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**'Wilskracht, durf en onverpoosden ijver' : Charlotte Jacobs (1847-1916),  
eerste vrouwelijke apotheker in Nederland en Nederlands-Indië**  
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## Summary

CHARLOTTE JACOBS (1847-1916), 'COURAGE, WILLPOWER AND UNTIRING DILIGENCE.'

Charlotte Jacobs was the first female Dutch pharmacist. She worked as a pharmacist and successfully owned a public pharmacy in Batavia in the Dutch East Indies for more than 30 years. At that point in time (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) she was the only pharmacist of that gender in the Dutch East Indies. Charlotte was the older sister of Aletta Jacobs, who was the first female physician in the Netherlands and a spirited advocate for women's suffrage.

Charlotte was born in Sappemeer on 13 February 1847 to Abraham Jacobs (1817-1881), a non-academically educated village doctor, and Anna de Jongh (1817-1887). She was the fifth of eleven children. After her younger sister Aletta, Charlotte was the second woman in the Netherlands to complete an academic course of study. Even though the fact that Abraham Jacobs was Jewish did not play a significant role in the upbringing of his children, their Jewish background is instrumental in understanding why his daughters managed to enter higher education.

Jewish culture has a strong intellectual tradition. *Lehren* and *Lernen* are key concepts in Jewish society, which may explain the fact that a Jewish background is often mentioned in feminist studies. Generally speaking there was a lack of opportunities for women to receive further education, though Jewish girls seemed to be the exception to this rule. This led to a supposed overrepresentation of Jewish women in further and higher education towards the end of the nineteenth century.

After primary school, girls from well-to-do bourgeoisie families could attend so-called French schools to receive general education in preparation for their future roles as mothers and wives. Girls from lower social circles could go to so-called sewing and knitting schools after primary school, or stay at home to help their mothers with domestic duties in anticipation of a suitable marriage candidate. Marriage was seen as a woman's 'natural' destiny. Women working outside the home with the purpose of earning their own living was not common. A woman's place was at the home, to manage the household and raise children. Looking back, it is beyond doubt that women like Charlotte and Aletta can be seen as 'pioneers,' as 'trailblazers.'

The 1863 Dutch Secondary Education Act, with the HBS (Higher Civic School) as its crowning achievement, did little to change the disadvantaged position of girls.

The HBS was meant for boys, aiming to prepare them for an active life in trade and industry. The equivalent for girls, the MSM followed by MMS (secondary school for girls) was established in 1867. An MMS diploma allowed girls to attend certain lectures at university to obtain a Secondary Education diploma in order to become a teacher. The MMS, however, was not a triumph for the emancipation of women. With its focus on the general development of girls in preparation for their future task as wives and mothers, the curriculum of the MMS did little to advance gender equality. In its nearly one hundred years of existence, the MMS has never been able to offer students the prospect of an academic degree.

The fact that Charlotte Jacobs' famous sister Aletta was able to follow a study program without adequate pre-education was the result of a personal exemption from the Dutch home secretary, Thorbecke. When her sister Charlotte wanted to follow a study program several years later, such exemptions were no longer granted. She had no choice but to prepare for the university entrance exam through self-study. In 1874, she passed the apprentice pharmacist exam in Leeuwarden. In 1875 and 1876 she attended classes at the HBS in Sappemeer, and in 1877 she took the university entrance exam in Leiden. She enrolled at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at Groningen University and obtained the Assistant Pharmacist diploma in 1879. Next, she went on to study in both Groningen and in Amsterdam, and in 1881 she took the pharmacist state exam in Amsterdam, which consisted of a theoretical and a practical section. The Dutch pharmaceutical, male-dominated world responded in a positive yet reserved manner. Since the first girl had passed the apprentice pharmacist exam in 1868, a woman in the pharmacy was no longer an unfamiliar sight, and this was generally regarded as a favourable development. Fellow-pharmacists expressed their doubts, though, as to whether a woman could also be a supervisor in a pharmacy; 'only time would tell'.

The first profession for girls with some status was that of apprentice pharmacist. The Industrieschool voor Meisjes (Industrial School for Girls), which was founded in Amsterdam in 1865, started offering training opportunities for this position in 1866. The position of Apprentice Pharmacist started off as a typical example of a male profession as the diploma opened up opportunities to become a full-fledged pharmacist through the exams of assistant pharmacist. The introduction of the Medical Act of 1878 put a stop to this and Pharmacy became an academic course of study and 'Pharmacist' a protected title. Allowing girls to become assistant pharmacists turned out to be an unexpected success, albeit with an unintentional effect. Because of the large influx of girls into this profession, the male apprentice pharmacist gradually disappeared completely, as it reduced the status of the profession since it had become 'a woman's job.'

