'The Eurasian Question' : the colonial position and postcolonial options of colonial mixed ancestry groups from British India, Dutch East Indies and French Indochina compared

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7 Eurasian emancipation and the foundation of Eurasian interest organisations

7.1 Introduction

In all three colonies, Eurasians united and founded their own interest organisations and corresponding periodicals in response to the sharper boundaries and negative discourse developing about them in the late colonial period. While the organisational efforts of Eurasians increased their visibility, paradoxically, this added to the negative stereotyping which was already rampant in colonial society. However, their increased visibility also meant they could make their voices better heard. These associations promoted Eurasian interests at large and after a while they achieved more rights and equal opportunities for people of mixed ancestry in the colonies. I have already mentioned a few of these organisations in passing. In this chapter I will discuss them at length.

7.2 British India: The All-India Anglo-Indian Association and discord

In British India, a Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association was founded in 1876.[1] The development of sharper boundaries between population groups in British India at the beginning of the nineteenth century explains this early date. This was almost a century earlier than in the other two colonial contexts. The movement to unite Eurasians had already started at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Even before the mutiny of 1857, a highly-developed group consciousness was present among Anglo-Indians in British India because of the measures the British colonial government had taken in 1790 and 1791. These measures (discussed earlier at length) limited the freedom of movement of Eurasians. As a result, a considerable number of local Anglo-Indian associations came into being. It was clear that the formation of a distinct Anglo-Indian or Eurasian identity was accompanied by the production of derogatory Anglo-Indian stereotypes.[2] When a group becomes organised, it is more visible to outsiders, and hence more criticised. However, the community formation of Anglo-Indians did not only have negative aspects. Common irritations and complaints about the British government had drawn the group together, but it also had a shared purpose: emancipation and improving chances on the labour market.[3]

The majority of the Anglo-Indians were pro-British. They were never at the forefront of a so-called 'creole nationalism', which happened in colonies in the West. The Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885, was supported by thousands

of Indian intellectuals, but not by Anglo-Indians.[4] On 9 April 1926, representatives of Anglo-Indian groups from different parts of the country attended a conference, during which it was decided that all groups would unite in one overarching organisation: The All-India Anglo-Indian Association (AIAIA). Sir Henry Gidney, the former president of an earlier Anglo-Indian interest organisation, the Bombay Branch of the Anglo-Indian Empire League, became the leader of the new organisation.[5]

One of the first things Sir Henry Gidney did as a leader of the AIAIA was to submit a memorandum to the Indian Statutory Commission (also known as the Simon Commission) in 1928. This committee arranged a series of Round Table Conferences during the years 1930-1932, that prepared a new and progressive Government of India Act which became a blueprint for the first constitution of independent India. All organisations representing minorities living on the Indian subcontinent, including trade organisations and organisations of tea planters, could send their memorandums, containing proposals and requests for the new Government of India Act. They took them into consideration during the Round Table Conferences.[6] In this way, Indian independence was well-prepared.

The memorandum of the Anglo-Indian association was an elaborate version of the memorandum that it gave to the Right Honourable Secretary of State of India in 1925 and the one it gave to its predecessor in 1923. It stood in a tradition of petitioning and lobbying of the mixed-race community of India, which had started in 1829 when John William Ricketts presented the first petition to East India Government on behalf of the 'East Indians'.[7] This early effort constructed them as a political group, making them both more vulnerable for discrimination and more receptive to privileges and rights. The 1923 version contained a proposal for separate European schools for Anglo-Indians and a system of scholarships and boarding grants for poor children.[8] Already in 1825, Anglo-Indians (at the time referred to as 'Eurasians') had made their grievances on the political, social and economic level known to the British Parliament by means of a petition.[9] Thus, early on, a strong group identity and organisational infrastructure among Anglo-Indians had come about, providing for important preconditions to have a relatively comfortable life in the late colonial period in British India.

The memorandum of 1928, which was signed by Henry Gidney, contained quotas of jobs reserved for Anglo-Indians and educational grants to maintain the unique Anglo-Indian schools also after decolonisation. He blamed the government of British India for encouraging occupational specialisation amongst Anglo-Indians. Furthermore, Gidney claimed that the deterioration in the economic position of the community was not their fault but due to the deliberate policy of the government which favoured other more powerful, indigenous communities through its Indianisation policy instead of Anglo-Indians.[10] Other prominent British people, who played an active role in the colony, also supported the case of the Anglo-Indians before the Statutory Commission. For example, Sir Edward Benthall, leader of the European Chambers of Commerce in India, said that 'the Anglo-Indian community was the greatest debt that England owed to India.'[11]

'India is in his blood, in the colour of his skin, in his habits'

When Sir Henry Gidney died in 1942, he was succeeded by Sir Frank Anthony who would act as president of the AIAIA for nearly five decades, until his death in 1991.[12] Similar to the IEV in the Dutch East Indies, education was a spearhead of the AIAIA. It was to prepare Anglo-Indian children for a better future than their parents. A stay at a boarding school in a hill station could help in that endeavour: they could be 'kept away from any injurious native influence' in an isolated location with a cool climate.[13]

