorte, een blauwe vlek te zien. Deze verraadt dat de baby geen volbloed blanke is, maar een gemengbloedig Bloem, Marion. *INDO* (2020), 9.

presence of the blue spots were similarly used as a signifier in medicine and general public websites, this caught my attention. This concept CDM is worthy of attention as it suggests the presence of racial thought in contemporary Dutch society.

In this introduction, I first introduce the current discourse on the “mongolenvlek” and then formulate the theoretical framework of this thesis. Lastly, I will clarify my research methods and the structure of this thesis.

0.1 What is the “mongolenvlek”?

The “*mongolenvlek*”, “Mongolian Spot” in English, is a blue spot that can be found on the lower back of a new-born child. As seen in figure 1, the “*vlek*” is a blue discolouration of the skin and looks similar to a bruise. In the first few months of the new-born, the spot darkens. However, the spot then disappears before the age of 7. The blue discolouration is caused by an accumulation of melanin in the dermal melanocytes on the lower back of the child.⁵ The medical term for this phenomenon is Congenital Dermal Melanocytosis (CDM).



Figure 1: Mongolian blue spots retrieved from <https://www.mountsinai.org/health-library/diseases-conditions/mongolian-blue-spots>

However, the medical term CDM is hardly used to refer to the blue spot. While it remains custom to use the term “mongolenvlek” or “Mongolian Spot,” this custom has also been criticized by medical professionals in the field of Paediatric Dermatology. In 2019, the article “*Revisiting the History of the ‘Mongolian Spot’: The Background and implications of a Medical Term Used Today*” by Connie S. Zhong, Jennifer T. Huang and Vinod E. Nambudiri was published in the Journal of Paediatric

⁵ Zhong, Connie S., Jennifer T. Huang, and Vinod E. Nambudiri. “Revisiting the History of the ‘Mongolian Spot’: The Background and Implications of a Medical Term Used Today.” *Paediatric Dermatology* 36, no. 5 (2019): 755. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pde.13858>.

Dermatology. This article stresses the problematic history and terminology of the “*Mongolian spot*” and argues that the popularly used term “*Mongolian*” is outdated and has a controversial origin. Highlighting the racial implications of the term and its origins, the article pleads for the use of the term “congenital dermal melanocytosis” (CDM) instead of “*Mongolian spot*”. The article shows that the “*Mongolian Spot*” is a racial term that may lead to racial delineations which they deem inappropriate.⁶

Moreover, a published comment on this article, *Bringing an end to the “Mongolian Spot”* by Neil S. Prose MD,⁷ reveals that many in the medical field of Paediatric Dermatology, felt a discomfort using the term “*Mongolian*.” However, Prose reveals that they lacked the knowledge of its historical origins and therefore continued using the term “*Mongolian*” to refer to the spot.⁸ This shows that a lack of historical awareness in the history of medicine can lead to the continuous use of racial terminology. This is a problem because using racial terminology in medical settings can induce racial thinking and racial ideologies in both medical and social settings.⁹ Most importantly, this correspondence shows that medical professionals are aware of this problem. Nevertheless, the term “*Mongolian spot*” remains in use. Similarly, this thesis shows that the use of the term “*Mongolian spot*” on Dutch parenting websites is problematic as it induces racial thinking. This thesis aims to highlight this presence of racial thinking. As Prose states, history and the social science can “shine a new light on our work in paediatric dermatology and enable us to become more thoughtful and caring health care providers.”¹⁰ Thus, this thesis aims for a better understanding of the use of the concept “*mongolenvlek*” as seen on parenting websites with the ambition of enabling a more thoughtful and inclusive healthcare.

0.2 Theoretical framework

The focus of this thesis is on Dutch informational parenting websites. Therefore, the concepts I formulate and use as framework are based on Dutch culture. In this thesis, I focus on two concepts: *knuffelracisme* (snuggle racism) and *Imagined Intimacy*. However, to understand both concepts, it is important to first have a general understanding of contemporary Dutch racism.

In Dutch culture, racism is difficult to pinpoint as explicit racial terms are taboos.¹¹ For, in the Netherlands, racism is considered to be the equivalent of Nazi genocide¹² and the Ku Klux Klan in the

⁶ Zhong, Huang and Nambudiri, “Revisiting,” 757.

⁷ Prose, Neil S. “Bringing an End to the ‘Mongolian Spot.’” *Paediatric Dermatology* 36, no. 5 (September 17, 2019): <https://doi.org/10.1111/pde.13933>.

⁸ Prose, “Bringing an End to the ‘Mongolian Spot.’” 758.

⁹ Helberg-Proctor, M’charek, and Meesters, “‘Ras’ Speelt Ten Onrechte Rol”, 25.

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ M’charek, Amade, Katharina Schramm, and David Skinner. “Technologies of Belonging: The Absent Presence of Race in Europe.” *Science Technology and Human Values* 39, no. 4 (2014): 462.

¹² *Ibid*.

United States.¹³ Due to these extremely violent connotations, race is excluded from discourse and culture. Instead, explicit racial terms are replaced with more implicit terms. For example, the term race is replaced by terms such as religion and ethnicity. Similarly, the term discrimination is preferred over racism. In this manner, explicit mentions of race are removed from discourse. Due to this typical feature of handling race, as conceptualised by M'charek et al. in the article *Technologies of Belonging* (2014), Dutch racism can be characterised as *absent present*.¹⁴ *Absent* because of the absence of explicit racial terms, *present* because “this active removal of race does not quite work, and race keeps surfacing.”¹⁵ Similarly, in *Dutch Racism* (2014), Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving describe Dutch racism to be “less in your face” and more of a cultural expression.¹⁶ Thus, despite the active exclusion of racial terms, racism is still present in cultural expressions in Dutch society. Using the concepts of *Knuffelracisme* and *imagined intimacy* provides a framework to identify these racist cultural expressions as they highlight the subtlety and implicitness of Dutch racism.

0.2.1 Knuffelracisme

I establish *Knuffelracisme* as one of these implicit cultural forms of racism which resides in Dutch society. For this thesis, I adopt the term *knuffelracisme* as used in a newspaper article of the same title.¹⁷ I consider jokes and a claim of innocence to be the two main characteristics of this form. In 2024, a study on Dutch racism done by the University of Amsterdam and Fontys Hogeschool, shows that 42% of people of Asian descent experience racism in the form of jokes.¹⁸ These jokes vary in explicitness and form. The jokes can take the form of explicit jokes in daily conversations or a more cultural form through entertainment and songs. To illustrate this form of racism I give three examples. First, as example for the latter, a common Dutch birthday song “Hanky Panky Shanghai”. Here Dutch children are taught to pull the sides of their eyes to imitate the “Asian eye” and imitate Chinese language. This song is one of the songs used for congratulating someone for their birthday. Another similar but more explicit example is imitating the “Asian eye” while asking: “Sambal bij?”. These examples show the more cultural form of these jokes. They are not explicit in the sense that they use racial terms or use slurs. However, explicit jokes are also present and endorsed in Dutch culture. For a more explicit example I

¹³ “Knuffelracisme.” *De Stentor*, November 30, 2013.

¹⁴ M'charek, Amade, Katharina Schramm, and David Skinner. “Technologies of Belonging: The Absent Presence of Race in Europe.” *Science Technology and Human Values* 39, no. 4 (2014): 459–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243914531149>.

¹⁵ M'charek, Schramm, and Skinner, “Technologies of Belonging”, 462.

¹⁶ Essed, Philomena, and Isabel Hoving. *Dutch Racism*. Edited by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2014.

¹⁷ “Knuffelracisme.” *De Stentor*, November 30, 2013.

¹⁸ Allard R. Feddes et al. *Onderzoek naar ervaren discriminatie en racisme bij mensen met een (Zuid-) Oost-Aziatische herkomst in Nederland*, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. 122.

turn to the essay *Black Dutch Voices* (2014) by Dienne Hondius published in *Dutch Racism*¹⁹. Hondius describes the experience of a 20-year-old Surinamese-Dutch student: “With the new study I do (theatre academy), there are these little jokes all the time, like ‘you are the (excusneger) token Negro,’”²⁰ In this example, race is explicitly present.

Moreover, in all cases of *knuffelracisme*, there is an impression of innocence. The racist remarks, jokes, and entertainment are not considered as obviously insulting. Therefore, perpetrators consider the jokes to be innocent jokes. Public figures such as Dutch politicians and celebrities agree that they are just jokes, and it is not real discrimination.²¹ Therefore, victims of *knuffelracisme* should not feel insulted. The article “Knuffelracisme” published in various regional newspapers illustrates this form in exaggerated but accurate form²². It is a satire on Dutch culture handling accusations of racism. It presents the attitude which resides at the core of *knuffelracisme*: “We, the native boys and girls of Jan de Wit, still decide for ourselves whether someone is allowed to feel offended in our country.”²³ This statement refers to the general attitude of white supremacy. Only white Dutch people have the power to determine what is harmful and what is not. It shows the attitude of the “allochtonen” (immigrants) simply needing to assimilate to understand and comply with the Dutch demarcations of distinguishing innocence and harmfulness.

Thus, formulating my understanding of the *knuffelracisme*: it is a combination of casual jokes and humorous cultural expressions that consist of implicit racial ridicule. Additionally, the humorous form of the racial ridicule is defended with claims of innocence. Because no explicit slurs or racism is present, the ridicule is said to be innocent. Moreover, accusations of racism are met with indignation. The perpetrator considers themselves the superior Dutch. They believe they have the right to determine what is harmful and what is not.

0.2.2 Imagined intimacy

The second concept of interest for this thesis is *imagined intimacy*. Here I expand on the concept of *imaginary intimacy* as formulated by Fenneke Sysling in *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia* (2016).²⁴ Sysling formulates this concept in the context of anthropology research in Colonial Indonesia. European scholars performed research on the native peoples of the colonies. They aimed to better understand the “races” of the archipelago. This research was possible because of the

¹⁹Hondius, Dienne. “Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that Leaves Racism Unchallenged” in *Dutch Racism*. Edited by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving. (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2014): 273-294.

²⁰ Hondius, “Black Dutch Voices”, 277.

²¹ Kartosen-Wong, Reza. “Boos Op Gordon, Dát Is Pas Integratie.” *Volkskrant*, December 6, 2013.

²² “Knuffelracisme.” *De Stentor*, November 30, 2013.

²³ Dutch: Wij, autochtone jongens en meisjes van Jan de Wit, maken altijd nog zelf uit of iemand zich gekwetst mag voelen in óns land. “Knuffelracisme.” *De Stentor*, November 30, 2013.

²⁴ Sysling, Fenneke. *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia*. Singapore: NUS Press Singapore, 2016.

hierarchy of the Dutch colonial system spanning from the VOC until the occupation by the Japanese. Occupying the highest tier of this hierarchy, the white European researchers had the power to study the colonial subjects as research objects. Research could be performed because of the violence and coercion on which the colonial system was based. Nevertheless, Sysling states, encounters could also be friendly. She argues that European researchers could feel an “unexpected intimacy” for their objects of study. Moreover, European writings would testify of feelings of friendship. However, Sysling makes clear, this is often a one-sided imagination. This one-sided feeling of intimacy is what she calls European “imaginary intimacy.”²⁵

For this thesis, I expand this concept of *imagined intimacy* as formulated by Sysling. Where Sysling positions this concept in colonial anthropological research, I extend it to the general Dutch colonial sentiment which also includes a patriarchal sentiment. This patriarchal sentiment is very similar to “the white man’s burden”²⁶ where the colonisers see it as their burden to bring civilization and Christianity to the colonial subjects. This burden is articulated by Rudyard Kipling in a poem of the same name where is described that the colonisers see it as their task to bring civilization and Christianity to the “new-caught sullen peoples, half devil and half child”.²⁷ Jan Breman’s *Colonialism, Capitalism and Racism; a Postcolonial Chronicle of Dutch and Belgian Practice* (2024) shows that this patriarchal sentiment was nurtured during the period of *Ethische Politiek* (Ethical Politics/ Ethical Policy). The Ethical Policy was established in 1901 in colonial Indonesia and focused on providing education for the colonial subjects. The instalment of Ethical politics was motivated by economic reasons. Its goal was to battle the growing poverty among the colonial subjects and create more profit from the colony.²⁸ Additionally, the Ethical policy was propagated as the Christian duty of helping the poor colonial subjects in the colonies. However, Breman argues that “the Ethical Policy was patronizing in nature, going no further than cultivating compliance and subservience.”²⁹ Moreover, Breman states that the Ethical Policy was also explicitly known as “the white man’s burden”.³⁰ In this manner, the Ethical Policy became synonymous with “the white man’s burden” where it is up to the white men to educate and help others navigate the world correctly.³¹ Breman describes this policy accordingly: “The ‘native’ was promoted from *Untermensch* (inferior person) to fellow man, still inferior but amenable to moral and

²⁵ Sysling, *Racial Science*, 12.

²⁶ Petra R. Boudewijn, “An Enormous Interstitial Mestizo? the (Im)possibility of Eurasian Identity in Dutch Postcolonial Novels.” *Werkwinkel* 11, no. 1 (2016): 49.

²⁷ “The White Man’s burden,” Poem, The Kipling Society, accessed July 22, 2024, https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_burden.htm.

²⁸ Jan Breman. *Colonialism, Capitalism and Racism; a Postcolonial Chronicle of Dutch and Belgian Practice*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024): 270 & 266

²⁹ Breman, *Colonialism, Capitalism and Racism*, 250.

³⁰ Breman, *Colonialism, Capitalism and Racism*, 211.

³¹ Breman, *Colonialism, Capitalism and Racism*, 199.

intellectual improvement under white leadership.”³² This burden of educating disregards and ignores the needs and wants of the colonial subjects.

Combining this notion of “the white man’s burden” with Sysling’s formulation of *imaginary intimacy*, I formulate the notion of *imagined intimacy* to be a Eurocentric notion of friendliness and generosity towards the colonies. This *imagined intimacy* is able to function in the hierarchical colonial system which ignores the needs and wishes of colonial subjects. *Imagined intimacy* denies the agency of colonial subjects. Thus, it is a one-sided *imagined intimacy* felt towards another while functioning in a system that completely disregards and ignores their autonomous needs and wishes.

The novel *Oeroeg* by Hella S. Haasse³³ perfectly illustrates this *imagined intimacy* as a colonial sentiment on an individual level. The novel *Oeroeg* is set in the Dutch Indies and follows the story of a childhood friendship between a Dutch totok boy (his name is never mentioned) and an Indonesian boy named Oeroeg. *Totok* is a term that was used in the Dutch-Indies to refer to white Europeans. Totoks occupied the highest rank of the colonial hierarchical system which the Dutch maintained in colonial Indonesia. The father of the totok boy is a plantation owner. The father of Oeroeg works on this plantation as foreman (mandoer). The novel is narrated by the totok boy and describes the friendship of the totok boy and *Oeroeg*. Their friendship collapses as they grow older when *Oeroeg* becomes an Indonesian nationalist. Ultimately, the totok narrator is unable to understand *Oeroeg’s* choice of becoming an anti-Dutch nationalist and his willingness to shoot his childhood friend.

Originally, *Oeroeg* is a short novel that was written as a *boekenweekgeschenk*³⁴ and has become the most successful *boekenweekgeschenk* ever since. It is considered one of the most read and loved books of modern Dutch literature. Currently, the novel has been reprinted 57 times and one million copies have been gifted to public libraries and schools.³⁵ In *Collective Memory and the Dutch East Indies* (2021), Paul Doolan explores the reception and criticism of the novel. He highlights that the novel presents a one-sided European view and that Oeroeg is a mute character that is mediated through the European gaze.³⁶ Initially, this European gaze consists of friendship. This sentiment and memory of friendship is what I deem *imagined intimacy* in the narrower sense as described by Sysling.

Considering the colonial system that surrounds this friendship, a broader notion of *imagined intimacy* can be seen which explicitly includes the notion of “the white man’s burden”. This broader notion of *imagined intimacy* consists of a one-sided, by European imagined, mythical memory of

³² Jan Breman, *Colonialism, Capitalism and Racism*, 199.

³³ Haasse, Hella S. *Oeroeg*. Amsterdam, EM. Querido’s uitgeverij BV, 57 ed. 2019. (First edition published in 1948)

³⁴ One week every year, its *boekenweek* (week of books). During that week, the *boekenweekgeschenk* is gifted with every book purchase.

³⁵ Doolan, Paul. *Collective Memory*, 44.

³⁶ Doolan, Paul. *Collective Memory*, 47.

colonial times that is devoid of colonial oppression and aggression. This can also be found in *Oeroeg* as the narrator is not aware of his privileged position. He fails to comprehend and present the motivations of other people who do not occupy the same position. He presents the *totok* perspective which consists of the highest rank in colonial Indonesia. Due to this one-sided view, Doolan deems the narrator unreliable. Thus, the friendship with *Oeroeg* and the mythical experience of the Colony are *imagined* and not representative of reality.

Nevertheless, as Doolan argues, this mythical memory of the colonies became part of Dutch cultural memory. Thus, *Oeroeg* became a literary representation of the general longing sentiment for a world that only existed in the white European memory. This longing is also referred to as *Tempo Doeloe* in the Indo-European community. *Tempo Doeloe* literally translates to “old times” and is now used with the meaning of “the good old times”. Nowadays, Indo media still use this phrase to recall this imagined comfort of the colonial times and use it to refer to Indo-European heritage. Similar to the narrator of *Oeroeg*, this Indo-European memory of comfort consisted of having multiple Indonesian servants and a privileged social position above the Indonesian subjects. Also here, friendships as portrayed in *Oeroeg* were possible. It is this *imagined* memory of the prosperous colony and its friendly subjects that I understand to be *imagined intimacy* in the wider sense.

Using these concepts as a framework help me identify racial discourse on informational parenting websites in contemporary Dutch culture where race is present through its absence. The concept of *knuffelracisme* highlights the implicitness of Dutch racism. Additionally, it emphasizes the claim of innocence of the perpetrator. The concept of *imagined intimacy* further expands this sense of innocence. More specifically, it highlights the patriarchal sentiment in which the Dutch see themselves as caregivers of the colonial subjects. This patriarchal sentiment found in *Imagined intimacy* denies the Indonesians of agency. The wants and needs of colonial subjects are ignored.

0.3 Methodology

This thesis is written within the understanding of situated knowledges as conceptualized by Donna Haraway. The perspective that this thesis offers is one of many. No vision or camera is entirely objective. As Haraway states: “There is no unmediated photograph or passive camera obscura in scientific accounts of bodies and machines; there are only highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds”.³⁷ Consequently, positioning and transparency is key. As historian and philosopher of science I position myself within the Dutch-Indo community where everyday pride and shame are still very much connected to the Dutch colonial past.

³⁷ Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 583.

As this thesis consists of an exploration of a legacy of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, I am aware that the intuitions surrounding these feelings have laid the foundation for the approach of this thesis.