Charlotte Jacobs also obtained her pharmacy diploma through the above-mentioned assistant pharmacist track. She only did so, however, once her family no longer made any demands on her. In the literature available, Charlotte Jacobs is depicted as a woman who focused mainly on reaching her goal of economic independence and who had to overcome some obstacles on the way. Yet at the same time we are presented with a woman who initially adapted to the mores of the nineteenth century. As was expected of her, the desire for study and (independent) work was always put on the back burner when family obligations like nursing her ill sister or running her unmarried brother's household demanded her attention.

Shortly before her graduation in 1881, her father passed away. As a result, her need to find a job became more urgent. Charlotte accepted, though reluctantly, a position as a second pharmacist at Het Algemeen Ziekenhuis Utrecht (General Hospital Utrecht). It was a job that she did not really enjoy which was presumably due to the demands placed on the second pharmacist that were not particularly attractive to an unmarried woman. In 1884 Charlotte resigned her post at the hospital and went to the Dutch East Indies where she joined her brothers Julius Karel, Simon, Johan Rudolf and Herman, who had all pursued careers in the army, and her sister Frederika. Within a short period of time Charlotte had the good fortune to be able to start working as a supervisor in her colleague Betting's pharmacy, the *Javasche Apotheek* in Batavia. After having worked there for over six years, she opened her own pharmacy in the upscale Menteng district in Batavia: the *Nederlandsche Apotheek* (Dutch Pharmacy). For nearly thirty years, she managed the *Nederlandsche Apotheek* successfully as an independent pharmacist, which can be seen as a major achievement given the limited opportunities for women at the time.

The history of pharmacies in Batavia during the period in question shows that especially those pharmacists who cooperated with others in a limited liability company, cooperative association, or other partnership were successful. The reason for this can be found in the fact that pharmacists in the East Indies faced far larger investments than their counterparts in the Netherlands. They were legally required to keep much larger stocks of medicines, enough to last a year. Also, when purchasing medicines, the pharmacists were not only obliged to adhere to the compulsory list of medicines from the prevailing Dutch pharmacopoeia, they also had to take into account the prescription behaviour of European doctors working in the East. In addition, laboratories had to be set up in such a way that medicines described in the *Pharmacopoea Belgica* could be prepared at all times. A self-employed pharmacist who wanted to take leave to visit the Netherlands was obliged to hire a fully qualified colleague as a replacement. This may also have been one of

the reasons why Charlotte Jacobs never took leave to visit the Netherlands during the nearly thirty years that she worked in the Dutch East Indies.

Charlotte Jacobs prided herself on the fact that she ran her pharmacy with an exclusively female staff, which in the early years she mainly recruited in the Netherlands through advertisements in the *Pharmaceutisch Weekblad* (Pharmaceutical Weekly). The 'women's cause' - women's suffrage first - that her sister Aletta fought for so passionately in the Netherlands would not leave Charlotte untouched either. In 1908 she and her friend, writer Marie C. Kooij-van Zeggelen, established a section of the *Vereniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht* (Association for Women's Suffrage) in the Dutch East Indies. The primary objective of her initiative was to bring the fight for suffrage in the Netherlands to the attention of the European - or to be more precise Dutch - women in the colony. The association grew into an organization that set up welfare projects for indigenous women in many places in the archipelago, but at the same time it aimed at preparing European women for taking part in clubs, associations and other forms of social life. A report written in 1917 states about this matter: 'Teach women to think logically and train them in issues of topical importance insofar as we, who were left out of virtually everything, could possibly do so'. European women, who usually played an inconspicuous role in the colony and were defined by their husband's position, were awakened from their mostly lethargic existence thanks to Charlotte Jacobs' initiative.

From 1908 to 1911 and from 1912 to 1913, Charlotte Jacobs served as the president of the Dutch East Indian section of the *Vereniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht*. During her presidency, membership grew exponentially and in a relatively short period of time many new sections were established all over the country. Nevertheless, Charlotte was always regarded as an outsider by her peers, even though her years in the Dutch East Indies spanned a period of almost thirty years. Single, working European women were supposed to conduct themselves according to the bourgeois standards in their home countries. This meant that women in the colony ruled the private domain, which comprised housekeeping, servants, and children. The fact that Charlotte was not married and - as far as can be determined - not in a relationship made her a conspicuous figure among the elite group of Europeans. Single, working women, especially those who were past the marriageable age, had a low social status in the East Indies. It is interesting to investigate whether this was also the case for women with an academic degree and who ran a successful and respectable company such as a pharmacy.

