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Vaders en dochters. Molukse historie in de Nederlandse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw en haar weerklank in Indonesië

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Summary

Fathers and daughters

Moluccan history in nineteenth-century Dutch literature and its resonance in Indonesia

Apostles of Enlightenment

In chapter one of this thesis the heritage of Enlightenment in early nineteenth-century colonial policy in the Dutch East Indies is outlined.

At the end of the eighteenth century the Enlightenment brought about a fundamental change of view regarding colonial affairs. Notably the third edition of *Histoire des deux Indes* (*History of the two Indies*), edited by G.Th. Raynal in collaboration with D. Diderot and published in 1780, advocated a reconsideration of political, economic, social and cultural relations between the colonizers and the colonized. This revolutionary international best-seller was soon available in a Dutch translation and contributed to the emergence of ‘enlightened’ concepts among the Dutch Patriots of how the administration of the Dutch Indies was to be organized after the demise of the Dutch East India Company (VOC).

It wasn’t until after the turbulence of the Batavian-French era had subsided that these ideas could be put to the test in the Dutch Indies. British and French-allied governors had laid out the groundwork for a centralized colonial state when the Kingdom of the United Netherlands regained power and G.A.G.Ph. baron van der Capellen was installed as Governor-General in 1816. He advocated the prosperity and welfare of the indigenous population, but his regulation of land tenure on Java did not result in a flourishing agriculture or sufficient revenues for the state. Van der Capellens proposal to abolish the monopoly which was still operative in the Moluccan clove trade, met with disapproval of King Willem I who unequivocally prioritized the Dutch commercial interests. The experiments with enlightened liberalisation came to a halt and gave way to the implementation of the *Cultuurstelsel* (System of Cultivation), a government policy requiring a percentage of land and labour to be used for the cultivation of export crops.

In the meantime the inflow of Dutch public servants and other colonists created a

civil society in the Dutch Indies which fostered an unprecedented interest in the archipelago and its indigenous populations. Since 1838 the *Tijdschrift voor Neêrland's Indië* (*Magazine for the Dutch Indies*), initiated and directed by W.G. baron van Hoëvell, published travel reports and a variety of scientific information and literary articles. As Van Hoëvell and his circle hoped to build and educate an articulate civil society, they are aptly labelled 'apostles of Enlightenment' by historian A. Goss. In 1848 a public meeting was organized in Batavia, in response to the preparation of a constitutional reform that was to lay the basis of Dutch parliamentary democracy. It addressed the King with a request to promote the training of civil servants in the Indies itself. Thereupon the then governor-general barred further meetings and threatened any opposition with dire consequences. Van Hoëvell returned to the Netherlands to become a member of parliament, while the empowerment of civil society in the Dutch Indies was brought to a stand still.

This study examines how Dutch colonial fiction interacted with the rise and fall of enlightened idealism in this period. In the chapters two, three and four of this thesis, three historical romances, varying from a narrative poem to a short story and a historical novel, are extensively researched and analyzed.

Historical romances

The authors of these romances aspired to bring an enlightened representation of historical events in the Moluccas to the Dutch public.

Jan Fredrik Helmers (1767-1812), owner of a masonry firm in Amsterdam, achieved renown as the poet of *De Hollandsche natie* (*The Dutch nation*), an abundant eulogy of the virtuous ancestors who forged a national identity in their fight against Spanish rule and made Holland a world power in the seventeenth century. The fourth chant of his tribute sings the praise of Dutch navigation, particularly to the East Indies, in several narrative episodes. One of these episodes is the fictional *History of Egeron and Adeka*, situated on the Banda islands at an indefinite moment in history when supposedly the first Portuguese ships and, shortly thereafter, the Dutch arrived.

Maurits Ver Huell (1787-1860), born of a prominent family in the county of Zutphen, made his career in the navy. As a naval officer he joined the fleet which sailed from 1815 until 1819 to the Dutch Indies in order to re-establish power from the British authorities, to the Kingdom of the United Netherlands. There he witnessed the uprising on the Ambon islands which took place from May to November 1817. Since his naval career floundered after this journey, he accepted a position at the navy wharf in Rotterdam and in an attempt to rehabilitate himself published the travelogue *Herinneringen van eene reis naar de Oost-Indiën* (*Memories of a journey to the East-Indies*) in 1835-1836. In addition, his memories of the Moluccan uprising inspired him to write *Christina Martha*, a historical romance which he read out to the Rotterdam department of the *Hollandsche Maatschappij van Fraaije Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Dutch Society of Fine Arts and Sciences) in 1837.