The research question of this thesis is: What is the meaning of the “mongolenvlek” and its association with Indonesian heritage in the context of Dutch parenting websites and Dutch colonial history? The approach of this thesis consists of a mix of methods as the research question asks for a qualitative analysis of parenting websites and historical research. First, by using the concepts of *Dutch racism*, *knuffelracisme*, and *imagined intimacy*, I analyse the “mongolenvlek” on informational parenting websites. These informational parenting websites are easily accessible and popular among mothers and mothers to be. All websites and forums analysed for this thesis are openly accessible, without paywall or gated content that requires signing up. Through the method of close reading and coding, I analyse the parenting websites and forums. The concepts established in the theoretical framework provide me with the insight to identify implicit racial terms and theoretical and historical absences. To further identify these implicit presences and absences I use the qualitative data analysis method of coding. I explain this method more extensively in chapter 1. The data obtained through this method of coding identifies the racial terms and assumptions present on the websites.

To understand the racial terms and assumptions used on the websites, I turn to historical research. By considering secondary texts, I establish the historical context of Dutch colonialism and racial science. With the knowledge obtained from these sources I further study the primary sources that were used in these secondary texts. Here, the anthropological encyclopaedia by Dutch physical anthropologist Johannes Pieter Kleiweg De Zwaan (1875-1971) becomes essential to this process.³⁸ Through this extensive Anthropological encyclopaedia, I was able to collect significant primary sources on the “mongolenvlek” in the Dutch context. Here, I find the article “Die Blauen Geburtsflecke bei den Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels” (1911) by A.B. Meyers³⁹ which I use as the key source to establish a Dutch history of the “mongolenvlek.” All further primary texts are collected through archival work and include articles written in Dutch and German. All articles are either written by Dutch scholars or published in Dutch journals. All translations from German and Dutch to English are done by me.

Additionally, the history of the Indo-Europeans in colonial Indonesia is established by studying Indo-European historical literature and recent research reports done by Dutch historical or remembrance institutes. These sources are studied to obtain a better understanding of the Dutch application of racial science and ideology. Furthermore, I explore the remaining contemporary

³⁸ J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan. “Anthropologische Bibliographie van Den Indischen Archipel En van Nederlandsch West-Indië.” In *Mededeelingen van Het Bureau Voor de Bestuurszaken Der Buitengewesten Bewerkt Door Het Encyclopaedisch Burea*. De Unie, 1923.

³⁹ A.B. Meyer. “Die blauen Geburtsflecke bei den Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels,” *Feestbundel ter herinnering uitgegeven bij het verschijnen van het 50ste deel Geneeskundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlands-Indië* (Javasche Boekhandel en Drukkerij, 1911).

presence of the blue spot Indo-European narratives by studying Indo-European cultural artefacts and literature. For a better understanding of this remaining presence, I turn to secondary sources discussing Dutch colonial history through the framework of cultural memory.

0.4 Thesis Structure and Argument

In this thesis, I aim to show the relations between three things:

- (1) CDM/ "mongolenvlek"
- (2) Slur
- (3) Identity

The structure of this thesis follows a similar order. In chapter 1, I analyse the parenting websites and establish the relationship between Slur and Identity. Then, in chapter 2 I establish the relationship between CDM and Slur. To do so, I reconstruct the history of racial science related to the CDM. In this chapter I focus on the origin of racial terms and racial science as a scientific endeavour. In chapter 3, I contextualize the "mongolenvlek" socially and place it within Dutch colonial history where such racial markers were imposed. Here, I focus on the application of racial science and the process of imposing racial identities in colonial Indonesia. In chapter 4, I show the internalization of the "mongolenvlek" as a racial marker and further explore the significance of Dutch colonialism and racism in present-day Dutch collective memory. Figure 2 provides for an overview of the argument.

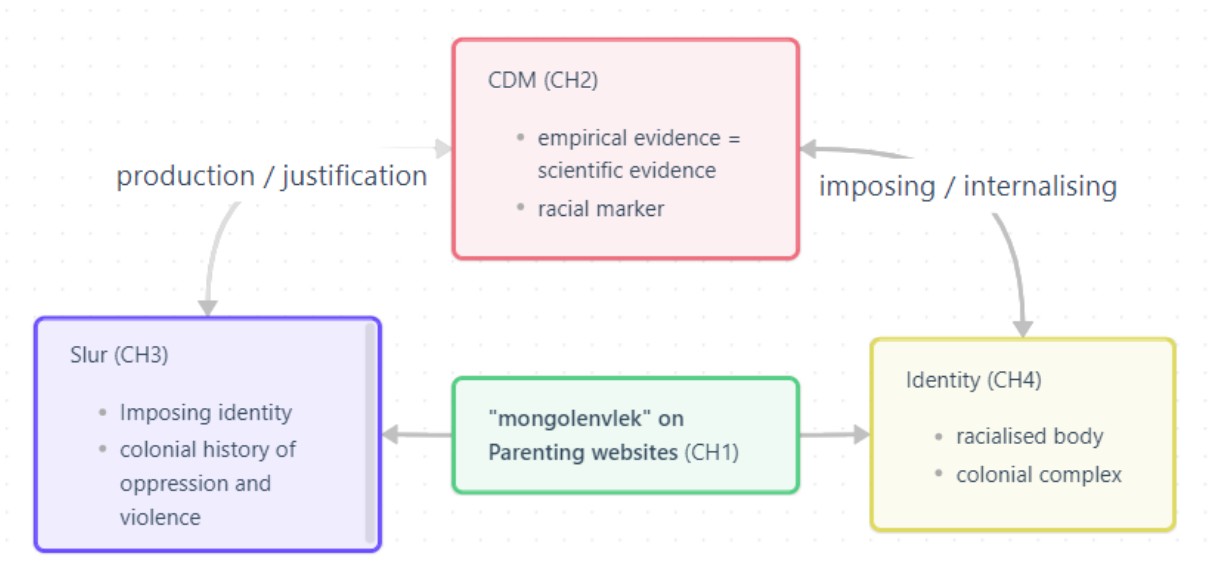


Figure 2: Overview argumentative structure

0.4.1 Thesis argument

First, in chapter 1 I show how the case study of the parenting websites creates a relation between Racial identity and Slur. The racial connotations of the "mongolenvlek" are present and sometimes explained, but not problematized. The information on the parenting websites suggests that geographical heritage

is a determining factor for the presence of CDM. Similarly, reactions on forums on the topic of the “mongolenvlek” show that visitors use their heritage to explain the presence of CDM. While clear references to race are omitted, racial thinking is still presented. Both the parenting websites and its users understand CDM as a determining factor for racial identity. This understanding forms the concept of the “mongolenvlek”. The websites are adopting Dutch implicit racial terms and biases which induces racial thinking. Nevertheless, similar to the article by Zhong et al. discussed before, some forum reactions found on the parenting websites criticize the term “mongol.” However, this is not because of its racial connotations, but because, in Dutch “mongol” is a slur which also originates from racial science. Also, this racial origin is long forgotten. Combined with the absence of critical consideration of the racial connotations of “mongolenvlek”, the forgotten racial origins suggest a lack of historical awareness concerning the racial science origin of the “mongolenvlek.”

Next, chapter 2 shows how racial science is the connecting factor between CDM and slur. Racial science produced the concept of the “mongolenvlek.” Physical anthropologists working in racial science produced the concept of the “mongolenvlek” as racial marker. However, Fenneke Sysling has shown that a priori racial biases also stimulated the production of racial science. In this way CDM is seen as physical evidence of a racial type. Thus, racial science both produced and justified racial thinking and biases.

Then, in chapter 3, I demonstrate the violent and oppressive nature of racial ideologies and racial science by reconstructing the history of the Indo-European. Falling between the racial constructions of white and Indonesian, this perspective highlights the practice of demarcating races in racial ideologies. It highlights how physical appearance becomes the determining factor of the imposed racial identity.

Lastly, 4 I establish that CDM as physical evidence of racial difference has been imposed on and internalised by Dutch society. Furthermore, exploring and identifying the significance of CDM in the Indo-European community, shows internalisation of colonial and racial thinking. Dutch colonial history is remembered in the persisting form of *imagined intimacy* as developed during period of Dutch colonial rule over Indonesia. This resulted in a dominantly white European cultural memory of Dutch racial science and Dutch colonialism. Consequently, CDM becomes related to self-identification. In this way the three relations shown in figure 2 go full circle.

Chapter 1: CDM on informational parenting websites

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I analyse informational parenting websites that provide publicly accessible information on the “mongolenvlek.” This analysis demonstrates how racial terminology and assumptions are presented as uncontested knowledge. The theoretical framework provides an understanding of the Dutch discourse on race. It shows that a variety of terms are used to refer to the concept of race. Explicit racial terms are not often used. By the method of close reading (as used by literary scholars) and coding, I focus on identifying implicit references to racial concepts and assumptions. These implicit references form the entry point of this thesis. In chapter two and three I further explore the historical origin of the identified concepts and assumptions.

1.2 Methodology

For this thesis, two categories of websites are considered: (1) informational websites and (2) forums. All websites collected are openly accessible without a payment wall or creating an account. All informational websites provide the visitor with information on the “mongolenvlek” and are listed in table 1. The forums consist of forum threads on the topic of the “mongolenvlek.” Here, the reaction of the target audience to the “mongolenvlek” can be analysed. All informational websites and forums are selected based on the presence of content on the topic of the “mongolenvlek. These informational parenting websites are collected as the first data set. Moreover, all websites used for this study are specifically targeted towards the mother, not the father. Websites specifically targeted towards fathers do exist but are not included in this study. Furthermore, the websites collected for this analysis publish a variety of content consisting of parenting advice, news content, horoscopes, relationship advice, and medical advice. The parenting websites can be found in various more media forms beside forums. For example, Kekmama publishes a physical magazine and 24baby developed online tools and an app. 24baby also won various prizes for best website of the year and best app of the year. Moreover, the 24baby app has acquired more than a hundred thousand members and ten thousand reviews.⁴⁰ This indicates that the parenting websites are popular among their target audience. Additionally, both *huidhuis* and *huidarts* are general informational medical websites which do not specifically target mothers. Nevertheless, they are still useful to compare as many of the mother targeted websites use

⁴⁰“24baby | #1 Zwangerschaps- en babyplatform,” De app die met jou meegroeit, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://24baby.app/>.

either *huidhuis* or *huidarts* as original source. This brings the total number of informational websites analysed for this thesis to 13.

Website names	URL website content "mongolenvlek"
24 baby	https://www.24baby.nl/baby/gezondheid/mongolenvlek/
zwangerenportaal	https://www.zwangerenportaal.nl/mongolenvlek-bij-babys
opvoed informatie	https://www.opvoeden.nl/mongolenvlek-2630/
groeigids	https://groeigids.nl/baby/aangeboren-vlekken/8419
alles over kinderen	https://www.allesoverkinderen.nl/baby/archipelvlek-of-mongolenvlek-bij-babys/
Famme	https://www.famme.nl/archipelvlek-geboortevlek/
kek mama	https://www.kekmama.nl/artikel/kind/een-archipelvlek-bij-je-baby-wat-het-en-kan-het-kwaad
opeenwolkje	https://opeenwolkje.nl/2021/07/26/alles-wat-je-moet-weten-over-de-archipelvlek-bij-je-baby/
wij	https://wij.nl/baby/babykwaaltjes/geboortevlekken-bij-je-baby/
meer voor mamas	https://meervoormamas.nl/baby/gezondheid-baby/mongolenvlek-of-archipelvlek-wat-is-dat/
oudersenzo.nl	https://www.oudersenzo.nl/archipelvlek-mongolenvlek/
huidhuis	https://huidhuis.nl/aandoeningen/mongolenvlek/

Table 1: List of names and URLs of the websites collected in the first data set.

The second data set consists of 4 forums with a combined total of 34 posts. As seen in the third column of table 2, all forums and their reactions are posted in the last three years. All collected forum posts can be found on 24baby. The combined number of informative texts and comments are below 50 and vary in size where the smallest comments consist of less than ten words.

Name forum	URL	Date of publishing	Number of reactions
Archipelvlek	https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/archipelvlek-DK61NA?page=1	"één jaar geleden"	13
Archipelvlek/pigmentvlek	https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/archipelvlek-pigmentvlek-ArkQ0m?page=1	"2 jaar geleden"	1
Mongolenvlek/archipelvlek	https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/mongolenvlek-archipelvlek-rDGmE2?page=1	"3 jaar geleden"	9
"Mongolenvlekken"	https://community.24baby.nl/forum/zwanger/mongolenvlekken-ppOwAg?page=1	"3 jaar geleden"	11

Table 2: Names, URL, publishing date, and number of reactions listed of the forums that are collected in the second data set.

To analyse both the information websites and the forums, I formulated two questions:

1. What kind of information on the blue birth spot is presented on the mother websites?
2. What is the understanding and significance of the blue spot for the audience based on reactions seen on the forum?

Both of these questions are explored through a mixture of close reading and “coding” as explained in *Qualitative Data Analysis; Practical Strategies* (2013) by Patricia Bazeley⁴¹. Similar to the methodology explained by Bazeley, the analysis of the parenting websites consists of two stages: (1) initial/ open coding, (2) refining/interpreting. First, I extract all phrases and words that are suggestive of racial notions. This collection forms the data set for this analysis. Second, I refine and interpret the dataset by connecting, describing, and organising the found phrases into themes. As explained by Bazeley this stage consists of: “seeing and interpreting what has been said, written, or done; reflecting on evolving categories; deciding what is important to follow up”.⁴² Based on the found data, an understanding of CDM is developed. The concepts and assumptions of this understanding of CDM are further explored in the second data set consisting of the forums. Here I test this understanding and compare it to the understanding of CDM as presented in the forum reactions. In this way, I establish how CDM is understood in the light of racial assumptions and thought.

Lastly, I performed this two- staged coding method manually. The combined number of informative texts and comments are below 50 and vary in sizes where the smallest comments consist of less than ten words. Therefore, this research strategy, as proposed by Bazeley, can be done without software.⁴³ Thus, the methodological stages of collecting, organising, coding, connecting, and describing – as described by Bazeley -- remain present.

1.3 Findings

An initial exploration reveals that many websites use the same structure of explanation. Each website answers the questions:

- “What is it?”
- “Where does the name come from?”
- “How does it occur/what is the underlying process/explanation?”
- “What does it look like?”
- “Is it harmful?”

The websites are organised into paragraphs in which each answering a question. Two websites add an additional paragraph consisting of information about laser treatment. Each website presents similar information. Three websites refer to huidhuis.nl as source and two refer to huisarts.nl. Huidhuis also refers to huidarts. Huidarts only used dermatologist dr. M.D. Njoo as reference. Five websites do not

⁴¹ Patricia Bazeley, *Qualitative Data Analysis : Practical Strategies*. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013).

⁴² Bazeley, *Qualitative Data analysis*, 15.

⁴³ Ibid.

cite a source at all. This shows that a limited number of sources are used and suggests that a limited amount of information is available on this topic.

codes	Number of websites
“archipelvlek”	10
Mongolian race	4
Mongolian citizens	5
Asian heritage	9
Suspicion of child abuse	8
“er gaat iets mis” (something goes wrong)	6
“vertraging” (delay)	3
Relation to Down syndrome	9
Laser treatment	2
Dichotomy dark / light skin colour	7
Total amount of websites	14

Table 3: The ten recurring codes found on the informational websites with the number of websites on which the code is present in the first data set.

In the first stage of the qualitative analysis, 10 recurring terminologies and assumptions can be established. The codes are listed in table 3 with the number of websites they are found on. The first significant code found is the term “archipelvlek”. This term is proposed as a better name for CDM instead of “mongolenvlek.” The term “mongolenvlek” has a negative connotation in Dutch as it is similar to the word “mongool.” This term was used to refer to people with Down Syndrome. Currently, it is a commonly used Dutch insult used to express that someone is stupid or retarded. Similarly, the websites by *meer voor mamas* suggests using the term “archipelvlek” instead as it has a “much friendlier” sound.⁴⁴ Moreover, two websites explain that the name “archipelvlek” was probably chosen because the blue spots look similar to island groups⁴⁵.

Continuing down the list of found codes, the codes of “Mongolian race” and “Mongolian citizens” are found in the paragraph explaining the origin of the term “mongolenvlek.” This explanation entails either that the spot comes from the people of Mongolia or from the “Mongolian race.” Similarly, nine websites explicitly state CDM being most prevalent in people of Asian heritage. Moreover, eight websites warn for the suspicion of child abuse. They explain that this occurs because CDM looks very similar to bruises. Therefore, they warn parents to inform their childcare services of the spots. Additionally, the websites reassure that the presence of CDM is not an indication of Down syndrome. As discussed earlier, the term “mongolenvlek” incorrectly suggests a relation to down syndrome.

⁴⁴ “Mongolenvlek of Archipelvlek, wat is dat?” Meer voor mamas.

<https://meervoormamas.nl/baby/gezondheid-baby/mongolenvlek-of-archipelvlek-wat-is-dat/>

⁴⁵ Meer voor mamas & “archipelvlek of mongolenvlek bij babys,” Alles over kinderen.
<https://www.allesoverkinderen.nl/baby/archipelvlek-of-mongolenvlek-bij-babys/>

The remaining codes of “er gaat iets mis,” “vertraging” and dichotomy in dark/light skin colour refer to medical specific medical information on the “mongolenvlek”. This refers to the pigment cells in the skin. According to 24baby, these pigment cells are first located in the deeper layer of the skin and later move to the more upper layer (epidermis) of the skin. In this paragraph 24baby explains: “When an archipelagic spot forms, this process is slowed down. During the first years of your child's life, the pigment cells are still moving to the epidermis, causing clusters of pigment to form. This is the discoloration you see on your baby's skin.”⁴⁶ In identifying these specific codes, a more subtle suggestion about a standard skin colour can be found. In the next section, I enter stage 2 of this analysis. Here I discuss the codes, interpret their meaning, and consider the assumptions surrounding them. I also categorize them into themes to establish a clear interpretation and understanding of the knowledge presented on the “mongolenvlek.”

1.4 Discussion

The codes can be split in three larger categories: (1) ignorance, (2) abnormality, and (3) Asian heritage. I will first demonstrate the presence of these categories in this order. The first subsection considers the first two categories. The second subsection is dedicated solely to the category of “Asian heritage.”

1.4.1 Category 1 and 2: “ignorance” and “abnormality”

The codes of “reference to Down syndrome” and “suspicion of child abuse” can be grouped into a meta code of “ignorance.” For this meta code, I use the term “ignorance” to refer to the suggestion of a lack of knowledge presented by the parenting websites. The reassurance of no connection to down syndrome and the warning of accusations of child abuse suggest that there are common misconceptions about CDM. First, that it is related to Down syndrome. And second, that people mistake it for a bruise. In this way, the inclusion of these code suggest that these misconceptions are important to clarify. This implies that these are common misconceptions about CDM. These common misconceptions exist because people generally lack knowledge about CDM. This lack of knowledge can be found in the target audience of the websites (parents) and professionals working in childcare. Therefore, I label the grouping of this category as “ignorance.” I first discuss the misconception of a relation to down syndrome and then move to the misconception of child abuse.