The ethical movement, the result of a change of course in colonial politics that got under way at around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, found an audience in a small but growing Dutch coterie of new-fangled socialists and social democrats to which Charlotte also belonged. She subscribed to the ideas of the ethical movement and felt encouraged to start initiatives that were in line with the ideas of the Javanese governor's daughter Kartini (1879-1904). Kartini was a strong advocate for the emancipation of women and the elevation of the Javanese population. The foundation of the above-mentioned Dutch East Indian section of the Vereeniging Voort Vrouwenkiesrecht (Association for Women's Suffrage) in 1908 can be considered as one such initiative. She also set up an association for the foundation of the S.O.V.I.A. a Scholarship Fund for the Education of Female Indigenous Doctors (Studiefonds voor Opleiding van Vrouwelijke Inlandsche Artsen) a scholarship fund for talented indigenous girls who wanted to study at the S.T.O.V.I.A, the boys-only educational institution for indigenous physicians (School Tot Opleiding van Inlandsche Artsen). Girls were not barred from attending the S.T.O.V.I. but they had to bear the costs of the study program themselves and, unlike the boys, they did not have a guaranteed prospect of paid work upon completion of the programme. Jacobs' initiative was driven by her conviction that Javanese women's lives were at risk when assisted in labour by indigenous midwives - the *doekoens baji* - and that they would be better off when attended by Western-trained female indigenous doctors. Besides support, Charlotte's initiative also invited criticism because many critics believed her plans to be far too premature and not well thought-out. Eventually, S.O.V.I.A never saw the light of day but in later years her ideas did result in the foundation of a midwife- and nurse school for indigenous girls.

In 1913, Charlotte Jacobs decided to return to the Netherlands. She could not find a female successor as there were only two other Dutch female pharmacists working in the Dutch East Indies around the time of her departure. As a result she decided to turn the Nederlandsche Apotheek into a limited liability company and appointed a (male) director. The final years of her life she spent in The Hague, where she passed away in 1916 following a serious illness. In her will she designated a large part of her assets to a foundation that should allow girls to follow an academic study program. The indigenous girls were also explicitly mentioned in her will. The *Charlotte Jacobs Studiefonds* (The Charlotte Jacobs Scholarship Fund) still exists and provides an annual grant for 30-40 female students to enable them to study at a Dutch university. The fund is currently controlled and managed by members of the VVAO (an association of women with a higher education degree).

The theoretical framework of this research is based on the vision of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) of the historicity of man. In *Les mots et les choses*, he states that in the nineteenth century, a 'naked' form of human historicity came to light - the fact that man as such was exposed to the events. Because man lives, speaks, and works, he, in his own Being, becomes completely interwoven with histories that are not subordinate to him or not correlate with him, says Foucault. As a result, man has the free choice to develop several or multiple versions of himself, depending on the context in which he finds himself and the goals he wants to achieve. Among other things, Foucault is the inventor of the concept of discourse, a specific linguistic structure of assertions, assumptions, and suppositions, which was especially embraced by feminists as an analytical category to find out how and in what context the meanings of masculinity and femininity are established. Foucault's work encourages a different way of thinking about social structures, such as equality and difference. The concept of difference - giving meaning to words and things based on a contrast, antithesis, or opposition that may or may not be explicit - is a recurring element in Foucault's work. The starting point in this regard is that a positive connotation always relies on a negative one; that they relate to one another in a dependent way, with their relationship being hierarchical, in the sense that they derive their meaning from one another, and the first always has priority over the second, which is presented as 'weaker.' This explains why gender research uses this category of analysis; the equality-versus-difference debate always revolves around the question why women are excluded from certain things. Feminists want to show the different ways in which women are oppressed as well as their resistance against them. Foucault shows that this resistance is not static, but that it can play a productive role in the life of man as he builds a relationship with himself based on the social, political, and personal preferences that are intertwined with him. As a result, man forms himself as a subject. This fact implies a different way of historiography. Using the life story of Charlotte Jacobs, this research shows how women in the nineteenth century changed the prevailing meanings of gender in response to the opposition evoked by their presence in the cultural setting in which the masculine was the norm. They transformed their female identity to a form in which they retained their credibility both for themselves and for the public.