Willem Leonard Ritter (1799-1862) went to the Dutch Indies as a lower rank army surgeon. In 1822 he was employed as a civil servant on the west coast of Borneo (Kali-

mantan), and later, after an administrative intervention by the then governor-general, in Padang on the west coast of Sumatra. After he was forced to resign in 1837, Ritter settled down in Batavia and tried to make a living by putting his administrative and writing skills at the disposal of the general public. Van Hoëvell published Ritter's report of an explorative journey to Aceh in the *Tijdschrift voor Neêrland's Indië* (*Magazine for the Dutch Indies*) and encouraged him to write other feature articles, both from his in-depth knowledge of Borneo's west coast and from his personal memories. Between 1838 and 1845 Ritter wrote about twenty narratives for various magazines, enriching his repertoire with historical romances. His most ambitious narrative of this period was *Toeloecabesie*, a comprehensive novel about the war between the chiefdom Hitu, situated on the northern peninsula of Ambon, and the Dutch East India Company. It was published as a serial in the *Tijdschrift voor Neêrland's Indië* in 1844, and in a compilation of his stories in 1845. In 1861 it was reprinted in the Netherlands, this time as a separate novel called *Vrijheid en dwang* (*Liberty and coercion*).

Fathers and daughters

Although *History of Egeron and Adeka*, *Christina Martha* and *Toeloecabesie* differ in literary form, there is a remarkable resemblance in dramatic content. The main character in each story is a young woman on the verge of adulthood, next to her aged father. They share a tragic fate which is intended to invoke a horrified and compassionate response of the audience and the readers.

In the historically unfounded story of *Helmers*, Adeka is the only daughter of Egeron, King of Banda. Her young and militant husband Afron, a prince from Timor, is treacherously killed by newly arrived Portuguese who then incarcerate King Egeron and ransack the islands. A loyal servant frees Egeron, who has lost his eyesight in prison and is doomed to wander in the wilderness, escorted by his caring daughter, like Oedipus and Antigone. After Adeka is captured and killed, Egeron unexpectedly meets the Dutch admiral Van Neck, who indignantly vows to avenge the Portuguese tyranny. After an easy victory Van Neck intends to restore Egeron to the throne. However, the old man yearns to be united with Adeka in the grave and before dying gratefully bestows his land and people to the Dutch.

In his travelogue *Ver Huell* introduces the historical *Christina Martha* as the daughter of Paulus Triago [Tiahahu], head of Abubu, a village on Nusalaut. According to hearsay, she did accompany her father during the uprising as his weapon bearer. After the rebellion was suppressed, *Ver Huell* met both of them as prisoners of war. He attended the interrogation and subsequent execution of the father and was later responsible for *Christina Martha* when she was exiled to Java and subsequently died aboard his ship.

In the historical romance *Christina Martha* *Ver Huell* fictionalized the events prior to the arrest of father and daughter. As Paulus Triago is summoned to participate in an uprising on the neighbouring island Saparua, *Christina Martha* decides to accompany him. She takes part in the war dances and inspires the insurgents by her noble and

militant attitude. Her love interest is the equally noble and militant Latumahina, but this provokes the envy of the ignoble commander Thomas Matulesia [Matulesy], who arranges the arrest of Latumahina by a Dutch patrol. Shortly thereafter the insurgents are defeated by the Dutch military and Matulesia is handed over to the Dutch by Christina Martha in retribution for his treason of Latumahina. After both her father and her groom-to-be are sentenced to capital punishment, Christina Martha loses the will to live, languishes aboard the ship that will take her into exile, and after her demise is buried at sea.