Starting with the misconception of a relation to Down Syndrome, as suggested on the *meer voor mamas* website, people with Down syndrome were often called “Mongols” in Dutch. For a deeper

⁴⁶Dutch: “Bij het ontstaan van een archipelvlek is dit proces vertraagd. De pigmentcellen zijn dan in de eerste levensjaren van je kleine nog bezig met het verplaatsen naar de opperhuid, waardoor clusters met pigment ontstaan. Dit is de verkleuring die je ziet op de huid van je baby.” Cited from: “Mongolenvlek of archipelvlek, wat is dat?” 24baby, <https://www.24baby.nl/baby/gezondheid/mongolenvlek/>

understanding of this relation, I turn the *Becoming yellow* (2011) by Michael Keevak. Keevak explains that this is also the case in English. In 1866 research published by English physician John Langdon Down used term “Idiot” to describe people who were considered mentally disabled.⁴⁷ Down suggested to organise mentally disabled people into “an ethnic classification”.⁴⁸ These ethnic classifications were based on physical appearance. Despite being white, Down argued that one group had a typical Mongol appearance consisting of “flat and broad” faces, eyes positioned sideways, typically “Mongolian” looking eyes, and a slightly dirty looking yellow tone in the skin.⁴⁹ This category of “Mongolian” looking people are now found to have Down syndrome. However, this name was introduced later as first terms such as “idiots,” “imbecile’s” and “feeble-minded” were used. Nowadays, in the Netherlands and as shown by Keevak in English speaking countries, the term mongol lost its relation to the Mongolian type and became a slur similar to idiot. Resultingly, forum reactions on 24Baby show general disgust towards using the term mongol: “Yes, the name is a bit nauseating, but it seems that almost all people from Mongolia have such a spot. And that's where the name comes from” (@Ollie01, 24Baby).⁵⁰

The second misconception consists of mistaking CDM for a bruise. This concern can be traced to medical handbooks used for teaching medical professionals. For this exploration I turn to *Kumar and Clark’s Clinical Medicine* (2021), which is used in the curriculum of study programme of medicine at Utrecht University,⁵¹ and *Medisch handboek kindermishandeling* (2013) (Medical handbook for child abuse). Kumar & Clark explain the CDM “appears in infants as a deep blue-grey, bruise-like area, usually over the sacrum or back; it is occasionally mistaken for a sign of child abuse”.⁵² Similarly, the Dutch Medical handbook for child abuse urges: “Recording a Mongolian spot in the medical file, for example during a routine check-up at the consultation bureau, can prevent a lot of confusion at a later stage.”⁵³ This reinforces the suggestion that CDM is commonly mistake CDM for a bruise by medical professionals. The forum reactions on the threads further confirm this: “I was called into the office with

⁴⁷ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 111.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Dutch: “Ja de naam is een beetje misselijk makend, maar het schijnt dat mensen uit Mongolië bijna allemaal zo’n vlek hebben. En dat daar de naam vandaan komt” Zwangerschapsraat 24Baby forum topic, “Mongolenvlekken,” 24baby, 2021, <https://community.24baby.nl/forum/zwanger/mongolenvlekken-ppOwAg?page=1>.

⁵¹ “Boekenlijst – Geneeskunde (B)” Boekenlijst, Universiteit Utrecht, accessed July 12, 2024, [CRU-Kernboekenlijst 2023/2024 - e-books Geneeskunde Bachelor & Master Studieboeken - LibGuides at Utrecht University \(uu.nl\)](https://www.cru-uu.nl/kernboekenlijst-2023-2024-e-books-geneeskunde-bachelor-master-studieboeken-libguides-at-utrecht-university-uu.nl)

⁵² Kumar, Parveen J. Kumar & Clark’s *Clinical Medicine*. Edited by Adam Feather, David Randall, and Mona Waterhouse. Tenth edition. London: Elsevier, 2021. 1234. <https://www.clinicalkey.com.au/dura/browse/bookChapter/3-s2.0-C20180021994>.

⁵³ Dutch: : “Het vastleggen van een mongolenvlek in het medisch dossier, bijvoorbeeld tijdens een routineonderzoek op het consultatiebureau, kan veel verwarring in een later stadium voorkomen” Cited from E.M. van de Putte, I.M.A. Lukassen, I. M. B Russell, and A. H. Teeuw, eds. *Medisch Handboek Kindermishandeling*. Tweede, herziene druk. (Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum, 2024), 190.

the question of how my daughter (who was at that time 4 months old) got a bruise above her buttocks."⁵⁴ This suggests that not all Dutch healthcare providers are familiar with the spot and general ignorance of CDM can be found.

Turning to the second category, I demonstrate that the category of abnormality can be found in the codes of “vertraging and “er gaat iets mis.” As already explored above, these phrases are used in the paragraphs that the cellular mechanism underlying the blue spot. Considering these phrases further, I argue that the parenting websites imply that CDM is a medical abnormality. Both *Huidhuis* and *Huidarts* describe the mechanisms surrounding the blue spot as different. *Huidarts* describes: “Apparently, there is a temporary delay in this migration in certain areas of the skin, which is only completed during the first years of life.”⁵⁵ Here, by using the word “vertraging” the text suggests that there is a normal speed for cells to migrate. It implies that at normal speed, CDM would not occur. Therefore, the presence of CDM would imply an abnormality in migration speed of the cells. Moreover, *Huidhuis* articulates this idea of abnormality more explicitly by using the phrasing “possibly, something goes wrong in this process, or the process is delayed.”⁵⁶ The coding process of the parenting website reveals that seven of the eleven parenting websites present a similar assumption of abnormality. Combining this sense of abnormality with the ignorance discussed in the previous section, it becomes clear that the CDM is not common knowledge to the extent that it is regarded as a phenomenon of “otherness”.

1.4.2 Category 3: “Asian”

Category or codes	Number of websites referring to category or code
Asian	14
Mongolian race	4
Mongolian citizens	5
Asian heritage	9

Table 4: The number of websites on which each code is found. The category of Asian consists of the total number of websites presenting at least one of these codes. Category of Asian in bold, codes present on websites not bold.

The remaining category consists of “Mongolian race”, “Asian heritage”, and “Mongolian citizens.” This category provides more insight into the assumed otherness of the phenomenon and its origin as found on the websites. The three codes of “Mongolian race”, “Mongolian citizen”, and “Asian heritage” can be grouped in the category consisting of references made to the “Asianness” of CDM and are presented

⁵⁴ Dutch: “Ik werd op kantoor geroepen met de vraag hoe mijn dochter (toendertijd) 4 maanden aan een blauwe plek boven haar billen kwam” cited from Babypraat, Forum reaction, “Archipelvlek”, 24Baby, 2023, <https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/archipelvlek-DK61NA?page=1>

⁵⁵ Dutch: “Kennelijk vindt er tijdelijk, op bepaalde plaatsen in de huid, dus een soort vertraging plaats van deze migratie, waardoor deze pas in de eerste levensjaren voltooid wordt.” Cited from “Mongolenvlek,” *Huidarts*, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.huidarts.com/huidaandoeningen/mongolenvlek/>

⁵⁶ “Mongolenvlek,” *Huidhuis*, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://huidhuis.nl/aandoeningen/mongolenvlek/>

in table 4. Grouping these codes into one meta code shows that all websites in this dataset refer to an “Asian” aspect of CDM .

These codes can be found in the paragraph explaining the term “mongolenvlek”. The content on *24baby* provides an exemplary illustration of this: “The birthmark is called Mongolian spot because it was once thought to occur mainly in residents of Mongolia. [...] Mongolian spots occur in children with dark skin colour or Asian ancestry. In children with light skin, birthmark is rarer”⁵⁷ Starting with the first sentence, a connection between the blue spot and the citizens of Mongolia is established. The explanation of “Mongolian spot” referring to the “residents of Mongolia” is incorrect. The explanation that “Mongolian” directly refers to the citizens to Mongolia is a common misconception seen on five parenting websites.

Huidhuis is referenced by *24baby* as only source but explains the terminology in a different manner: “The spots are named as such because they occur very frequently in people of the Mongolian race.”⁵⁸ This difference in phrasing of *24baby* while citing from *Huidhuis*, implies that the “residents of Mongolia” are understood to be the same as “people of the Mongolian race.” The preference for using the phrase “residents of Mongolia,” could be due to discomfort with the explicit mention of race in the phrasing by *Huidhuis*. As established in the concept of *knuffelracisme*, explicit racial terms are taboo in Dutch culture. Therefore, the discomfort of encountering this racial term could result in different phrasing.

However, the assumption that “inhabitants from Mongolia” means the same as “people from the Mongolian race” is incorrect. This is because concept of the mongolian race can directly be traced back to the classification of humans into five races. The concept of the “mongolian race” is not demarcated by the borders of Mongolia. The “Mongolian race” was conceptualised in 1785 by Natural philosopher Johan Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840). Blumenbach formulated the five human races which became commonly known and standard knowledge at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁵⁹ Blumenbach is now most famously known for his division of the human races and the articulation of the category of the Caucasian race. These human classifications designed by Blumenbach became the

⁵⁷Dutch: “De geboortevlek wordt mongolenvlek genoemd, omdat men vroeger dacht dat de vlekken voornamelijk voorkwamen bij inwoners van Mongolië. [...] Mongolenvlekken komen voor bij kinderen met een donkere huidskleur of een Aziatische afkomst. Bij kinderen met een lichte huid is de geboortevlek zeldzamer.” “Mongolenvlek of archipelvlek, wat is dat?” *24Baby*, accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.24baby.nl/baby/gezondheid/mongolenvlek/>.

⁵⁸Dutch: “De vlekken zijn zo genoemd, omdat ze erg vaak voorkomen bij mensen van het Mongoloïde ras.” Cited from *Huidhuis*, “Mongolenvlek”

⁵⁹ Robert J. Richards. “The beautiful skulls of Schiller and the Georgian girl” *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach; Race and Natural History, 1750-1850*. Edited by Nicolaas Rupke and Gerhard Lauer (Routledge, 2019): 158.

standard at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ In 1883, German physician Erwin von Bälz (also written as Baelz) (1849-1913) described CDM on Japanese children. Assuming that the division by Blumenbach was right, von Bälz adopted the term “Mongolian” to refer to this blue spot. In this way, the term “Mongolian spot” became commonly understood as a marker of the “Mongolian race”.

Two websites stand out in their reference to human classifications. As we see in figure 3, websites also provide for the exact percentages of prevalence. Both *ouders enzo* and *meer voor mamas* present such percentages. The percentages presented by both websites are the same. However, no source of origin can be found for these exact percentages.

In this presentation of information, the concept of the human races is more explicitly visible. The websites present four distinct populations “negroid,” “Asian,” “Latin-American,” and “white.” Similar demarcations can be found in Carl Linnaeus’ classification of four human varieties dating from

Enkele cijfermatige gegevens over archipelvlekken

Om je ervan te overtuigen dat archipelvlekken niet uitzonderlijk of zeldzaam zijn, volgen hieronder – ter afsluiting – een aantal cijfermatige gegevens met betrekking tot archipelvlekken:

- Meer dan 90% van alle baby's met een donkere huid hebben één of meerdere archipelvlekken

Verder komen de vlekken voor bij:

- 98,8% van alle negroïde baby's
- 81% van de Aziatische baby's
- 70% van baby's van Latijns-Amerikaanse afkomst

Figure 3: screenshot of extract from *meer voor mama's* website on “Some numerical data about the mongolian spot” <https://meervoormamas.nl/baby/gezondheid-baby/mongolenvlek-of-archipelvlek-wat-is-dat/>

tot slot:

- Bij 3-4% van de baby's verdwijnt de vlek niet

1740.⁶¹ No critical reflection on this demarcation of human populations can be found on these websites. This suggests that Both Linnaean and Blumenbach’s demarcations of human populations are uncontested common knowledge in the context of the “mongolenvlek”.

Moreover, seven parenting websites suggest a similar distinction between dark(er) skin versus light skin: “Mongol spots mainly occur in children with dark skin or Asian descent. The birthmark is rarer in light children.”⁶² However, in this distinction, a clear dichotomy between white and non-white

⁶⁰ Nicolaas Rupke and Gerhard Lauer. “Introduction: A brief history of Blumenbach representation,” *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach; Race and Natural History, 1750-1850*. Edited by Nicolaas Rupke and Gerhard Lauer (Routledge, 2019), 4.

⁶¹ Robert J. Richards. “The beautiful skulls,” 145.

⁶²Dutch: “Mongolenvlekken komen vooral voor bij kinderen met een donkere huidskleur of een Aziatische afkomst. Bij kinderen met een lichte huid is de geboortevlek zeldzamer.” Cited from 24Baby, “Mongolenvlek”

is visible. In this dichotomy, CDM occurs often in dark skinned children and rarely in light skinned children. In the same citation, 24baby emphasizes the spot to be a characteristic of Asian heritage. Most interestingly, websites that do not refer to a Mongolian race or citizen do refer to Asian heritage, and vice versa. Some refer to both. Especially on [wij.nl](https://www.wij.nl) the opening line on the mongolian spot is notable: “If you or your partner have Asian heritage then there is a good chance that your baby will have a blue spot above his buttocks or on his lower back at birth.”⁶³ Placing the Asian heritage in the opening line as an interesting statement suggests a certain kind of special interest in the connection between heritage and the birth spot. Especially, since the opening statement is refuted in the latter half of the section: “They occur in dark-skinned babies and Asian babies, but also in children from countries around the Mediterranean Sea.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, placing the relation between CDM and Asian heritage in the opening statement of the websites suggests that this relation is more significant than others. It emphasizes CDM as characteristic of Asian heritage.

1.4.3 Relation to heritage on forums

This relation between CDM and Asian heritage can also be found in the second data set consistent of the forum posts. The codes that are found are presented in table 5. A significant amount of 24 of the 37 forum posts relates the birth spot to their own heritage as parent and/or their child’s heritage. For example: “Our daughter also has them, it is an accumulation of pigment and will change and disappear over the years. I am Dutch and my boyfriend is Javanese Surinamese. Our daughter mainly has it on her back, she is now almost 2 years old and sees it slowly decreasing. It belongs to half-bloods ❤️”⁶⁵ (BabyMay2019) Besides relating the blue birth spot to heritage, the mother also positions the birth mark to be a characteristic of “half-bloods”. Half-bloods are people who have one parent of complete Dutch origin and one of differing heritage. In Dutch, the term “halfbloedje” is used. This is a diminutive which, in Dutch, provides for a sense of innocence of the term that is not captured in the English translation. Like “halfbloedje,” people also speak of “kwartbloedjes” (quarter-blood) meaning having one grandparent of differing heritage. Research done by Naomi Kok Luis explores the ethnic self-categorization of multi-ethnic Dutch millennials. Kok Luis found that in contrast to the US or UK, no

⁶³ Dutch: “Heb jij of je partner Aziatische roots, dan is de kans groot dat je baby bij zijn geboorte een blauwe vlek boven zijn billen of op zijn onderrug heeft.” Cited from “Geboortevlek bij je baby: ooievaarsbeet, aardbeivlek of wijnvlek,” [Wij](https://www.wij.nl/baby/babykwaaltjes/geboortevlekken-bij-je-baby/), accessed June 20, 2024, <https://www.wij.nl/baby/babykwaaltjes/geboortevlekken-bij-je-baby/>

⁶⁴ Dutch: “Ze komen voor bij baby’s met een donkere huidskleur en Aziatische baby’s, maar ook bij kinderen uit landen rond de Middellandse Zee.” Cited from [Wij](https://www.wij.nl/baby/babykwaaltjes/geboortevlekken-bij-je-baby/), “Geboortevlek bij je baby: ooievaarsbeet, aardbeivlek of wijnvlek”

⁶⁵ Dutch: “Onze dochter heeft ze ook, het is een ophoping van pigment en idd in de loop der jaren zal en veranderen en wegtrekken. Ik ben Nederlandse en mijn vriend is Javaans Surinaams. Onze dochter heeft het vooral op haar rug zitten, ze is nu bijna 2 jaar oud en zie het langzaam minder worden. Hoort bij halfbloedjes ❤️”⁶⁵ Zwanger, Forum reaction, “Mongolenvlekken” ,24Baby, 2023, <https://community.24baby.nl/forum/zwanger/mongolenvlekken-ppOwAg?page=1>

clear unambiguous term exists in the Netherlands to refer to people of mixed heritage.⁶⁶ The only term used is half-blood. However, this term is considered to have racial connotations. Therefore, Kok Luis finds that some people advocate for the term “dubbelbloed” (double blood). This is also seen in the forum reactions: “It might be nice to call it double blood instead of half-blood 😊.”⁶⁷ Like we established in the concept of *knuffelracisme*, there is a sense discomfort with using explicit racial terms. However, her research shows that millennials of a multi-ethnic background mostly identify with the term “halfbloed” and without any discomfort.⁶⁸ To determine popular terminology for self-identification, participants of the study were given the options of “halfbloed”, “dubbelbloed”, “mengelmoes” (mixed person/ hodgepodge), “bicultureel” (bicultural), “biracial” (biracial), and “metissage” (French for mixed person). Notably, most of the participants chose “halfbloed”.⁶⁹ Moreover, as similarly seen in the forum posts, most people refer to their ethnic background in fractions for example: “I am half Indonesian. My daughter, who is only a quarter Indonesian.”⁷⁰ This example shows that also fractions are used without discomfort. The exact meaning of *kwartbloed*, being a quarter of a different heritage insinuates that the Dutch heritage is a given and the standard. The common use of the terminology of half-blood, quarter-blood and double-blood suggests that the non-Dutch heritage still plays a defining role, even though the other three quarters or halves are considered Dutch. Moreover, it implies that the idea of racial purity remains. The use of mixture terms means that there are also people of full Dutch origin who are considered to be of pure non-mixed standard blood.

The “halfbloed” and “kwartbloed” concepts are also seen as significant for the appearance of the blue birth mark. The full comment quoted above reads:

“I had it on my tailbone at birth and it disappeared before I was 1, I am half Indonesian. My daughter, who is only a quarter Indonesian, had a very light spot on her left buttock/lower back that also disappeared around her first birthday.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Naomi Kok Luis.. "Chapter 3 It's Not All Black and White: Ethnic Self-Categorization of Multiethnic Dutch Millennials". In *The Riches of Intercultural Communication*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2022), 69. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004522848_004

⁶⁷ Dutch: “Misschien mooi om het zelf straks dubbelbloed te noemen i.p.v. halfbloed 😊.” Babypraat, Forum reaction, “Archipelvlek” ,24Baby, 2023, <https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/archipelvlek-DK61NA?page=1>

⁶⁸ Kok Luis, “Chapter 3”, 83.

⁶⁹ Kok Luis, “Chapter 3”, 75.

⁷⁰Dutch: “ik ben half Indonesische. Mijn dochter die dus maar kwart Indonesische is.”Cited from Babypraat, Forum reaction, “Archipelvlek” ,24Baby, 2023, <https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/archipelvlek-DK61NA?page=1>

⁷¹ Dutch: “Ik had het bij me geboorte op mijn stuit en die is weggetrokken voor ik 1 was, ik ben half Indonesische. Mijn dochter die dus maar kwart Indonesische is, had een hele lichte vlek op haar linkerbil/onderrug die ook rond haar eerste verjaardag weggetrokken was.” 24Baby, 2023, <https://community.24baby.nl/forum/baby/archipelvlek-DK61NA?page=1>

This post shows that the exact make up of heritage is considered significant for the appearance of the blue birth mark. Having a lighter blue spot is seen as directly related to being a quarter of Indonesian instead of half. This correlation not only indicates that the blue spot is seen as a non-Dutch characteristic, but its appearance also signifies to what extent someone is not Dutch.

Code	Number posts mentioning specific code
"Asian"	4
Asian country	11
Other country	5
"blank" (white)	3
"halfblood"/"quarterblood"	4
Mention of heritage	24
Criticism name	5
Total amount forum posts	37

Table 5: codes in posts on 24Baby forums titled with "mongolenvlek" or "archipelvlek"

Considering the number of comments mentioning a relation between CDM and heritage, suggests that CDM is seen as an unproblematic marker of heritage. As can be seen in table 5, 24 forum posts relate the spot to the heritage of child and/or parent and only a five criticize the name "mongolenvlek". Thus, the general public understands CDM to have a significant connection to heritage. Moreover, this relation between CDM and heritage, suggests that the body presents signs of geographical heritages. It connects the physical body to geographical origins. In chapter two, I further explore how the physical body was studied in relation to its geographical origins in the history of racial science.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, two questions were explored:

1. What kind of information on the blue birth spot is presented on the mother websites?
2. What is the understanding and significance of the blue spot for the audience based on reactions seen on the forum?

Answering question one, the examination of the presentation of the blue birth spot on parenting websites shows that the racial nature of the concept of the "mongolenvlek" is presented without any discomfort. However, the term "mongolenvlek" is deemed uncomfortable because it is similar to the Dutch slur "mongool." The similarity suggests a relation between the slur and CDM. However, the racial origin of term is seen as unproblematic. The websites share that the term "mongolenvlek" originates from the fact that either the inhabitants of Mongolia or people from the Mongolian race commonly have CDM. Despite this explicit racial notion, this knowledge is presented as uncontested knowledge.

In this manner the websites repeat and reinforce racial assumptions and classifications as uncontested knowledge. Also, informational websites curated by health organisations and used as

sources, present the racial nature of CDM. Moreover, a more thorough analysis reveals that the websites emphasise a non-Dutch and abnormal nature of CDM. This understanding of the spot can also be found in medical literature where the spot is seen as deviant and the parents are advised to inform kindergarten and schools to prevent misunderstandings concerning child abuse.

Considering question two, the forum reactions confirm the popular understanding of CDM as a marker of heritage. Analysis of the forum posts shows that the majority of the people using these parenting websites consider CDM to be a marker of race or ethnicity. The reactions also suggest that the intensity of the colour of CDM is related to the fraction of non-Dutch heritage. This is in contrast to the medical explanation presented by Zhong, Huang and Nambudiri: “the birthmark’s appearance is determined by the concentration of melanin in the dermal melanocytes, the number of dermal melanocytes, and the melanocytes’ depth in the dermis, regardless of the individual’s race or ethnicity.”⁷² Therefore, the phrases used in the comment highlight the racialised approach to the presence of CDM. Moreover, the fractions used highlight the non-Dutch fractions as these fractions are emphasized. Moreover, only five posts criticise the terminology of “Mongolian.” This shows, that CDM is predominantly considered as an uncontested racial marker. This connects the physical body to geographical heritage and reinforces the idea that the body is a signifier of race. In the next chapter, I further explore this idea of a relation between body and geographical heritage further by studying the history of the “mongolenvlek” and the history of racial science.

⁷² Zhong, Huang and Nambudiri, “Revisiting,” 755.

Chapter 2: Racial science & blue spot: defining “Mongolian”

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the history of the “mongolenvlek” and the term “Mongolian”. In this exploration I answer two questions: (1) what are the origins of the “mongolenvlek”? and (2) What is origin of the term “Mongolian”?

In the first half of this chapter, I answer the first question and investigate the history of the “mongolenvlek.” To set the stage of this historical research, I first turn to chapter four of *Becoming Yellow* (2011) by Michael Keevak.⁷³ In this chapter, Keevak discusses the historiography of the “Mongolenfleck” and thereby provides a foundation for my reconstruction of the history of the “mongolenvlek” as seen in the Dutch context. For my own historical research, I use articles published at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. All articles are either published by Dutch scholars, in Dutch journals, or in the Dutch language and reference the “mongolenvlek.” Analysing these sources, I specifically focus on the use of racial terminologies and ideas that are similar to the racial terms found on parenting websites. I then, compare the use of these terminologies and ideas between the sources. This provides me with the insight that is needed to reconstruct the discourse surrounding the “mongolenvlek” as a racial concept. Similar to Keevak, I find disagreement on the use of the term “Mongolian” to signify the spot. However, I do find agreement on the idea that the “mongolenvlek” is a racial marker.

In the second half of this chapter, I explore the history of the “Mongolian race” and physical anthropology. For this exploration I use the concept of *racialized common sense* conceptualised by Fenneke Sysling in *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia* (2016) as a framework. The *racialized common sense* consists of ideas and assumptions about populations and is formulated in the context of social and cultural spheres. More specifically, this *common sense* was partly based “on local ideas of difference, histories of closeness and enmity between different ethnic groups, and many other prejudices.”⁷⁴ Sysling argues that physical anthropologists sought to provide empirical evidence to scientifically establish these ideas and assumptions⁷⁵. Positioning my thesis in the extension of Sysling’s argument, I argue that this racialized common sense has been a crucial factor in the persistence of the

⁷³ Keevak, Michael. “Chapter 4. East Asian Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Medicine: The Mongolian Eye, the Mongolian Spot, and ‘Mongolism.’” In *Becoming Yellow*, 101–23. Princeton University Press, 2011.

⁷⁴ Sysling, Fenneke. *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia*. Singapore: NUS Press Singapore, 2016, 10.

⁷⁵ Sysling, *Racial science*, 10.

concept of the "Mongolian spot" as scientific knowledge up to the present day. This despite lacking the empirical evidence for establishing the exclusive "Mongolian" aspect of CDM.

2.2 Establishing "Mongolian spot"

As found in the chapter 1, Erwin von Bälz (1849-1913) is seen as the discoverer of the "mongolenvlek." Von Bälz taught and operated at Tokyo Imperial University and served Emperor Meiji as a personal physician. He was the first European who published about children being born with a blue spot on their bottoms and lower back. He first mentions the blue birth mark in *Die Körperlichen Eigenschaften der Japaner Teil 2*. (1883): "Undoubtedly, the most interesting pigmentation is a dark blue spot which all new-born Japanese children have on the sacrum region or on the buttocks."⁷⁶ In his next work concerning the blue birth mark, Bälz adopts the term "Mongolen-flecke" to refer to the blue spots.⁷⁷ From 1883 up to 1902, Bälz published various works on the blue spot and lectured on the topic further developing his understanding and concept of the "mongolenvlek"⁷⁸.

During this period, Bälz received criticism from scholars who observed the blue spot all around the world.⁷⁹ The article "Die Blauen Geburtsflecke bei den Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels" (1911) by A.B. Meyers published in the 50th anniversary edition of *Geneeskundig tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (medical journal for Dutch-Indies) provides for an overview of sources published on the blue spot.⁸⁰ Despite the article's title suggesting a the scope consisting of the Dutch-Indies, the table of contents shows a variety geographical locations of the articles that Meyer discusses in this article. It shows that other scholars observed the spot in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, where the inhabitants were considered part of the Malay race.⁸¹ Moreover, the table of content, seen in figure 4, lists the locations Bohemia, Prussia, Lower Austria, and Bulgaria. All these locations are located in Europe. Additionally, as the table shows, the spot was also found in Afrika and the USA. African people and Native American people were also not considered part of the "Mongolian race." This shows that scholars outside Asia also encountered the spot. This means that the blue spot was

⁷⁶ German: "Unstreitig is die interessanteste Pigementirung aber ist *ein dunkelblauer Fleck, welchen alle neugeborenen japanischen Kinder auf der Kreuzbeingegend oder auf den Hinterback tragen.*" Cited from Baelz, Erwin. *Die Körperlichen Eigenschaften Der Japaner II Teil*. (Yokohama; Echo du Japon, 1883): 6.

⁷⁷ Meyer, A.B. ., "Die blauen Geburtsflecke bei den Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels," *Feestbundel ter herinnering uitgegeven bij het verschijnen van het 50ste deel Geneeskundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlands-Indië* (Javasche Boekhandel en Drukkerij, 1911): 52.

⁷⁸ Von Baelz, "Noch einmal die blauen „Mongolen-Flecke“. Intern. Centralbl. Anthr. 7. 329-331 1901.

⁷⁹ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 110.

⁸⁰ Meyer, A.B. ., "Die blauen Geburtsflecke bei den Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels," *Feestbundel ter herinnering uitgegeven bij het verschijnen van het 50ste deel Geneeskundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlands-Indië* (Javasche Boekhandel en Drukkerij, 1911). 21-52.

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB31:024450000:00001>

⁸¹ Robert J. Richards, "Skulls of Schiller and the Georgian girl," *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach; race and Natural History, 1750-1850*. (Routledge, 2019): 146.

DIE BLAUEN GEBURTSFLECKE
BEI DEN
Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels
VON
A. B. MEYER
(Berlin)
Mit einer farbigen Tafel.

❧

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Figure 4: Table of contents of “Die blauen Geburtsflecke bei den Völkern des Ostindischen Archipels,” published in *Feestbundel ter herinnering uitgegeven bij het verschijnen van het 50ste deel Geneeskundig Tijdschrift voor Nederlands-Indië* (1911) by A.B. Meyer.

observed all over the world in many populations. Consequently, Meyer concludes, the “Mongolian spot” was not exclusively present in the “mongolian race”. Therefore, he argues that the term “Mongolian” is “irreleiteind” (misleading): “Baelz called them “Mongolian spots” when it was not yet known that they also applied to races other than the Mongolian. But if many writers have retained this term up to recent times, it is misleading.”⁸² Therefore, Meyer uses the term “blauen Geburtsflecke” to refer to the blue spot. This shows that, shortly after the discovery by Bälz, the “mongolenvlek” was not an uncontested racial marker of the “Mongolian race.” In section 2.3, I further explore the concept of human races.

However, despite Meyer’s criticism of the “Mongolian spot” being a typical characteristic, and therefore a racial marker, of the “Mongolian race,” Meyer does argue that the spot remains an accurate

⁸² German: ““Mongolenflecke” hatte Baelz sie gennant, als man noch nicht wusste; dass sie auch andern Rassen als der Mongolischen zukommen. Wenn nun aber viele Schriftsteller noch bis in die jüngste Zeit hinein diese Bezeichnung beibehalten, so ist das irreleitend.” Cited from Meyer, “Die blauen Geburtsflecke,” 23.

marker for being non-white. He argues that: "The exceptional occurrence of a slitted "Mongolian eye" or of "Negro hair" among whites does not lead us to the false conclusion that this is nothing more than a quantitative difference as Adachi and others assume with the birthmark; they are and remain racial characteristics of the Mongolian and the Negro."⁸³ His argument shows disagreement with the idea that the blue spot could not be a racial marker as it was also seen in "whites". Similarly, in his last publication on the topic in 1902, Bälz concluded that "the blue spots occur in all races except the white one, so they are an eminently important racial diagnostic feature."⁸⁴ The general consensus of the time became that the spot was a racial marker, but discussion remained of exactly what races.⁸⁵ Meyer suggests that the leading argument was that the spot was a racial marker for "Gelben" (Yellows) and "Schwarzen" (blacks).⁸⁶

Moreover, Meyer includes that the inheritance of the blue spots depends on other racial markers. Meyer cites Bälz to clarify this: "Among Japanese-European children, those who take after their European parent have no trace of spots, those who have inherited the characteristics of both father and mother equally have a hint of them, and those who are exactly like their Japanese parents show them very clearly."⁸⁷ Similar to the comments on the parenting websites, mixture of races influences the presence of spot. Moreover, it is related to other racial markers present on the physical body. If the child resembles their Japanese parent more, they will also show the blue spots more clearly. If they resemble their European parent more, no spot will appear. In this way, the presence of the spot is connected to the physical racial body that results from the mixture of race.

However, Dutch sources dating after 1911 consistently refer to the "Mongolian spot" and concentrate in its initial understanding as characteristic of the Mongolian race. Sources acknowledged the fact that the spot could be found all over the world but insisted on the significance of its occurrence in the "Mongolian race". For example: a source concerning the Anthropology of the people of Batavia ("Bijdrage tot de anthropologie der bevolking van Batavia en naaste omstreken") dating 1937 states (translated from Dutch to English): "Although, as mentioned above, the Mongolian spot also occurs in

⁸³ German: "Das ausnahmsweise Vorkommen eines geschlitzten „Mongolen- auges" oder von „Negerhaar" bei Weissen verleitet uns doch auch nicht zu dem Trugschlusse, dass es sich hier um weiter nichts als um einen quantitativen Unterschied handle, wie Adachi und andre es beim Geburtsfleck annehmen, es sind und bleiben eben Rassen-merkmale des Mongolen und des Negers." Cited from Meyers, "Die blauen Geburtsflecke," 39.

⁸⁴ German: "die blauen Flecke bei allen Rassen ausser bei der weissen vorkommen, dass sie also ein eminent wichtiges rassendiagnostisches Merkmal sind." Von Baelz, "Noch einmal die blauen „Mongolen-Flecke". *Intern. Centralbl. Anthr.* 7. (1902). 330.

⁸⁵ Meyer, "Die blauen Geburtsflecke," 40.

⁸⁶ Meyer, "Die blauen Geburtsflecke," 38.

⁸⁷ German: "Diese Flecken verschwinden in der Regel ganz von selber inden ersten Lebensjahren Unter den japanisch-europaischen Kindern habeti die, welche dem europaischen Erzeuger nachschlageu, keine Spur von Flecken, die Kinder, die die Eigentüm- lichkeiten von Vater und Mutter gleich geerbt haben, eine Andeutung, und die Kinder, die ganz dem japanischen Erzeuger gleichen, zeigen sie sehr deutlich." Meyer, "Die blauen Geburtsflecke," 24.

children of other races, it is most common in children of Mongolian race.⁸⁸ Even though it was commonly known that the spot was a global occurrence, the author insists on the correctness of the term. Similarly, a list of typical physical Mongolian characteristics published in 1933 include the “Mongolenvlek” as the tenth and last characteristic.⁸⁹ Another argument is that the Mongolian spot occurs in other indigenous peoples because these people, in some undiscussed way, have Mongolian heritage (“inslag van Mongools bloed”).⁹⁰ Thus, even though the blue birth mark was found in many continents, a connection to the “Mongolian race” remained emphasised. The assumptions stemming from the earliest observation persevered. The term “Mongolian spot” and its racial context remained the standard definition.

2.2.1 Ten Kate and native stories

Another scholar who thoroughly investigated the blue spot is Herman Frederik Carel Ten Kate (1858-1931). In contrast to Bälz and Meyer, who focused on racial demarcations, Ten Kate recorded the account of a native understanding of the blue spot. Ten Kate was a Dutch anthropologist and trained as an artist from the academy of arts and a physical anthropologist from the University of Leiden and the French anthropological school.⁹¹ He was known as a hard worker and has published more than 150 titles on various geographical regions and anthropological topics.⁹² Most notably, he refrains from using the term “Mongolenfleck”.⁹³

Similarly, this wide research interest can be found in his work titled “Die Blauen Geburtsflecke” (1905).⁹⁴ In this article Ten Kate includes native knowledge on the blue spot and its native names. Ten Kate found that the Javanese call the blue spot “tembong”, Sundanese call it “tjiri”, Hawaiian and Samoa call it “ila”, and Malay call it “tanda”. Most often the spot is understood as a lucky sign.⁹⁵ Other stories relate the blue spot to the presence of passed grandparents:

If the grandparents or great-grandparents of a pregnant woman die, she smears some soot or charcoal on some part of the body of the corpse, so that a dark spot, about the size of half a guilders, appears. The pregnant woman believes that as a result her child will also have a dark

⁸⁸ Dutch: “Hoewel, naar boven reeds vermeld werd, de Mongolenvlek ook bij kinderen van andere rassen voorkomt, is zij toch het meest frequent bij de kinderen van Mongolide rassen.” Cited from Louis Johan Alexander Schoonheydt, Louis Johan Alexander, “Bijdrage tot de anthropologie der bevolking van Batavia en naaste omstreken” (Visser & Co.1937): 77-78

⁸⁹ J. Moerman, “De Chineezers in Nederlandsch Oost-Indië : ook bedoeld als handleiding bij de aardrijkskundige wandplaten van Menno van Meeteren Brouwer”. (Noordhoff,1933-1934): 14-15.

⁹⁰ Frans M. Olbrecht, “Ethnologie : inleiding tot de studie der primitieve beschaving”. (W.J. Thieme & Cie,1936): 58.

⁹¹ Heyink, JAC. Hodge, F. W. “Herman Frederik Carel Ten Kate.” *American Anthropologist*, (1931):417.

⁹² Heyink, JAC. Hodge, F. W. “Herman Frederik Carel Ten Kate.” *American Anthropologist*, (1931):

⁹³ Kate, “Die Blauen Geburtsflecke.” 56.

⁹⁴ Kate, H. Ten. “Die Blauen Geburtsflecke.” *Globus LXXXVII*, no. 4 (1905): 53–58.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

spot on the skin at birth, although the spot does not correspond. If the child is actually born with such a spot, then this is proof that both physical and mental characteristics of the grandparents have been transferred to the child. If the child is born without toh, then the parents or one of the other blood relatives will be told in a dream to whom the characteristics of the deceased have been transferred. It is not the soul itself that is transferred, but the exterior appearance, the character, the habits, etc.⁹⁶

This shows, knowledge about the blue spots already existed in places where CDM was a common phenomenon. Moreover, this demonstrates that the indigenous and western approach concerning the blue spots are very different. In native cultures, the blue spot is a common phenomenon and often seen as a positive sign. This is in contrast to the western empirical perspective in which it is viewed as a racial marker. This stark difference in understanding of the blue spot, shows that none of the already existing native knowledge of CDM became part of the European conception of the “Mongolian spot”. In this way, it highlights the ignorance of the European scholars regarding native knowledge. Moreover, it highlights the European urge of establishing human races. In the next section, I explore the history of establishing human races which is known as racial sciences.

2.3 Developing the “Mongolian type”

As established by Fenneke Sysling in *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia* (2016) it was “the central pursuit of physical anthropology to find out how races could be defined and what markers could be used to distinguish them.”⁹⁷ Therefore, I turn to the history of anthropology to establish a reconstruction of racial science in relation to the concept of the “mongolenvlek”. In this reconstruction, I demonstrate the origins of the concepts of race and human varieties as seen on the informational parenting websites in chapter 1. For this demonstration I emphasise the presence of the *racialised common sense* which I explained in the introduction of this chapter.

⁹⁶ German : 'Wenn die Grosseltern oder Urgrosseltern einer schwangern Frau sterben, dann schmiert diese etwas Russ oder Holzkohle an irgend einen Körperteil der Leiche, so dass ein dunkler Fleck, etwa von der Grösse eines halben guldens, entsteht. Die Schwangere glaubt, dass infolgedessen ihr kind bei der Geburt auch einen dunkeln Hautfleck (t o h) haben wird, obwohl die Stelle nicht zu korrespondieren bracht. Wenn nun das Kind wirklich mit einem solchen Fleck geboren wird, dann ist damit der Beweis geliefert, dass sowohl körperliche wie seelische Eigenschaften der Grosseltern auf das Kind übertragen worden sind. Sollte aber das Kind ohne toh geboren werden, dann wird schon den Elter oder sonst einemen der andern Blutsverwandten in einem Traum offenbart, auf wen die eigenschaften der Verstorbenen übertragen worden sind. Nich die seele selbst wird „übertragen, sondern das Aeussere, der Charakter, die Gewohnheit usw Kate, H. et al. Ten. “Sitzung Vom 14. Juli 1905.” Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie 37, no. H. 5 (1905): 756.