The historical novel *Toeloecabesie* is largely based on Valentijns comprehensive work *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (*Old and New East-Indies*, 1724-1726). Telukabesi was a Hituese commander who barely escaped when, after a three-year siege, the Dutch military took the stronghold Kapahaha by surprise. His second wife was killed during the assault and Valentijn falsely asserts that by interfering she made her husband's escape possible. The episode inspired Ritter to compose a novel about Telukabesi's fictitious wife Si Tidja who is resolved to stand by her man in his battle with the Dutch East India Company. Si Tidja is the foster-daughter of the aged warrior Patiwani who has found her as a child, tied to a barrel adrift in the sea, and has raised her as his own. She is in an identity crisis, caused by dreamlike memories of a happy childhood in the loving care of a Dutch father and Portuguese-Indian mother. Her biological father is Jacob Verheiden, portrayed by Ritter as a Byronic hero, seeking a solitary existence ever since he lost his wife and daughter by shipwreck. Verheiden commands the ultimate assault on Kapahaha and, taking a shot at Telukabesi, hits his wife Si Tidja who resolutely sacrifices her life to protect her husband. In their last moments together father and daughter recognize each other and Si Tidja's identity crisis is resolved by Verheidens assurance that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Si Tidja's foster-father Patiwani by then has already passed away after a deadly skirmish at sea and Telukabesi, who eventually decides to surrender, is sentenced and executed by the implacable governor Demmer.

The indigenous fathers in these historical romances can be said to represent an elite which under conditions of colonial supremacy is unable to ensure the security, prosperity and welfare of the younger generations. As a result, the daughters represent a population liable to be victimized. Even if Christina Martha and Si Tidja show an inclination to militancy, which is not in line with the contemporary view of womens' nature, they are incapable of taking control of their fate. However, despite their grim outcome the stories of Helmers and Ver Huell offer some perspective of change in colonial relations. Helmers presents the virtuous admiral Van Neck as Egerons successor, while Ver Huell in the last episodes of his historical romance introduces the *radja* (village head) of Booi, who proudly vouches his allegiance to the King of the United Netherlands, as a substitute for Christina Martha's father. Ritters story expresses less confidence in an enlightened colonial future: Verheiden, Si Tidja's father, succeeds in giving his dying daughter peace of mind, but as a military employee he has to carry out the self-serving and rigid power politics of the Dutch East India Company which are incompatible with Enlightenment ideals.

Narrative arguments

Despite their dramatic resemblance the historical romances of Helmers, Ver Huell and Ritter convey disparate ideas about colonial relations and enlightened colonial policy.

Helmers pictures Banda as a scene of idealized pastoral innocence in classicist garments. In the scheme of philosophical history, pasturage represents an early stage in the history of mankind, prior to societies based on agriculture and civilizations engaged in commerce. His story highlights the contrast between the tyrannical Portuguese who come to Asia to plunder and to enforce their religion, and the enlightened Dutch who just come to trade and therefore are welcomed as liberators. This narrative argument relied on the thesis of Raynal and Diderot in *Histoire des deux mondes*, stating that the Dutch opened up a new era in colonial history. However, Helmers ignored their stern disapproval of the Dutch monopolistic policies which rapidly invoked as much fear and hatred as Portuguese tyranny did before. He also ignored Banda's history as it was known at the time: the establishment of a Dutch trading agency on Banda, the enforcement of monopoly contracts, the elimination of British competition, the depopulation of Banda Besar by governor-general J.P. Coen and the building of a nutmeg-plantation economy using slave labour. Helmers kept silent on the subject of colonial policies which were debated in the Batavian-French era by Patriots and their political opponents. Since he could not identify with any plebeian revolutionary movement and was repulsed by the bellicose aftermath of the French revolution, he tried to uphold his moral integrity and innocence by rising above the political strife of his time in philosophical reflections. Thus, dazzled by his belief in the virtuousness of the Dutch ancestors and the enlightened creed that the relation between a civilized nation and a pastoral society should be based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, Helmers located his narrative on Banda, probably the most inappropriate historical setting he could have chosen.

The historical romance *Christina Martha* was presented to an audience some twenty years after the uprising on Saparua. In the meantime Van der Capellen had ordained measures to improve living conditions on the Ambon islands, but his proposal to abolish the clove monopoly had been banned by the King. In his romance Ver Huell put forward his views on enlightened colonial relations while refraining from any reference to Van der Capellens enlightened administration or to the current colonial policy. Being a zealous dilettante in natural history and philosophy, he positioned his narrative as a study of mankind in a distant part of the world. He suggested that the impetuous Moluccan uprising was sparked by the demeaning and embarrassing treatment of a prominent inhabitant of Saparua by a local Dutch official. The story of *Christina Martha* was intended to remind the audience that the inhabitants of the Dutch Indies should not be treated as slaves, but as fellow human beings, blessed with the divine light of reason and justly entitled to affection and respect with regard to their disposition and customs. Indigenous society, as Ver Huell saw it, was in a transitional stage between an ancestral past of savage customs, such as headhunting and cannibalism, and a harmonious agricultural society. The advancement of civilization is represented in characters such as the *radja* of Booi, a pillar of colonial administration, and *Christina Martha*, who distances

herself from ancestral superstition and embraces the religious teachings of the Dutch missionary Joseph Kam. The story conveys the authors' confidence that Dutch colonial rule and missionary work play an important part in furthering and speeding up the process of civilization.