⁹⁷ Fenneke Sysling, *Racial Science and Human Diversity in Colonial Indonesia* (Singapore, NUS Press Singapore, 2016): 5.

In chapter one, I showed that parenting websites present a list of populations identical to the four human types as established by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778). Linnaeus was a Swedish botanist famous for his binominal nomenclature. As seen in a section of the quadrupedal order in this binominal nomenclature presented in figure 5, he categorized humans into four types: “Europæus albesc. /Americanus rubesc. / Asiaticus fuscus. /Africanus nigr.” The categories translate to: “European white, American reddish, Asian tawny, and African black”.

I. QUADRUPEDIA.			
<i>Corpus hirsutum. Pedes quatuor. Feminae viviparæ, lactiferæ.</i>			
ANTHROPO- MORPHA. Dentes primores 4. u- tingue: vel nulli.	Homo.	Nosce te ipsum.	H { Europæus albesc. Americanus rubesc. Asiaticus fuscus. Africanus nigr.
	Simia.	ANTERIORES. POSTERIORES. <i>Digiti</i> 5. 5. Posteriores anterioribus similes.	Simia cauda carens. Papio. Satyrus. Cercopithecus. Cynocephalus.
	Bradypus.	<i>Digiti</i> 3. vel 2. . . . 3.	Ai. <i>Ignavus.</i> Tardigradus.

Figure 5: The order of Quadrupeds in *Systema naturæ* by Linnaeus, 1735

Succeeding Linnaeus, the German physician/anatomist Johan Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) further developed the racial categorizations. Blumenbach reconceptualised the four types and extended the list of human variants from four to five. Similar to Linnaeus, determined the five varieties of human as, Oriental, American Indian, Caucasian, Malay, and Ethiopian.”⁹⁸

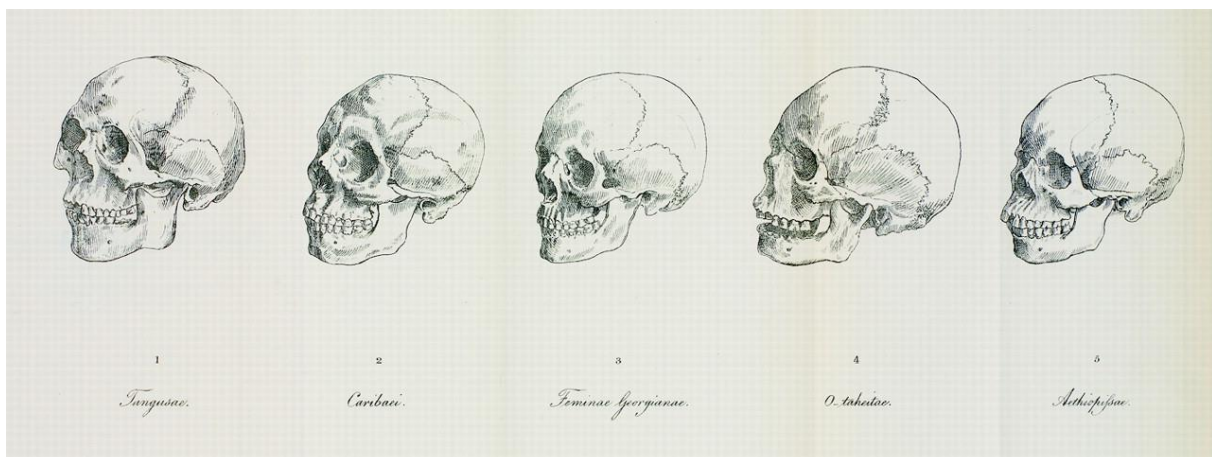


Figure 6: Blumenbachs' *generis humani varietate nativa*, 3rd ed. (1795).

Michael Keevak describes Blumenbach as “the most authoritative taxonomer of the post-Linnaean period”.⁹⁹ Both Blumenbach and Linnaeus agree that all humans belong to the same species.

⁹⁸ “Blumenbach and the concept of race” Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/650077.html>

⁹⁹ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 49.

However, they argue, variety can be found among humans. However, this conceptualisation of human varieties was not done without prejudice or assumptions. Blumenbach considered his Caucasian type as the standard and most beautiful form of human where the others were divergent and degenerates.¹⁰⁰ The Caucasian type represented the white European type. Blumenbach was especially “enthused” by the beauty of the skull he used to represent the Caucasian. The skull belonged to a young woman from the Georgian region who was captured and died in imprisonment. More specifically, she was a sex slave who lived and died in terrible circumstances. Girls and young women from the Caucasus were considered the epitome of beauty and therefore prized on slave markets.¹⁰¹ This conscious decision of establishing the ultimate Caucasian skull highlights the normative nature of Blumenbach’s human races. All five of the skulls drawn by Blumenbach in figure 6 were obtained from victims’ sexual exploitation and imperialist wars.¹⁰² Moreover, it highlights the privileged position of the white male on top of the hierarchy determining all races below him. Considering the origin of the skull representing the Caucasian type, Blumenbach’s process of determining human classifications becomes normative. Similarly, Keevak argues that gendered description of native peoples in travel diaries played a crucial role in the development of racial thought.¹⁰³ To demonstrate this Keevak turns to the works of François Bernier (1620-1688). According to Keevak, Bernier was the first to organise people in such manner in his work *New Divisions of the Earth, according to the Different Species or Races of Man That Inhabit it, sent by a Famous Voyager in 1684*.¹⁰⁴ The essay consists of seven pages long. It argues for four species in hierarchical order and includes passages describing and comparing the appearances of the native women he encounters:

“I have encountered seven or eight in various places who were of such an astonishing beauty that they put in the shade the Venus of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome - with aquiline nose, small mouth, coral lips, ivory teeth, large bright eyes, gentle features, and a bosom and everything else of utter perfection. At Moka I saw several of them completely naked, waiting to be sold, and I can tell you, there could be nothing lovelier in the world to see but they were extremely expensive because they were being sold at three times the price of the others.”¹⁰⁵

In the essay, the argument for human variants and the judgement on the beauty of the women are presented side by side. The fact that these two topics are presented together shows the inclusion of the gendered and sexualised view in the traveller’s perspective on human differences. In this way, it

¹⁰⁰ Rupke and Lauer, “Introduction,” 6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Rupke and Lauer, “Introduction,” 9.

¹⁰³ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ Bernier, François. “A New Division of the Earth.” (1684) republished in *History Workshop Journal*, no. 51, 2001, pp. 247–50. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289731>. Accessed 7 June 2024.

confirms the inclusion of gendered perspectives in the development of racial thought. Moreover, the fact that the most beautiful women “were being sold at three times the price of others” shows a value judgement of appearance. This consideration of gender highlights the normative nature of these first encounters and Blumenbach’s construction of the human races.

The article “Physical Anthropology Reconsidered: Human Remains at the Tropenmuseum” (2007) by Van Duuren et al. provides a similar argument on the topic of the relation between physical appearance and worth. The article considers the history of physical anthropology. Similar to history constructed by Keevak, the article starts with the first encounters described in the travel diaries. Van Duuren et al. argue that no distinguishments were made between somatic, psychic and cultural characteristics of the people the travellers encountered.¹⁰⁶ This means that they related the physical appearance to cultural characteristics and intelligence. In this way, certain physical features would be considered inherently smart or stupid and thereby someone could be considered worth more or worth less. Furthermore, being different from Christians and the west meant being “other”. This inherently meant being considered barbarian, wild, stupid, brutal, and childlike.¹⁰⁷ In this way, it was common sense for Europeans to consider themselves superior to the newly met non-Christian populations. This is similar to the relation of physical appearance and worth found in Bernier’s work.

These assumptions are examples of what Sysling calls a *racialized common sense*. Sysling lists similar examples of the *racialized common sense*. They include “the idea that Madurese looks different from Javanese, that Acehnese are radical, Moluccans are good soldiers and Balinese girls are pretty.”¹⁰⁸ Moreover, such “knowledge [was] created through centuries of interaction”¹⁰⁹ and influenced later ideas about human differences.

The use of preceding knowledge can also be seen in Blumenbach’s process of developing the human races. Historian and expert on Blumenbach’s collection Wolfgang Böker argues that Blumenbach had conceptualised his five species theory before having encountered any skulls.¹¹⁰ Put differently, Blumenbach collected 240 skulls to argue for his thesis of human varieties which he conceptualised beforehand.¹¹¹ At first, Blumenbach rejected the idea the human varia could be established based on skull shapes. Having only access to descriptions of skulls, Blumenbach concluded multiple times that establishing clear human races was impossible. Therefore, he switched to physical appearance such as

¹⁰⁶ David van Duuren, Mischa Ten Kate, Micaela Pereira, Steven Vink, and Susan Legene. “Physical Anthropology Reconsidered: Human Remains at the Tropenmuseum.” *Bulletins of the Royal Tropical Institute*, no. 375, 2007: 14.

¹⁰⁷ Van Duuren et al. “Physical Anthropology,” 14.

¹⁰⁸ Sysling, *Racial Science*, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Sysling, *Racial science*, 10.

¹¹⁰ Wolfgang Böker. “Blumenbach’s collection of human skulls,” *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach; Race and Natural History, 1750-1850*. Edited by Nicolaas Rupke and Gerhard Lauer (Routledge, 2019): 80-95.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/nq/31.4.521-d>.

¹¹¹ Wolfgang Böker. “Blumenbach’s collection,” 90.

skin colour, hair colour, and facial features. Based on this he formulated five main species in 1781.¹¹² Blumenbach obtained the first skulls for his collection after his first publication on the five races. Böker found that early publications including findings about these newly obtained skulls, immediately expressed confidence in the determination of human varia based on skull morphology.¹¹³ Thus, after establishing that determining human varia based on skulls was impossible, Blumenbach turned to physical appearance. Once he demarcated the human varia there, he again turned to his skulls to argue for demarcations he could previously not find. Eventually, in 1794, owning 83 skulls, Blumenbach constructed his work on the skull morphology of the five species, which he already established fifteen years before.¹¹⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century, Blumenbach's "Mongolian type" became a solidified racial category.¹¹⁵

2.4 Seeking empirical evidence for racial demarcations

A similar process of approach can be found in the physical anthropologists after Blumenbach. After Blumenbach, scholars were no longer exploring by drawing and describing the people in their environment, but by measuring and registering numerical and photographic data. Individual skulls were no longer enough to establish a type, scholars now sought to establish averages among large collections through statistics.¹¹⁶ Consequently, a new discipline emerged: physical anthropology or anthropometry. Using the methodologies of craniology and anthropometry, physical anthropology sought to scientifically distinguish between human varieties.¹¹⁷ It is important to note that these methods were used on colonial subjects and that they were systematically oppressed by the people who studied them. Once scientifically established what exactly distinguished the superior from the inferior, the colonisation could be scientifically justified.¹¹⁸

These methods origin from the field of physiognomy. Where the physiognomist sought to establish the physical characteristics of the criminal, the physical anthropologists working in the colonies sought to further establish a hierarchy of human "races".¹¹⁹ Also in physiognomy, judgement was based on physical appearance. Scholars relied on the assumption that physical characteristics and psychological traits were interrelated.¹²⁰ Consequently, criminologists and educators found that beauty,

¹¹² Böker, "Blumenbach's collection," 85.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Böker, "Blumenbach's collection," 85.

¹¹⁵ Keevak, *Becoming Yellow*, 5.

¹¹⁶ Sysling, *Racial Science*, 5.

¹¹⁷ Sysling, *Racial Science*, 4.

¹¹⁸ Sysling, *Racial science*, 14.

¹¹⁹ Sysling, *Racial Science*, 5.

¹²⁰ Lindauer, Martin S. "Historical Background and Methods of Study." In *Expressiveness of Perceptual Experience*, (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013): 25

weight, and height were related to commission of crimes and sentencing and grade point averages.¹²¹ Also here, a link is made between physical appearance and psychological traits. Similarly, anthropologists went on fieldwork to measure the bodies, study hand and feet profiles, take photographs, make plaster casts, and eventually take blood samples (in 1930) of the people they encountered at the other side of the world.¹²²

Sysling argues in her work that physical anthropology never became a fully established discipline due to the disconnect between the hypotheses and measured results.¹²³ Instead, to reach conclusions, the researchers considered the data obtained by their trained eye the most important evidence. This “trained eye” consisted of an intuitive gaze argued for through the use of photographs.¹²⁴ However, due to friction between the data found through the trained eye and the measurements, conclusions were only based on vaguely connected data.¹²⁵ Here, similar to the persistence of the term “Mongolian spot,” the initial findings and assumptions remain the dominating narrative.

The assumptions stemming from the earliest observation persevered. As established earlier, the *racialized common sense* refers to the internalisation of this earliest knowledge to the extent that it is considered common sense. Similar to the dominance of the initial hypothesis of the blue spots being specifically Mongolian, the initial data collected through the trained eye was perceived more significant than the later obtained data through empirical evidence. In this way, racial science and its conclusions was sustained by the racialised common sense.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the history of the “mongolenvlek” in Dutch context. Here I found that the critique arguing that the term was criticised for being misleading. However, this did not prevent its continued use. The term “Mongolian spot” remained in use, despite its misleading suggestion of the blue spots only occurring in people of the “Mongolian race.” Moreover, the even though there was disagreement on the validity of the terminology, it was generally agreed upon that the blue spots were a racial marker. Moreover, considering the contrasting indigenous views presented by Ten Kate, the racialised approach that was used to study the blue spot is highlighted.

Moreover, the exploration of the development of the human races shows the domination of the racialised common sense. The assumptions made in first encounters became common knowledge to the extent that it was internalised by the scholars demarcating human differences. Blumenbach

¹²¹ Lindauer, “Historical Background, 28.

¹²² Sysling, *Racial science*, 47.

¹²³ Sysling, *Racial science*, 178.

¹²⁴ Sysling, *Racial science*, 7.

¹²⁵ Sysling, *Racial Science*, 178.

choice of exemplary skulls and method of developing his racial theory reveal that physical appearance was an essential factor for formulating human the human races.

This importance of observing physical appearance can also found in Sysling's exploration of physical anthropology. Sysling established that the field of physical anthropology did not provide the empirical evidence for the conclusions that were made. Also here, observations through the "trained eye" were considered pivotal evidence. Physical anthropologists relied on their "intuitive gaze" to demarcate the human types. All three explorations show how the *racialised common sense* dominated racial science.

Chapter 3: Contextualizing racial science

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 showed the discussion about the accuracy of coining the blue spot as “Mongolian.” Despite differing arguments on the concept of the blue spots being solely “Mongolian”, I established that agreement was found on the concept of the “Mongolian spot” as racial marker. Additionally, I argued in chapter 2 that the racial science, that conceptualised the “Mongolian race” and other racial markers, is rooted in initial assumptions that can be considered as a racialized common sense. Moreover, I noted that racial science operated in the context of the colonialism and imperialism ideology where European researchers had access to the bodies of colonial subjects. In this chapter, I further consider the historical significance of racial markers like the “Mongolian spot” in the context of colonialism.

The relation between the “Mongolian spot” and colonialism can be found in contemporary Indo-European narratives. Indo-Europeans are the offspring of both an Indonesian and European parent originating from colonial Indonesia.¹²⁶ The narratives show that CDM is both used to impose an identity and to conceptualise an identity of self. On the one hand, CDM has been used as a racial marker by Dutch communities after the Indo-Europeans repatriated to the Netherlands. In *De kolonie mept terug* (2024), Adriaan van Dis states that Indo-Europeans are also referred to as “blauwen.”¹²⁷ Van Dis recalls the people in Bergen calling the house designated for repatriates ‘de blauwe kolonie’ (the blue colony). Moreover, he explains that the dark-skinned Indo-European children were called “blauwen” (blues) because of the blue spot above their bottoms.¹²⁸ In this way, CDM was used to impose an identity through physical characteristics. On the other hand, the blue spot as racial marker has been internalised and is now used to self-identify Indo-European heritage. This phenomenon of internalisation and self-identification is further discussed in chapter 4. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that this imposed identity is a racial identity. A similar use of “blauwe” can be found in the history of the Dutch marines. Every Wednesday the marine serves “de blauwe hap” (the blue meal) for dinner which consists of their rendition of Indonesian food: “de rijsttafel”.¹²⁹ The Dutch marine museum explains that “de blauwe hap” originates from the insulting nickname for their Indonesian personnel.¹³⁰ Despite being aware of the insulting nature of the name, the “blauwe hap” persisted.

¹²⁶ Koks, Joseph Theodore. *De Indo*. (Amsterdam, H.J. Paris, 1931): 5.

¹²⁷ Humphrey de la Croix, “Social geschiedenis | Wie zijn ze? Indische Nederlanders, Indo-Europeanen, Indo’s en blauwen?” Indisch Historisch, <https://www.indischhistorisch.nl/tweede/sociale-geschiedenis/sociale-geschiedenis-wie-zijn-ze-indische-nederlanders-indo-europeanen-indos-en-blauwen/>

¹²⁸ Adriaan van Dis, *De kolonie mept terug* (Atlas Contact, 2024), 15.

¹²⁹ “Indisch Eten,” aan tafel op woensdag, Mariniersmuseum <https://www.mariniersmuseum.nl/nl/aan-tafel-op-woensdag/>

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Further societal significance of racial markers and its power to determine racial identities, can be found in the history and the origin of the Indo-Europeans. Therefore, in this chapter I reconstruct the history of the Indo-Europeans. This history starts in colonial Indonesia and continues into Japanese occupation during WW2. I end this chapter in the 1960s, during which Indo-Europeans had to assimilate into their new home country. With this reconstruction, I aim to show that the use of racial markers involves oppression and, in the case of Dutch colonialism, violence.

3.2 Racially organised Dutch colonial society

Despite being extremely outnumbered, the white Dutch population maintained the highest rank in colonial Indonesia's society. The census of 1930s counted 137.000 Indo-Europeans and 86.500 white Europeans individuals living in colonial Indonesia¹³¹. Combined, roughly 240.000 European individuals resided in colonial Indonesia. These 240.000 European individuals consisted of the highest social rank. Contrastingly, the complete Indonesian population of 60 million individuals was considered the lowest rank.¹³² Race was considered as the determining factor for this organisation of superior and inferior.¹³³

The Dutch kept to strict rules and traditions to maintain the high allure of their status. Dutch-Indo writer Reggie Baay explains that since 1870, the colonial elites organised themselves through strict rules and codes such as "who was important enough to wear a high hat, who should greet the other first, how and with whom one could be seen."¹³⁴ Moreover, social relations were considered of the highest importance: It was a world of calls, of receptions and of being seen. From the club, the societal club, balls and from non-spontaneous morning and evening visits. It was important to be invited, to be at the front of the line at receptions and ceremonies and to have connections."¹³⁵ Thus, rules, codes and traditions were considered of the highest importance to the Dutch elite. Furthermore, these rules were considered of such importance that it influenced careers and general livelihood. If someone would not adhere these rules, they would get wound up in feuds which would eventually lead to them

¹³¹ The other 7% were other European nationalities and European strangers such as Americans, Australians, Africans, Japanese and other Asian citizens who were "gelijkgestelden" (people who obtained Dutch citizenship through application and were called "staats-europeanen"). Cited from: Captain, Esther, and Onno Sinke. *Het Geluid van Geweld; Bersiap En de Dynamiek van Geweld Tijdens de Eerste Fase van de Indonesische Revolutie, 1945-1946*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022) : 35.