Ritter lacked this confidence. He had administrative experience, but as he was no longer active as an official, he felt free to question historical colonial relations. Like Ver Huell in *Christina Martha*, Ritter describes an indigenous society in a transitional stage between ancestral savagery and burgeoning civilization in the historical novel *Toeloeccabesie*. On the one hand he depicts human sacrifice as an indispensable part of the traditional ancestral oath before waging a war, on the other hand he portrays Patiwani and Telukabesi as impassioned supporters of political autonomy and religious liberty. While in Valentijns account of colonial history and in previous Dutch historiography, the Hituese, and other Muslim elites in the region, are characterized as unreliable allies and deceitful opponents, Ritter suggests that the Hituese were, in principle, fighting a just cause, as did the Dutch in their own struggle for independence and religious liberty. In his view the subjugation of Hitu and the abolition of its government by the Dutch East India Company was a blatant injustice to an ally which had been among the most loyal in the region. Since the Company had alienated the Hituese by its self-serving policies and the abuse of power by its officials, the civilizing prospects of Dutch colonial rule and missionary work were doubtful. Ritter's narrative suggests that a common ground between the colonized and the colonizing power is to be restored in time by an enlightened policy which prioritizes prosperity and welfare. The novel highlights the longing for intimacy in a loving family by both the Dutch and Hituese protagonists. It shows the counterproductive effects of colonial power politics on the provision of an appropriate framework for civilization. However, like Helmers and Ver Huell before him, Ritter ignores the enlightened plea to abolish the monopoly on the spice trade and to liberalise the colonial economy.

Eclipse of Enlightenment ideals

While the heritage of Enlightenment in the first quarter of the nineteenth century did not result in an effective liberalisation of the economy in the Dutch Indies, the public debate about colonial relations went on. However, halfway through the century historical romance gave way to military narrative which eclipsed enlightened idealism.

The vision of enlightened bliss which Helmers conjured up in the *History of Egeron and Adeka* (1812) waned as the reality of managing a colony sunk in. S.P. Oudkerk Pool, who adapted the story in a theatre play, *Adeka, of de Nederlanders op Banda (Adeka, or the Dutch on Banda, 1834)*, questioned the image of tyrannical Portuguese and virtuous Dutchmen. Ph.P. Roorda van Eysinga, inspired by Helmers to sing the praises of Dutch colonial history in *Nederlands roem in Oost-Indië (Dutch glory in the East Indies, 1831)*, maintained that the Dutch ancestors had to free the peoples of the East not only of Portuguese and Spanish tyranny, but also from the despotic inclinations of their own leadership. Like Ver Huell

in *Christina Martha* (1837), Roorda van Eysinga advocated the spreading of Christianity in order to combat 'false beliefs' and to build a civilized society. Irrespective of their narrative differences, these authors fostered enlightened ideals on the subject of colonial relations and entrusted the Dutch to implement them.

In 1857 the former army officer J.B.J. van Doren published *Thomas Matulesia*, a military history of the Moluccan uprising in 1817. Contrary to Ver Huells image of Christina Martha, he ascribes to her an insensitive, rather than noble, nature. In 1870 another former army man, W.A. van Rees, wrote a romanticized biography of P.F. Vermeulen Krieger, an officer who was involved in smothering the revolt. Using Ver Huells travelogue as a historic source, he portrayed the leadership of the uprising with undisguised contempt, exempting only Christina Martha as a fanatical, yet respectable opponent. In most colonial military narrative of this period all Enlightenment idealism has disappeared.

Even Ritter was drawn into a disillusioned mood by the current climate. In 1861 his novel *Toeloecabesie* was reprinted in Amsterdam and renamed *Vrijheid en dwang* (*Liberty and coercion*). The new title actually referred to the fierce public debate on the principles of the system of cultivation on the island of Java, which closely resembled the monopoly system implemented earlier in the production and trade of Moluccan spices. However, a plea for economic liberalisation was not the key message of the novel. To give the novel a contemporary profile, Ritter added a preface which was at odds with its essence. It stated that an understanding between colonizers and colonized had turned out to be impossible, notably because of religious differences and animosities. The novel should make the readers aware that the outlook in the Dutch Indies might be one of long term conflict and that the colonial army should be duly respected. For Ritter enlightened idealism had become a thing of the past.