¹³² Captain & Sinke. *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 35.

¹³³ Captain & Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 35.

¹³⁴ Dutch: "wie belangrijk genoeg was om een hoge heud te dragen, wie het eerst de ander diende te groeten, hoe en met wie men gezien kon worden." Cited from Baay, *De Njai*, 56.

¹³⁵ Dutch: "Het was een wereld van ontvangsten, van recepties en van gezien worden. Van de club, de soos, bals en van niet-spontane ochtend- en avondvisites. Het was belangrijk om uitgenodigd te worden, om vooraan te staan bij recepties en plechtigheden en om connecties te hebben." Cited from Baay, *De Njai*, 56.

losing their job and being transferred to remote areas.¹³⁶ In this way, the Dutch maintained the exclusive high allure of being the elites in the colony.

3.2.1 Racial divisions

Baay argues that the social allure and high standards were considered important in the Dutch colonies because it was considered crucial to show the Indonesians that the Dutch were of the higher and better race.¹³⁷ Moreover, a high social status in the Netherlands was not needed to achieve high status in the Dutch-Indies. Baay illustrates through diary entries of white Dutch men in the Dutch-Indies, that once a white man stepped on the land of the Dutch-Indies, his skin colour provided him with a position of the highest social rank.¹³⁸ Thus on one side, a white European physical appearance would immediately provide the individual with the highest social status. This also means, that on the other side, an Indonesian physical appearance would inherently mean being positioned in the lowest social status. Furthermore, it means that people with appearances that are not considered white European could never attain the same social status as the Dutch elite. This colour system shows the importance of racial ideologies in the Dutch colonial endeavour.

This racial division was further maintained through legal and governmental practices. The colony practiced two separate systems: one legal system for the Europeans and one legal system for the Indonesians.¹³⁹ In this way, the two racial groups were also demarcated by law. This demarcation by law further legitimised inequality between the Dutch and Indonesians. Moreover, the colonial school system made a similar distinction. By separating European, Indonesian and Chinese schools, the colonial government also gained control over the education of the racially constructed groups.

However, despite these inequalities, Indonesians could opt for a European legal status. Nevertheless, they would be referred to as “Staatsblad-European” (Government Gazette European) instead of European. This is because the governmental decision of granting a European status would be published in the *Staatsblad den Nederlandsch-Indië* (Government Gazette of the Dutch-Indies).¹⁴⁰ The use of a different term for the Indonesians that obtained the European legal status, suggests that having the same nationality would not grant them the same position on in the colonial hierarchy. They would never be fully considered the equal of the white European elite.

3.2.2 Dutch colonial violence

To further maintain this racially homogenous and elite position, the Dutch used violence. Dutch violence in the colonies only recently became a topic of discussion in The Netherlands. In 2022, a report

¹³⁶ Baay, *De Njai*, 57.

¹³⁷ Baay, *De Njai*, 55.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Captain & Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 36.

¹⁴⁰ Captain & Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 37.

Het Geluid van Geweld (2022) (The Sound of Violence) by Esther Captain and Onne Sinke was published. It is an extensive research report about Dutch violence during the Indonesian war of independence. It explicitly explores and highlights the extreme violence used by the Dutch during the Indonesian independence war. Remarkably, this report directly led to the Dutch Prime minister, as representative of the Dutch government, apologizing for this extreme violence.¹⁴¹ Important for this section of the thesis, the contents of the research report also argue that precursing the Japanese occupation and the war of Independence, extreme violence can already be found in the Dutch colonial rule.¹⁴²

According to Sinke and Captain, Dutch historians demarcate violence in the Dutch-Indies in two sections: (1) the VOC period in late 17th century in which the number of deaths on the Indonesian side is estimated between the 600.000 and 1 million. And (2) During the Aceh war spanning from 1871-1910 in which the European armies killed more than 75.000 people.¹⁴³ At that time, this was around 13 percent of the inhabitants of Aceh. This demarcation considers the violence that was used by the Dutch to obtain and maintain new land. Moreover, these wars were not only fought by white Europeans. The Dutch government found it too costly to only send their Dutch men. Therefore, the Dutch colonial army (KNIL) also consisted of Indonesian, Moluccan, Menadonese (also called Ambonese), and Timorese men. These men could be in paid position or forced labourers. Additionally, the Dutch still filled the higher ranks of the army.¹⁴⁴ In this way, the Dutch government formed a system in which they maintained their colonial power through violence while simultaneously profiting from its colonial subjects as soldiers.

Furthermore, Captain and Sinke add that, despite this clear demarcation of violent periods, violence was a continuously part of colonial society.¹⁴⁵ The constant threat and fear of violence maintained the colonial system. Besides the KNIL, also smaller controlling organisations such as a colonial army, political intelligence service and local police provided for a continuous threat of violence. These governmental organisations used a similar hierarchical management of employees as the KNIL. In this way, the governing Dutch elite both used and controlled colonial subjects to maintain their colonial hierarchy. Thus, on a larger scale the Dutch government obtained and maintained to colony through violence. And on a smaller scale, they further maintained their colonial rule through the continuous threat of violence by installing smaller controlling organisations.

¹⁴¹ Rutte, Mark. "1e reactie van minister-president Mark Rutte na de presentatie van het onderzoeksprogramma 'Onafhankelijkheid, Dekolonisatie, Geweld en Oorlog in Indonesië, 1945-1950'" Speech, The Hague, februari 2, 2022.

¹⁴² Captain & Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 36.

¹⁴³ Captain & Sine, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 38.

¹⁴⁴ Captain & Sine, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 40.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

3.3 Flipping racial ideologies

The governmental system described in the previous section completely flipped when the Japanese occupied Indonesia during the Second World War. The Japanese propagated a strong unified Asia without any European influences. They advertised to aim for a unified and prosperous Asia free from western domination. To achieve this, Japan invaded and occupied many Asian countries for raw materials and manpower and imprisoned Europeans in internment camps.¹⁴⁶ As seen in figure 7, propaganda suggested the expansion of the Japanese empire would bring Asian pride and prosperity. Consequently, the Dutch lost their privileged position in the Indonesian colony. After a prolonged period of holding the privileged position of the highest elite, the Dutch were now “vijandige onderdanen” (hostile subjects) and removed from their privileged position and their homes.¹⁴⁷ In

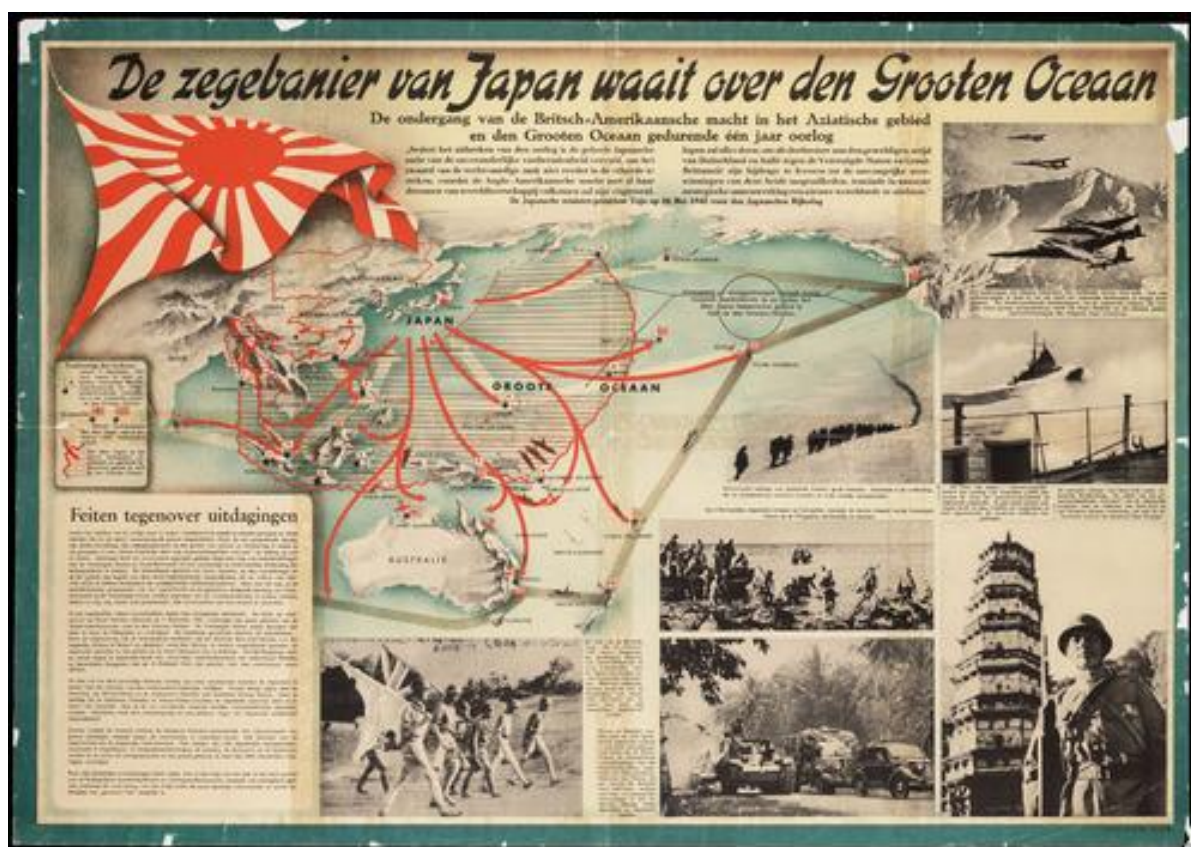


Figure 7: Japanese propaganda quoting prime-minister Tojo on May 26 1942. Retrieved from: <https://beeldbankwo2.nl/nl/beelden/detail/5d5ecd2c-025a-11e7-904b-d89d6717b464/media/9cced4e2-fd18-da3c-1e74-5434555d044d>

March 1942, only government officials and high-ranking businessmen were interned. However, after anti-Japanese conspiracies, all Europeans were captured and placed in camps.¹⁴⁸ The living situation

¹⁴⁶ Captain and Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 46.

¹⁴⁷ Velden, Doetje van. *De Japanse Interneringskampen Voor Burgers Gedurende de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. (Groningen: Wolters, 1963), 440.

¹⁴⁸ Captain and Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 48.

and survival rate of these internment camps varies per camp. Roughly one in ten interned individuals did not survive and died within these camps.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, all KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlands Indische leger) soldiers were captured and set to work forced labour camps.¹⁵⁰ These labour camps were located all over Asia. This meant that some prisoners of war were transported to Siam, Japan or Korea. The survival rate of these camp was much lower than the civilian internment camps. Twenty percent of the prisoners working in labour camps did not survive.¹⁵¹ The most notorious labour camps are the camps working on Burma-Siam railroad. This railroad obtained the nickname “dodenspoorlijn” (railroad of the dead). However, Indonesians also suffered in these labour camps. For 60.000 Indonesian forced labourers, also known as Romusha’s, compared to 16.000 Europeans died while working on the Burma-Siam railroad.¹⁵² During Japanese occupation, poverty famine among the Indonesians increased. To maintain profit, the Japanese used forced labourers to build railroads, airports, weapons and ships. These forced labourers also known as Romusha’s were recruited under false advertising and held captive.¹⁵³ In this way, the people who previously occupied the highest tier in the colonial hierarchy, were now interned in civilian camps or prisoners of war in forced labour camps. The racial segregation remained, but the white Europeans now filled the lowest rank in social and legal hierarchy.

3.3.1 Proving heritage

As established in the previous section, racial segregation remained. In this section I explore the situation of the Indo-Europeans as they were considered to be positioned between the racial categories. Exploring this in-between position, highlights the importance of physical appearance in separating Europeans from Asians. Individuals who could prove to be of Asian heritage were allowed to stay outside of the camps. They had to register for a proof of registry (pendafteran seen in figure 8) to be able to secure their Asian heritage. After securing this Asian heritage, they received a proof of heritage (asal oessoel).¹⁵⁴ By showing their pendafteran, people of Asian heritage could remain outside of the internment camps. Therefore, Indo-Europeans were able to remain outside of the camps. However, after finishing the internment of the Dutch in 1943, the Indo-Europeans were urged to

¹⁴⁹ De Vries, *Indisch is en Gevoel*, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 445.

¹⁵¹ De Vries, *Indisch is een Gevoel*, 30.

¹⁵² Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 247.


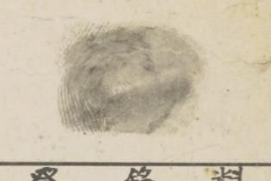
¹⁵³ Captain & Sinke, *Het geluid van geweld*, 58.

¹⁵⁴ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken; buiten de kampen*, 11.

cooperate with the Japanese military. If not, they would meet severe consequences.¹⁵⁵ In August 1943, Indo-Europeans had to register again to be categorised in a new system.

1. Totok father – Indo mother
2. Indo-European father – totok mother
3. Indo-European father – Indo-European mother
4. Totok father– Indonesian mother
5. Totok father – totok mother (born in Dutch-Indies)
6. Indonesian father – totok mother
7. Indonesian father – Indo-European mother
8. Indonesian father – mother of other Asian nationality

Eventually, despite their Asian heritage, groups one and two would be interned too. The categorizations suggest that the amount of Asian heritage became a determining factor. It considered to which extend one was of Asian heritage.

登録番號 (A) 17162	外國人居住登録宣誓證明書 SIYAKUSYU MISSKIN		Wanda 5- oleh Karna hilang. 7-05
姓名(年令) (B) Miss K. Manuel 19 tahun.			
現住所 (C) Puhut subalah Sonduloh...			
(1) 國籍 (2) 出生地 (3) 出身地 (D) Belanda (1) Indo (2) Jakarta (3) Padang Padang.			
職業 (E) Mendirikan rumah rawat	指紋 (Tjap Djempol)		
在留年數 (F) 19 tahun			
(1) 配偶者有無 (2) 家族數 (未登録) (G) (1) Belum kawin (2) Tidak ada			
昭和17年5月5日 大日本軍ニ對スル誠意ノ宣誓 登録ヲナシタルコトヲ證明ス (Lihat salinannya di sebelah)		登録料 Oepah mendaftarkan 16-164-2 15/1/15 J. Koenig	

Keterangan: (A) nomor; (B) nama dan oemoer; (C) alamat sekarang; (D) (1) bangsa, (2) tempat lahir, (3) tempat asal; (E) pekerjaan; (F) berapa tahun tinggal di negeri ini; (G) (1) berkawin atau tidak, (2) banyaknya keluarganya (yang belum didaftarkan).

Figure 8: Pendafteran K. Manuel (Museon-Omniversum). Translation: "A. Number: 17162 B. Name and age: Miss K. Manuel, 19 years old C. Current address: Not yet known D. 1: Origin/Nationality: Dutch-Indonesian; 2: Place of Birth: Jakarta; 3: Originating from: Padang Andalos E. Occupation: Student nurse F. Number of years residing in this country: 19 years G. 1: Married yes or no: not yet married; 2: Number of Family Members (not registered): None" retrieved from: <https://cc.museon-omniversum.nl/#/query/70def779-0d47-40a0-abcc-d14901efc5d7>

¹⁵⁵ Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 445.

However, diaries written during Japanese occupation, show that in practice, physical appearance became the determining factor of internment. This shows that the process of splitting Europeans from Asians was much more determined by physical appearance than by asal oessoel. In *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken; buiten de kampen* (2002), Jeroen Kemperman reconstructs the experiences of Indo-Europeans during the Japanese occupation through diaries. Entries in these diaries show that for Indo-Europeans, physical appearance became an important factor for determining internment or not. When in doubt, the Japanese officials would determine heritage based on physical appearance.¹⁵⁶ This means that regardless of Asian heritage or pendafteran, people with blue eyes and blond hair would be interned. Moreover, due to the mixed heritage of Indo-Europeans, skin colour, eyes colour, and hair colour, would often vary. Resultingly, many Indo-Europeans were still interned because of their European appearance.

The Indo-Europeans that remained outside of the camps (buitenkampers) were strongly urged to become full Indonesian citizens and leave their European heritage behind.¹⁵⁷ The Japanese wanted them to embrace their Asian heritage and contribute, like the Indonesians, to the goal of the Great Asian prosperity.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, in the first year, Indo-Europeans could keep their job and their daily lives provided that they were not in service of the Dutch colonial military (KNIL).¹⁵⁹ However, after the second year, they were urged to comply with the military authorities, or they would be punished severely.¹⁶⁰ Once every totok was interned, all Indo-Europeans were warned again for the consequences of not assimilating. The phrase “tussen wal en schip vallen” (falling between) became “tussen kade en schip plat gedrukt worden”.¹⁶¹ They were to assimilate and comply or suffer fatal consequences. Consequently, Indo-Europeans were pushed to become “pure” Indonesians or “vijandige onderdaan”.¹⁶²

Mostly Indo-European women and their children remained outside of the internment camps. Most husbands were in service in the KNIL and therefore imprisoned in forced labour camps. Consequently, women and children did not have any income and had to find other ways to survive. They started little crafts businesses and asked the help of their Indonesian family.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, sometimes the fear of the danger outside of the camps became so great that they voluntarily let themselves be interned in the internment camps looking for safety.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁶ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken; buiten de kampen*, 12.

¹⁵⁷ Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 446.

¹⁵⁸ Captain & Sinke, *Het Geluid van Geweld*, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 444.

¹⁶⁰ Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 445.

¹⁶¹ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 20.

¹⁶² Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 21.

¹⁶³ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 16.

¹⁶⁴ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 12.

Despite the Japanese demand of becoming Asian, Indo-Europeans became isolated from society. The Japanese sealed or confiscated radio's, closed schools (attending Indonesian schools was not allowed for Indo-Europeans), and shut down Dutch newspapers.¹⁶⁵ The living situation of the "buitenkampers" declined further. The Japanese were confiscating and occupying homes and arresting people who were suspected of being anti-Japanese. Furthermore, Indo-Europeans were considered traitors and enemies by the Indonesians. Indo-Europeans were registered again, and their houses were repeatedly searched and raided. Also, they were continuously watched and threatened to be reported to the police for anti-Japanese conspiracies.¹⁶⁶ Being arrested meant to prisons where the living situation was worse than the internment camps as a large percentage of the prisoners did not survive.¹⁶⁷ Thus, despite of owning a pendafteran and therefore remaining outside the camps, it was not enough to provide safety. This piece of history shows the significance of racial thought and the violent applications of it.

3.4 Assimilating

During the repatriation from Indonesia to the Netherlands (dates?), the Indo-Europeans resided in the void between racial categories again. Both the Indonesian and Dutch government did not recognize the Indo-Europeans as their full citizens. I argue that this imposed identity was again determined by racial notions and prejudice.

In the article "Biology, Culture, 'Postcolonial Citizenship' and the Dutch Nation, 1945–2007,"¹⁶⁸ Guno Jones argues a similar case. Jones explores the Dutch assimilation policy that was installed for the Indo-Europeans and states that the case of the Indo-Europeans shows that possession of full Dutch citizenship does not guarantee inclusion in Dutch society.¹⁶⁹ After Indonesia's declaration of independence, all Europeans were urged to repatriate. From the Indonesian perspective this also included the Indo-Europeans. However, the Dutch government did not initially agree with this. The Dutch considered the Indo-Europeans as too Indonesian to fit into Dutch society. The government propagated that it would be in their best interest to discard their Dutch nationality and opt for Indonesian nationality. They implied that the reluctant Indo-Europeans lacked the judgement to see their "true" national identity.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Kemperman, *De Japanse bezetting in dagboeken*, 14.

¹⁶⁷ Van Velden, *De Japanse Interneringskampen*, 446.

¹⁶⁸ Guno Jones. "Biology, Culture, "Postcolonial Citizenship" and the Dutch Nation, 1945-2007," in *Dutch Racism*. (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2014): 315-336.

¹⁶⁹ Jones, "Biology, Culture, "Postcolonial Citizenship"," 324

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Moreover, Jones argues that “the Dutch government and the House have ascribed ‘identity’ to people from the former colonies.”¹⁷¹ Similarly, Esther Captain highlights in *Harmless Identities: Representations of Racial Consciousness among Three Generations Indo-Europeans (2014)* that, at first, the Dutch government considered the Indo-Europeans as “rooted in the East Indies” and “oriented towards Indonesia.”¹⁷² This is in contrast to the attitude before 1949 when, Captain states, the Indo-Europeans were regarded as “loyal, kindred and excellent Dutch people.”¹⁷³ This suggests, that the “identity” that was ascribed to the Indo-Europeans was not the same as the identity ascribed to totoks. Consequently, initially, Dutch authorities refused passage, allowance, and the necessary documents for travelling to the Netherlands. The government considered the Indo-Europeans to be incapable of assimilating into Dutch society because of their Asian heritage. Captain contrasts this to the absence of such treatment towards white “repatriates”/ totoks of which many of them were also born in colonial Indonesia. However, despite both having the Dutch nationality, totoks and Indo-Europeans fell under different policies.¹⁷⁴ This confirms the difference in ascribed identities. Thus, despite their legal Dutch nationality, the Dutch government ascribed different identities to totoks and Indo-Europeans. This implies that racial ideologies were a pivotal factor for the repatriation of Indo-Europeans.

Despite the fact that Indo-Europeans could eventually repatriate, racial bias remained pivotal for adjusting to the Netherlands. Due to increasing tension between the Netherlands and Indonesia, the policy of discouragement was dropped. Indo-Europeans could now repatriate to the Netherlands. However, racial bias remained as a paternalistic and normative assimilation policy was installed. Both Jones and Captain argue that the strict assimilation policies focused on fully assimilating the Indo-Europeans to the extent that they would forget their Indonesian heritage. The policy obtained a normative character in which habits such as eating rice was interpreted as the unwanted “Asian attitude” and eating potatoes was considered a sign of assimilation.¹⁷⁵ Dutch female welfare workers had to discipline “their children from the Far East” how to run a household in the Netherlands.¹⁷⁶ They organised courses on how to cook, clean, and budget.¹⁷⁷ Captain argues that, even though the welfare workers themselves were probably genuine in their intentions of helping the Indo-European women, it standardised a disregard for the Indonesian or Asian culture.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Guno concludes that the policy had a paternalistic character.¹⁷⁹ Not adapting to the discipline would mean confirming inherent

¹⁷¹ Jones, “Biology, Culture, “Postcolonial Citizenship””, 316.

¹⁷² Captain, Esther. “Harmless Identities: Representations of Racial Consciousness among Three Generations Indo-Europeans.” In *Dutch Racism*, (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2014): 53–69.

¹⁷³ Captain, “Harmless Identities”, 57.

¹⁷⁴ Captain, “Harmless Identities”, 57.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Jones, Guno. “Biology, Culture, “Postcolonial Citizenship” and the Dutch Nation, 1945–2007,” 326.

¹⁷⁸ Captain, “Harmless Identities”, 57.

¹⁷⁹ Jones, “Biology, Culture, “Postcolonial Citizenship””, 326.

difference and inability to become Dutch. Consequently, interviews by De Vries reveal that, Indo-Europeans felt belittled by this policy.¹⁸⁰ The paternalistic attitude and disregard for Indo-European agency by the white Dutch are characteristics found in the concept of *Imagined Intimacy* as described in the introduction. The white Dutch citizens had to guide their children to the right path of Dutch citizenship regardless of their wants and needs. In this way, Indo-Europeans were pressured to forget their Indonesian heritage and fully assimilate into Dutch society. Currently, the Indo-Europeans are now seen as successfully integrated. This despite the lack of research to confirm this conclusion.¹⁸¹

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I considered the importance of physical characteristics in racially constructed societies. I first showed that CDM became a racial slur for the Indo-Europeans repatriating to the Netherlands after the Indonesian independence. Indo-Europeans were called “blauwen” because of the blue spots on their lower back they have as a child. Considering Indo-European history showed the importance of physical appearance in the process of demarcating the racial categories. It shows that through racial ideologies and identities are imposed. Groups are forced to prove racial identity both through appearance and heritage. First, during Dutch colonial rule, the Dutch racial ideology of becoming white dominates. This meant becoming like the Dutch, learning about Dutch culture and adhering to Dutch traditions were prioritised. Indo-Europeans were taught to emphasise their Dutch heritage for their general wellbeing. It provided more career opportunities and therefore general prosperities. Nevertheless, physical appearance still hindered the chances of becoming part of the colonial elite.

Second, the Japanese racial ideology of Asia becoming free from westerners, reversed the colonial hierarchy. This implied interning all Europeans and urging Indo-Europeans to abandon their Dutch ideology and becoming Indonesian. Physical appearance such as blue eyes, where it was previously preferred and the standard, would now “betray” them for being a hostile subject. This confirms that, even with a change in governance, the pivotal role of physical characteristic in racially constructed societies. This part of Indo-European history emphasises the void between the racially constructed populations. And that categorisation based on physical appearance was again used as a solution for dissolving this void. Moreover, it shows that violence and oppression are the main methods used for attaining their racial ideology of homogeneity.

Third, I showed the persistence of racial prejudices and the *imagined intimacy* as characteristics of the Dutch colonial sentiment during the repatriation of Dutch citizens in Indonesia. In the next chapter I show how, similar to blue eyes in Dutch colonial history, CDM is considered a physical

¹⁸⁰ De Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel*, 267.

¹⁸¹ De Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel*, 17.

characteristic that is ascribed to a certain race. Despite being less visible, the blue spot became a marker of non-Dutch heritage and therefore a non-Dutch identity. Especially after repatriation, Indo-Europeans were racially identified by this blue spot. Similar to the blue eyes in Japanese occupation, the blue spot would “betray” racial heritage.

Chapter 4: Reconsidering the “Mongolian spot”: interpreting the absence of historical awareness

4.1 Introduction:

In chapter one we found that informational parenting websites present racial terminology and assumptions as uncontested knowledge. We saw that all websites present a relationship between CDM and Asian heritage. We also saw that the audience of the informational parenting websites internalise the CDM as racial marker. In chapter two I explored the history of racial science to establish the origin of the terminology and assumptions. Here we found that the assumptions made, are not founded in empirical evidence but by an earlier existing socially constructed *racialised common sense*. In the previous chapter we saw the pivotal role of physical appearance in racially organised societies. Racial science formed the foundation and justification for Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. Here I demonstrated the oppressive and violent nature of applications of racial ideologies. Moreover, we also saw CDM being imposed as racial marker in the Indo-Europeans. Despite the end of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia, colonialism remains part of present-day Dutch society

In this chapter I reconsider the findings in chapter one in relation to the new insights of chapter two and three. As established by Pamela Pattynama in the article “Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations” (2012): “although colonialism is often thought of as a phenomenon of the past, it continues in fact in new shapes and forms in our present-day-colonial societies.”¹⁸² Therefore, in this chapter, I will reconsider the findings on the informational parenting websites and reconsider the remaining legacies of racial science and CDM as racial marker in Dutch culture.

In this exploration, I do demonstrate three things. First, I consider Dutch cultural artifacts in which “blue” is a motif for presenting Indo-European heritage. Here, I demonstrate how CDM has become an uncontested racial marker and is used as self-identification tool by Indo-European families. Second, I demonstrate the absence of historical awareness by reconsidering the urge to rename “mongolenvlek” to “archipelvlek.” Here, I argue that while the colonial attitude remains, the Dutch cultural memory excludes the racist and violent nature of Dutch colonial history. Dutch colonial history is, as Paul Doolan argues, “unremembered”. While Dutch colonial history remains in the memory of those who experienced it themselves or whose family experienced it, it is not present in the collective memory of the Dutch. Lastly, I further demonstrate that Dutch racial ideologies, which were formed during Dutch colonialism, remain uncontested and ever present in Dutch culture and therefore also on informational parenting websites.

¹⁸² Pamela Pattynama, “Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations,” in *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* edited by Ulbe Bosma. (Amsterdam University Press, 2021): 175.

4.2 Indo-European as “Blauwe”: Internalising CDM as contemporary uncontested racial marker

In current Dutch Indo culture, the term “blauwe” has been reclaimed as a theme for presenting Indo content. The music duo “The Blue Diamonds” were the first to explicitly reclaim the name “blauwe.”¹⁸³ As seen in figure 9 and 10 below, they also used the colour blue to merchandise the band. The Blue Diamonds consisted of two Indo-European brothers, Riem and Ruud de Wolff, born in Jakarta just before the second world war. Riem and Ruud were popular in the Netherlands and in Indonesia as they also released songs in Malay. Resultingly, in the twenty first century, more Indo-Europeans reclaim “blauwe” as a nickname for themselves.

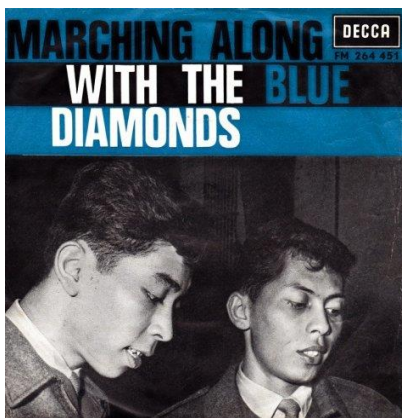


Figure 9: MARCHING ALONG WITH THE BLUE DIAMONDS

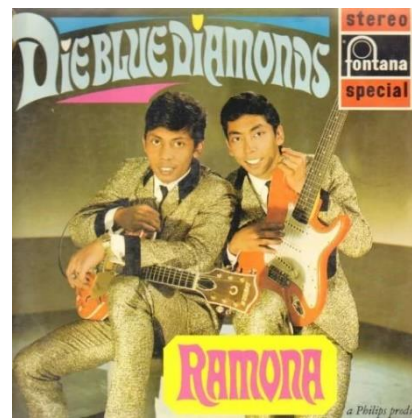


Figure 30: RAMONA - BLUE DIAMONDS

¹⁸³ Van Dis, *De kolonie mept terug*, 15.

Authors started using blue as a colour motif when merchandising Indo-European content. Notable, is that the blue motif is also present in the cover of above cited work *Indo* (2020) by Marion Bloem (see figure 11). *Indo* (2020) is a personal exploration of the Indo identity as experienced by Marion Bloem. The book shows how her Indo Identity is always present in her life. Moreover, another work about the Indo-community is *Indische Gelderlanders; Indisch leven in de provincie* (2007).¹⁸⁴ Figure 12 shows the

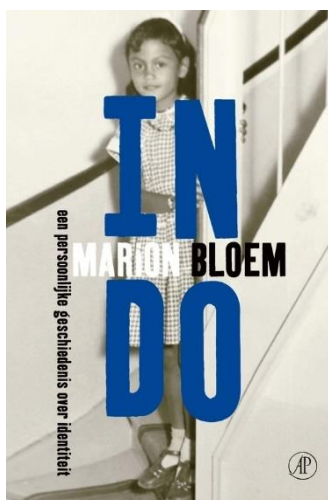


Figure 41: Bloem, Marion. *Indo: Een Persoonlijke Geschiedenis over Identiteit*. de Arbeiderspers, 2020.

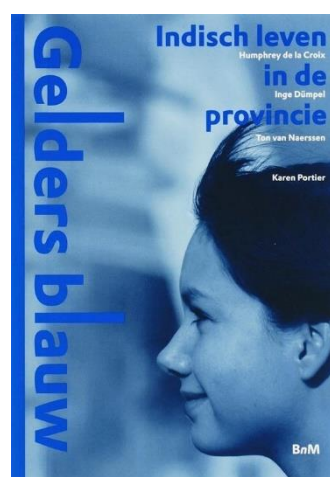


Figure 52: Cover *Indische Gelderlanders; Indisch Leven in de Provincie* (2007) by Humphrey de la Croix, Inge Dümpel, Ton van Naerssen and Karen Portier.



Figure 73: Logo of *Restaurant Blauw* (2024)



Figure 64: Meta van den Boonen, *Blauw* (2018)

cover with both the title “Gelders blauw” and a blue colour referring to the nickname. Another presence of blue in relation to Indonesian heritage is seen in the advertisement of “Restaurant Blauw”. The restaurants are located in Amsterdam and Utrecht and serve Indonesian food. The restaurants also publish cookbooks with the same title. The colour scheme of the logo in figure 13 and cookbook in figure 14 are similar to the Indonesian flag and the name “Blauw” refers to Indonesian cuisine similar

¹⁸⁴ la Croix, Humphrey de, Inge Dümpel, Ton van Naerssen, and Karen Portier. *Indische Gelderlanders; Indisch Leven in de Provincie*. BnM uitgevers, 2007.

to the “Blauwe hap” in the Dutch marines. In this manner, the term “blauwe” had remained as motif for the Indo community and its food culture.

4.2.1 CDM as self-identification tool

Moreover, Dutch Indo-Europeans have internalised the use of CDM as racial marker and now use it to self-identify as Indo-European. In this manner, they confirm their Indonesian heritage in Dutch society where being white is the norm. This is seen in Indo-European narratives. Indo-European writers approach CDM in a similar manner as found on the informational parenting websites and its forums.

As first example, on the website *Indo 3.0*, a blog titled “Blauwe billen” (Blue butt) suggests that CDM is also used to confirm Indo-European identity in new-born babies. The author Ed Caffin explains that his new-born son also has CDM and highlights the significance of the blue spots: “My Indo grandmother would have been reassured; like my brothers and I, Reza had blue spots on his skin at birth. According to her, that was the sign that we were ‘real’ Indos. Nice, that makes it immediately clear.”¹⁸⁵ In this narrative, CDM is seen as a physical marker of the Indo-European identity. Immediately after birth, CDM confirms that the child is a “real” Indo. This shows that CDM is seen as a racial marker of Indo heritage. Moreover, the last sentence of the excerpt suggests that Caffin is also relieved at the sight of the blue spot. The positive and accepting attitude of Caffin’s comment shows that he also accepts the blue spot as a racial marker.

Similarly, as second example, Marion Bloem, who I introduced in the introduction, recounts in her biography *INDO* (2020): “Near the tailbone of the Indo baby, a blue spot can be seen shortly after birth. This betrays that the baby is not fully white, but of mixed blood. The spot disappears completely over time, but the white skin the baby was perhaps born with, becomes tinted.”¹⁸⁶ The second sentence shows a racial interpretation of the blue spot. Also here, the term “blue spots” is used and not “mongolenvlek”. Bloem positions this observation of the blue spot in a social context in which being white is the norm. In this way, the blue spot is a marker of not fitting in with the norm. Similar to the presentation on the parenting websites, Bloem defines the blue spot as a marker of “mixed blood”. As established in the Introduction, explicit racial terms are taboo in Dutch culture. This taboo is avoided by using the term “mixed blood.” In this way, the concept of race is present but in a reference to blood composition.

¹⁸⁵Dutch: “Mijn Indische oma zou al gerustgesteld zijn geweest; net als mijn broers en ik heeft Reza bij zijn geboorte blauwe vlekken op zijn huid. Volgens haar was dat het teken dat we ‘echte’ indootjes waren. Mooi, dat is dan gelijk duidelijk.” By Ed Caffin, “Blauwe billen,” *Indisch 3.0*, last modified January 4, 2010, <https://indisch3.nl/2010/01/04/blauwe-billen-2/>

¹⁸⁶ Dutch: “Rond het stuitje van de Indische baby is, vlak na de geboorte, een blauwe vlek te zien. Deze verraadt dat de baby geen volbloed blanke is, maar een gemengdbloedig. De Vlek trekt naderhand helemaal weg, maar de blanke huid waarmee de baby wellicht geboren was, wordt getint.” Bloem, *INDO*, 9.

Moreover, the interactions as described by Bloem and Caffin with medical professionals during childbirth give further insight into the solidification of CDM as racial marker of Indo-European heritage. Bloem's narrative suggests that Dutch medical professionals were generally not aware of the existence of CDM. Therefore, Indo-Europeans had to introduce the phenomenon to them. Bloem describes the interaction with medical professionals during the birth of her oldest brother in 1955:

The general practitioner was not surprised by the blue spot above Martin's tailbone. Since the arrival of the Indo families to this aviation village, he had already gained some experience with Indo new-borns. However, the midwives in Heerlen and Arnhem were shocked when they discovered the blue skin on our lower backs, Joyce's and mine. They looked at Jacqueline in disbelief when she explained that all Indo babies are born with such a blue spot and that the blue would disappear over time.¹⁸⁷

Here, the blue spot is again explained as a phenomenon present on all Indo babies. Moreover, it describes that the general practitioner was only aware of the spot due to previous experience with Indo-European families. This confirms the concept of CDM being a marker of Indo-Europeans. Moreover, the dynamic of informing professionals of the presence of CDM is analogous to the advice of informing kindergarten of CDM as found on informational parenting websites. It shows that Dutch people are generally not aware of CDM.

A similar interaction as described by Caffin shows the further development of Dutch medical knowledge on CDM dating 2010:

In medical terms, they are called Mongolian spots. Usually, as in his case, they are located on the back, just above the tailbone—a small spot, and often on the buttocks as well. The maternity nurse also told me this later at home. While demonstrating how to best tackle a dirty diaper, she saw the spots. According to her, darker-skinned children, especially from Asia, typically have a number of these spots.¹⁸⁸

Here the term "mongolenvlek", as conceptualised by Erwin von Bälz, is used. Additionally, the "mongolenvlek" is said to be directly related to Asian heritage, which was also argued by Bälz. Thus,

¹⁸⁷ Dutch: "De huisarts kijkt niet op van de blauwe plek boven Martins stuitje. Hij heeft sinds de komst van de Indische gezinnen naar dit vliegdorp al enige ervaring met Indische pasgeborenen opgedaan. Maar de vroedvrouwen in Heerlen en Arnhem schrokken toen ze bij Joyce en mij de blauwe vel op onze onderrug ontdekten. Ze keken Jacqueline ongelovig aan bij haar uitleg dat alle Indische baby's met zo'n blauwe plek geboren worden en dat het blauw mettertijd zal verdwijnen." Bloem, *Indo*, 163.