Postcolonial traces

The Menadonese E. Kandou, employed at the teachers college in Ambon, condensed Ritters novel into a concise Malay *Hikajat Kotidjah* (*History of Kotidjah*), which was published in 1901. He revitalised Ritters idealism by suggesting that Si Tidja's tragic death brought about a moment of reconciliation between the Hituese and Dutch bystanders of the event. Since he gave the story the appearance of a traditional folk tale, some elements were incorporated in oral history. Particularly in the village of Morela, inhabited by descendants of the Hituese stronghold Kapahaha, Ritters fictional character Si Tidja has acquired the status of a historical freedom fighter.

On Banda the traces of the history of Egeron and Adeka have been volatile. After the abolition of the nutmeg and mace monopoly in 1864, the plantations in the eighteen seventies proved hugely profitable. The upper echelons of Bandanese society, fostering high expectations of the future, created a cult of Egeron and Adeka as icons of a golden age. Their names were kept alive at memorial sites like *Gunung Menangis* (Weeping Mountain) and Adeka's grave. At the end of the century some elements of the story had

seeped into indigenous oral history. In one particular village history Adeka was presented as an alias for the mythical princess Tjilubintang. Another village history claimed that cunning Portuguese initiated a brutal regime on Banda which was quickly overturned by the great J.P. Coen. However, the transfer of colonial historical fiction into oral history was short-lived. In post-colonial Banda the traces of the history of Egeron and Adeka have been erased from historical memory.

Ver Huells historical romance *Christina Martha*, published in 2013, did not have any impact on historiography in Indonesia, but his travelogue did. In 1969 Christina Martha Tiahahu was candidated for the Indonesian pantheon of *pahlawan nasional* (national heroes) who had valiantly fought colonial oppression, thereby involving the Christian population of the Moluccas in the nation building process. At the time she was not remembered in oral history and no official biography was published until 1981. Her biographer L.J.H. Zacharias constructed her life history out of the bits and pieces she gathered from, mainly, Dutch sources. Practising selective reading and tendentious editing, and unaware of the degree to which Ver Huell and Van Rees had already fictionalized the historical Christina Martha, she created a national and regional heroine who suited the ideology of *pahlawan nasional* under the Soeharto regime. 'Martha Christina', as she calls her, is still committed to public memory as a paragon of *semangat perjuangan* (militant spirit), virtuousness and moral superiority for younger generations, especially for women. This image is kept alive by womens organisations and enshrined in monuments, ritualized memorial events, digital media, magazines and other print media.

An unfulfilled project

In the historical romances of Helmers, Ver Huell and Ritter colonialism was basically taken for granted and legitimized. Though no traces of their histories of fathers and daughters are to be found in Indonesian postcolonial literature, there is some similarity in *Ikan-ikan Hiu, Ido, Homa* (Sharks, Tunafishes, Smelts), a historical novel published in 1987 by the Indonesian priest, architect, writer and social activist Y.B. Mangunwijaya.

The novel, a historical romance about the arrival of the Dutch on Ternate and Banda, is presented as a narrative by a young scholarly woman, thus attempting to examine and evaluate her ancestral history. The main characters in her story are a father and his foster-daughter, both from Tobelo, an ethnic group on the island of Halmahera. From their perspective the rivalry between the sultanates Ternate and Tidore is a major threat to popular welfare in the region, since it inevitably leads to the engagement of outside forces whose interventions cannot be controlled. In a chaotic world where 'fish eat fish', common people can only counteract by developing and maintaining a virtuous lifestyle. Contrary to the protagonists in Dutch colonial fiction, father and foster-daughter in Mangunwijaya's novel together survive the turbulent and violent establishment of Dutch power in the Moluccas.

The contrast between Dutch colonial historical fiction and this postcolonial novel highlights the inadequacy of nineteenth-century historical and anthropological knowl-

edge, the gaps between literary and historical characters, and the shortcomings of nineteenth-century concepts of equality and inequality. Enlightenment as an intellectual, social and cultural transformation of society, inspired by a scientifically based philosophy of liberty, equality and fraternity, has been an unfulfilled project, and still is.