¹⁸⁸ Dutch: "In artsen taal heten het mongolenvlekken. Meestal, zoals ook bij hem, zit het op de rug, net boven het stuitje een klein vlekje, en vaak ook op de billen. Ook de kraamzorg wist me dat later thuis te vertellen. Terwijl ze voordeed hoe ik een poepluier het best te lijf kon gaan zag ze de vlekken. Volgens haar hebben donkere kindjes, vooral uit Azië, meestal een aantal van die vlekken." Caffin, *Blauwe Billen*

this shows that since the first introductions of the blue spots in the 1950s, Bälz's research became foundational for establishing a medical conception of the blue spots. Considering the presence of CDM as self-identification tool and medical racial marker, shows that the racial connotations of CDM are both internalised and imposed. Moreover, the interaction between the two Indo-European families and the medical professionals show that this internalised racial tool also confirms the medical conception of CDM as racial marker. In this way, both approaches encourage each other. However, notable is that in both sources, "blue spots" is used to refer to CDM instead of the "mongolenvlek". This suggests that the concept "blue spots" as a racial marker is not directly derived from the concept of the "mongolenvlek." It implies that the concept of "blue spots" as racial marker developed distinct from the "mongolenvlek." Additionally, Caffin learns about the term "mongolenvlek" from a nurse. This suggests that he was not aware of the concept of the "mongolenvlek." In the next section, I further explore the presence of such racial identities and the relevance of racial markers in the modern-day Indo-European community.

4.2.2 Explaining persistence of colonial/racial identities: The colonial complex

The internalisation of CDM as self-identification tool can be explained through the remaining presence of colonial thought in Dutch Indo communities. I argue that the concept of CDM as a racial self-identification tool remains dominant in Dutch Indo narratives because of the *colonial complex* as articulated by Marlene de Vries. In 2009, De Vries conducted a small research project, titled *Indisch is een gevoel* (2009) (Indo is a feeling), where 42 Dutch-Indo individuals were interviewed on the topic of their Indo-European heritage and identity. The author extensively explores the individual experience of the second and third generation Indo-Europeans in the Netherlands. De Vries states that they inherited a *colonial complex* from their parents who lived through the Dutch colonial occupation in Indonesia. Consequently, like their parents, these generations suffer from an inferiority complex (*minderwaardigheidscomplex*).¹⁸⁹ De Vries summarizes the complex in 5 characteristics:

- (1) An ambiguous attitude towards white Dutch: on one side respect because they considered the white Dutch culture superior, but on the other side resentment because of white Dutch supremacy.
- (2) Strongly adaptationally oriented and even "assimilationist": a strong preference for Dutch culture, values, norms, and preference of marriage to a white Dutch partner to obtain more social prestige and lighter skinned children.
- (3) Denial and shame towards the Indonesian part of their heritage
- (4) Superior attitude regarding Indonesians

¹⁸⁹ De Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel*, 26.

- (5) Strong sense of social status and racial notions in relation to other Indo-Europeans and totoks.¹⁹⁰

This *colonial complex* originates from the experiences of the Dutch colonial occupation of Indonesia as described in chapter three. It consists of the internalised ideal of white Dutch supremacy and superiority. Furthermore, De Vries states that this colonialist ideal still influences peoples' own behaviour and attitude but also of those around them.

Moreover, I add that this colonial complex has been reinforced by the strict assimilation policies in the Netherlands, as presented in the previous chapter. This reinforcement occurred in multiple ways. First, the Dutch assimilation policy for the Indo-Europeans idealised Dutch culture. By discouraging habits such as eating rice, the policy encouraged a disregarding attitude towards Indonesian culture.¹⁹¹ Asian habits were seen as undesirable as they would prevent the Indo-Europeans from becoming fully Dutch. Moreover, by presenting Dutch habits as the correct and desired way of living, Dutch culture was considered superior over Indonesian culture. In this way, Indo's were encouraged to disapprove of Asian habits and forget their Indonesian heritage. Second, the assimilation policy appealed to the already existing assimilationist attitude of the Indo-Europeans. De Vries finds that the assimilationist attitude, as noted in point two, was formed during the Dutch colonial occupation of Indonesia.¹⁹² Therefore, this attitude was already present. In this way, the Dutch assimilation policy required the Indo-Europeans to maintain the assimilationist attitude. Third, the assimilation policy also confirmed the racial comparison between totoks and Indo-Europeans as in the fifth point of De Vries' colonial complex. The Dutch insisted that the presence of the Indonesian heritage made Indos inherently less adaptable to Dutch culture. Indo's had to be re-socialised and disciplined to Dutch society in the Netherlands, whereas totoks were not subjected to any of these assimilation policies. In this way, racist ideologies as applied in the Dutch-Indies were again reinforced in the Netherlands.

This reinforcement of the colonial complex allows for Dutch society to maintain racism without being contested. I consider this a side effect of the strict assimilation policy. Due to the reinforcement of this colonial complex, Indo's still experience an assimilationist attitude and inferiority complex. The first generation taught their children to adjust to their new lives to extent of complete silence and inferiority.¹⁹³ This generation had experienced the Dutch colonial system and the Japanese occupation as described in chapter 3. More recently later generation Indo's are sharing their experience of assimilating into Dutch society. For example, in November 2019, the AD published an article about "De

¹⁹⁰ De Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel*, 27.

¹⁹¹ Captain, "Harmless Identities", 57.

¹⁹² De Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel*, 25.

¹⁹³ AD, *De ingetogen Indo*, November 19, 2019.

ingetogen Indo" (the reserved Indo)¹⁹⁴ it confirms the submissive attitude of the second-generation Indo-Europeans towards the white Dutch and acceptance of racist remarks: "I was called names on the schoolyard: 'Linda, peanut, poopchinese'. We remained silent and realized: we are guests in their country, so we must be humble."¹⁹⁵ Racist insults were accepted and as they considered themselves inferior to the Dutch. They considered themselves guest of the Dutch and therefore should not criticize the Dutch. The first generation taught their children to adjust to their new lives to extent of complete silence and inferiority.¹⁹⁶ This generation experienced the Dutch colonial system and the Japanese occupation as described in chapter 3. De Vries states that generally both the second and third generation struggle with conflict avoidance as a consequence.¹⁹⁷ In this way, the colonial complex leaves racism unchallenged and leaves racist concepts such as the "mongolenvlek" an uncontested racial marker.

4.3 Reconsidering "Mongolenvlek" on informational parenting websites

As established in chapter one, "mongol" is an insult in Dutch. It assumes that someone is retarded or stupid. The insult "mongol" origins from its earlier use as term for people with down syndrome. Because of this connotation, the term "mongolenvlek" is disliked. Therefore, a new term is introduced on ten of the fourteen studied websites. I argue that (1) the argument for disliking the term "mongolenvlek" and (2) the introduction of the term "archipelvlek" show a lack of historical awareness.

First, no historical awareness is shown regarding the racist origins of the "mongolenvlek". As demonstrated in chapter one, the racist terminology and assumptions are presented as uncontested knowledge. However, in chapter 2 I established that these racial terms and assumption origin in racial science which is based on socially constructed racial presumptions. Moreover, chapter three illustrates the violent and oppressive nature of systematic application of such racial prejudices. Taking these findings into consideration, none of these historical relationships and connotations are in some way presented on the informational parenting websites. Instead, the websites uncontestedly present that the name "mongolenvlek" comes its common prevalence in either people from Mongolia or of the Mongolian race. Moreover, a relationship between the presence of CDM and the geographical heritage of the child is highlighted. This reinforces the idea of CDM being a racial marker. Similarly, more than half of the posts highlight the heritage of their child to the presence of the spot. Thus,

¹⁹⁴ AD, *De Ingetogen Indo*.

¹⁹⁵ Dutch: "Op het schoolplein werd ik uitgescholden: 'Linda, pinda, poepchinesees'. Wij zwegen en beseften: we zijn te gast in hun land, dus we moeten ons nederig opstellen." Cited from AD, *De ingetogen Indo*.

¹⁹⁶ AD, *De Ingetogen Indo*.

¹⁹⁷ De Vries, *Indisch is een gevoel*, 321.

despite the name change from “mongolenvlek” to “archipelvlek”, the uncontested presentation of racial science will still reinforce racial thinking. Thus, no reflection concerning this relation is present.

Second, “Archipel” is a term used to refer to an island group or chain. Indonesia is part of such and archipel. Therefore, in Dutch historical context, the Dutch-Indies is also often referred to as the “Indische archipel.”¹⁹⁸ Consequently, the term “archipelvlek” suggests a connection between CDM and the Indo-European heritage. Thus, renaming the spot to “archipelvlek” could again reinforce its use as racial marker. However, the informational parenting websites make no such assumption as only one website explains the origin of the new name. The website *alles over kinderen* states that the name “archipelvlek” stems from the fact that the blue spots look similar to island groups.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the argument of CDM looking like island groups is not incorrect, but it suggests that CDM is special in this, which is not the case. Many skin conditions present themselves in clustered spots. Moreover, the origin of the name is actually not sure as the paragraph ends with: “This is probably the origin of the name.”²⁰⁰ The use of “probably” (“waarschijnlijk” in Dutch) shows that this origin is not confirmed. In this way, the argument of the similarity to island groups is an assumption while the actual origin of the new name is unknown. In this way, the introduction of the term “archipelvlek” shows a lack of historical awareness of Dutch colonial history.

4.4 (Un)remembering Dutch Colonial history

I argue, that this racist blindness found on the parenting websites, is due to the systematic absence of public reflection on Dutch colonial history. However, the urge to change the term “mongolenvlek” does show reflection in some sense, but this reflection remains at the surface. It is superficial as it only considers the contemporary problematic connotations of “mongol” and does not consider its racial connotation. Simultaneously, while urging to change the terminology, the websites reinforce the use of CDM as uncontested racial marker. The websites present no indications of a reflection on the racial assumptions and terminology that are used.

In the article *Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations* (2012) Pamela Pattynama calls this historical ignorance “colonial amnesia.”²⁰¹ Pattynama used the term colonial amnesia to refer to the absence of colonial history in the Dutch cultural memory. However, Paul Doolan argues in *Collective memory and the Dutch Indies* (2021), that “amnesia” is not the right term to describe the

¹⁹⁸ For example: publications by Kleiweg de Zwaan and A.B. Meyer cited in chapter 2.

¹⁹⁹ “Archipelvlek of Mongolenvlek bij Baby’s.” Alles Over Kinderen. Last modified January 16, 2023, accessed on January 29, 2024. <https://www.allesoverkinderen.nl/baby/archipelvlek-of-mongolenvlek-bij-babys/>.

²⁰⁰ Dutch: “Waarschijnlijk komt de naam hieruit voort.” “Archipelvlek of mongolenvlek bij baby’s”, [allesoverkinderen.nl](https://www.allesoverkinderen.nl)

²⁰¹ Pamela Pattynama, “Cultural memory and Indo-Dutch identity formations,” in *Post-Colonial Immigrants and Identity Formations in the Netherlands* edited by Ulbe Bosma. (Amsterdam University Press, 2021): 175-192.

state of colonial memory. On the one hand, Doolan argues that “members of Dutch society knew nothing about decolonization, or had only the haziest notions. Consequently, they could not forget it.” This phenomenon Dutch people not knowing their colonial history can also be found in Indo-European narratives describing their first years in the Netherlands. De Vries finds that despite being the largest group to have immigrated to the Netherlands, people find that the white Dutch people know so little of the Dutch-Indies. To illustrate this, she uses the example of Indo being often confused for Indonesian or even Indian.²⁰² This confirms Doolan’s argument that white Dutch people never properly knew about colonial Indonesia and its wars. Therefore, instead of “amnesia,” Doolan argues for the term “unremembered”. He compares the “unremembered” state of cultural memory to the members of the body. In this context, remembering would mean reattaching the members: “Collective memory is the process or result of individual members of a group remembering.”²⁰³ In this sense “unremembering” means to not reattach. The members remain but disconnected and concealed from the body: “Unremembered in the sense of not entirely forgotten but placed in cold storage.”²⁰⁴ On the other hand, Doolan states that “those who experience the trauma of decolonization did remember decolonization. We cannot speak of a society forgetting, when some individuals still remember.”²⁰⁵ The individuals who still remember are the people who have experienced these events. So, on the one hand, as established in the introduction, the collective Dutch colonial past is animated by the *imagined intimacy*. This animated past is one of myths and idyll and the “unfairness” of losing “ons Indië.”²⁰⁶ This past has been created by cultural artefacts such as *Oeroeg* and has settled in Dutch collective memory as a proper history. This includes the notion of *Tempo Doeloe*. This past never existed but is now remembered as if it existed. Returning to analogy of the body, this past can be considered a phantom pain. Phantom pain is the event of feeling pain in a limb that is not present often due to amputation. Similarly, Dutch colonial memory is present through sensations such as *Tempo Doeloe* but the historical awareness not actually there. On the other hand, Dutch colonial history is “unremembered” and is felt by the Indo-European community through the colonial complex. In this way, Dutch colonial history in Indonesia remained present but disconnected from Dutch cultural memory.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I reconnected and reconsidered the empirical findings of chapter one to the historical chapters two and three. Here I demonstrated how racial science and colonial history are still

²⁰² De Vries, *Indisch is een Gevoel*, 13.

²⁰³ Doolan, *Collective Memory*, 16.

²⁰⁴ Doolan, Paul. *Collective Memory and the Dutch East Indies. Heritage and Memory Studies*. (Amsterdam University Press, 2021): 20.

²⁰⁵ Doolan, *Collective Memory*, 18.

²⁰⁶ Pattynama, “Cultural memory”, 183.

relevant today. I showed that, as seen in chapter three, “blauwe” was a slur at first, but it now has been reclaimed by the Indo community. The colour blue and “blauw” have become motifs that represent Indo-European content. Moreover, we found that CDM as a racial marker has been internalised by Dutch Indo families. This is because of the presence of CDM now indicates that the new-born child is a “real Indo.” It has become a mark of a distinct colonial heritage in a predominantly white Dutch society. The origin of the urge to identify differently from the white Dutch identity can be found in the colonial complex. De Vries articulated that the colonial complex of the Indo-Europeans consists of a strong sense of racial differences, difference in social status, and a strong assimilationist attitude. This assimilationist attitude was maintained and encouraged by the strict assimilation policy used to integrate the Indos. Next, I reconsidered the racial information presented on the informational parenting websites. Here I establish an historical blindness in both the presentation of racist thought in the form of uncontested knowledge and the urge to change “mongolenvlek” to “archipelvlek.” Lastly, I demonstrated how this historical blindness is caused by the practice of unremembering as established by Paul Doolan. This practice of unremembering has provided for the persistence of racial thought and its racial markers as uncontested knowledge.

Conclusion

In this thesis I answered the question: What is the meaning of the “mongolenvlek” and its association with Indonesian heritage in the context of Dutch parenting websites and Dutch colonial history? To answer this question, I argued for the connection between three things.

- (1) CDM
- (2) Slur
- (3) Identity

First, I established the concept of the “mongolenvlek” presented on informational parenting websites. Initially, I noted that the term “mongolenvlek” is deemed uncomfortable as it includes the term “mongool” which is a Dutch insult. I also noted that the blue spots are relatively unknown which leads to misunderstandings between parents and healthcare providers. Moreover, by using the theoretical framework of *knuffelracisme* and *imagined intimacy*, I was able to identify implicit racial terminologies and assumptions. These racial connotations originate from the racial categorisations in which the European “discoverer” of the blue spots operated. The concept of the “Mongolian race” established by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, became the pivotal to the articulation of the “mongolenvlek”. Moreover, I found that these racial terminologies and assumptions were accepted by its target audience. I established this through an analysis of three forums found on one of the parenting websites. More than half of all the comments described a relation between the presence of CDM and the non-Dutch heritage of either the parents or the child. This shows that the presence of CDM is related to non-Dutch heritage.

Second, in chapter two, I connected the notions of identity to CDM by exploring the history of racial science. Here I established the origin of the racial demarcations suggested by the informational parenting websites. Moreover, I found that these demarcations were constructed on the ideas and assumptions residing in a *racialised common sense*. This *racialised common sense* are socially constructed assumptions and ideas about populations created during the first encounters of European travellers and native peoples. These assumptions guided the “trained eye” of the racial researchers, and they were used to argue for the racial demarcations that could not be confirmed by the metrical evidence. Similarly, the “mongolenvlek” was found in many populations that were not considered part of the “Mongolian race”. Discussion on the use of the terminology of “mongolian” occurred, but the idea that the blue spots were a marker of race remained uncontested because they rarely occurred in European children.

Third, in chapter three, I established a connection between the racial science that established the “mongolenvlek” and the colonial context that formed it into a “betrayal” or race. When arriving in

the Netherlands, the Indo-Europeans were called “Blauwen” or even “the blue colony” by the Dutch. I found that this was due to the fact that many Indo children had CDM. In this way, CDM became a marker of an identity. In this chapter demonstrated the history of demarcating human identities based on physical appearance. Further understanding the history of Indo-Europeans showed that these racial identities were imposed and maintained through oppression and violence. Moreover, I demonstrated the racist and oppressive nature of the assimilation policy that was constructed by the Dutch government to re-socialise and discipline the Indo-Europeans after repatriation. In this way, racial identities were crucial in the history of the Indo-Europeans.

In chapter four, I reconnect the findings of chapter two and three to the notion of identity. Here I find CDM to a tool of self-identification and confirmation of heritage in the Indo-European community. Moreover, I find that CDM was first imposed as a racial marker and then internalised. This internalisation happened due to the colonial complex in which the Indo-Europeans internalised white superiority. This idea white superiority reinforced through the strict assimilation policies where Indo-Europeans were “disciplined” and “re-socialised” to become fully Dutch citizens. In practice, Dutch social workers were called to teach the children from the colonies how to be Dutch. In this way *Imagined Intimacy* was reinforced and operated. Moreover, I argued, this *imagined intimacy* persists of the collective “unremembering” of Dutch colonial history. Even though the history is remembered, it is not connected as a member of the Dutch colonial body of history. This explains why the racial and colonial assumptions on the informational parenting websites remain uncontested. The audience is not aware of the “unremembered” part of Dutch colonial history. Considering and acknowledging these unremembered parts would help in creating a more thoughtful and inclusive healthcare.

Thus, through the case study of the “mongolenvlek” we learn that racial markers originating from racial science persist in contemporary Dutch society. Taking the perspective of the Indo-European highlights the presence of colonial legacies in Dutch postcolonial society and helps identifying “unremembered” history. This conclusion initiates the discussion of how “post” Dutch postcolonial society actually is if colonial legacies like racial markers remain and persist uncontested. It shows that even though colonial Indonesia no longer exists, certain colonial attitudes remain. The Dutch-Indies are history but remain relevant to our current society through these unquestioned colonial legacies. Furthermore, the case study of the “mongolenvlek” shows that these unquestioned colonial legacies are also present in medicine. In this way, colonialism also affects medical care as the idea of the racialised body persists. Thus, forgetting colonialism does not mean that it disappears.

As seen in the thesis, Indo authors have written about the racial system of Dutch colonialism and ethnic identity forming of Indo-Europeans. However, no case studies had previously been done on the historical significance of Indo-European racial markers. For further research it could be interesting to see how this supposedly successfully integrated minority further navigates Dutch postcolonial

society. Interesting case studies could be on the idea of the “typical Indo nose” or Indo-Europeans being referred to as “pinda’s.” Considering such remaining racial markers opens up the commonly avoided discussion of race in contemporary Dutch society. This is an important endeavour as discussing race is the first step to discarding the current unquestioned racialised lens through which we view the body and the world.

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