In an article which appeared in the Anglo-Indian Review in 1944, the then president of the AIAIA, Frank Anthony, described the collective memories that shaped the Anglo-Indian as a human being in relation to India and the hill schools:

> India is in his blood, in the colour of his skin, in his habits. It is in his palate and his emotions. The curry and rice we'd miss so badly and the red rhododendrons on the sweeping slopes of the Himalayas in spring. India means a great deal to him.[14]

During the long existence of the AIAIA, there was always much criticism and discord among its members about its leadership, its main ethos and the policies it pursued. Many felt that not enough was being done to help the poorest members of the community. They claimed that scholarships were not given to Anglo-Indians who were really in need.[15] Next to that, the Anglo-Indian Association used its local branches to check the genealogical ancestry of prospective members from 1933 onwards. The majority of Anglo-Indians did not accept that they had to prove their mixed ancestry with documents. This resulted in the AIAIA experiencing enormous difficulties trying to attract new members, especially in railway colonies.[16] Therefore, the AIAIA represented only 40 per cent of the Anglo-Indian community. Moreover, there were other Anglo-Indian organisations next to the AIAIA, such as the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association of South India (Madras) and the Union of Anglo-Indian Associations of Travancore-Cochin State (now Kerala). This last organisation offered room to people of other mixed ancestries: Portuguese and Indians, commonly known as Feringhees. Because they had another mother tongue than English – the Malayalam language – they were not welcome in the All India Anglo-Indian Association.[17]

Eurasian self-interest organisations were also established in Burma, which the British ruled as a province of British India from 1886 until its separation from British India in 1937. Examples of these organisations were the Anglo-Burmese Association, the Anglo-Burman Union and the Anglo-Burman Council.[18] Until the separation in 1937, they were also part of the All-India Anglo-India Association of India and Burma. In 1928, Sir Henry Gidney wrote in an additional supplementary note to the Indian statutory commission that his organisation had almost 90 branches with a total membership of over 10,000 people representing about 50 per cent of the Anglo-Indian population.[19]

7.3 Dutch East Indies: Foundation of several organisations and newspapers

The foundation of several Indo-European interest organisations accompanied the negative change in image building around miscegenation. These developments influenced each other. The organisations could be founded as a result of the negative discourse on people of mixed ancestry and their exclusion by both indigenous and European social circles. Some initiatives to improve the circumstances of Indo-Europeans were taken earlier. Already in 1877, three Indo-European editors started to write for the *Padangsch Handelsblad,* which became the first Indo-European newspaper in the colony. This newspaper developed into an advocate of the interests of the lower classed Indo-Europeans and was critical towards governmental policy. According to the paper, Dutch government was only focused on economic exploitation of the Dutch East Indies.[20] In 1892, the first Indo-European association *Soeria Soemirat* (literally translated as the first sunbeam) was created by the Indo-European newspaper *De Telefoon* in Semarang. The founders were inspired by the Eurasian 'Mutual Improvement' society of Singapore. This was an early Eurasian interest organisation and another example of a transnational connection in the South-East Asian colonial world. In 1898, the Indo-European organisation *Indische Bond* (Indisch League) was established. Over the next two years, 4,000 Indo-Europeans became members.[21]

'What they have to complain about [...] is therefore difficult to see'

There were also two Indo-European movements which tried to instigate Indo-European nationalism: *Insulinde* was founded in 1907 and the *Indische Partij* in 1912. One of the founders of the *Indische Partij* was E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, a second cousin of the famous writer of the book *Max Havelaar,* Eduard Douwes Dekker, alias Multatuli. The *Indische Partij* advocated: 'the Dutch East Indies for the Indies people!', which was meant as an early call for independence by giving the people of mixed ancestry the leadership of the independence movement.[22] This movement advocated three viewpoints in particular. In the first place, mixed races were always superior to unmixed races. Because both Dutch and Indonesian people were part of very mixed peoples, Indo-Europeans must have had positive characteristics. Secondly, Indo-Europeans were more Indonesian than Dutch. They were from the East and should therefore never choose the side of the colonial government. Lastly, Douwes Dekker predicted that Indo-Europeans together with educated Javanese, would have a leading position in the nationalist movement.[23] The reporter of the *Straits Times* felt that the Eurasian movement might be an example that indigenous people would follow in their own quest for independence:

> References have been made from time to time in this paper to the dissatisfaction amongst the natives in Java [...] What many foresaw has, however, come to pass: the natives have awakened to the fact that they have very little to say in the government of the country [...] This cry for emancipation has not been heard for very long and is very evidently a result of the Eurasians in Java recently clamouring for their 'rights'. [...] Now it must not be thought that the Eurasians in the Dutch Indies have no rights; they have the same legal, social and

> moral rights as the Dutch and they are very numerous. There are decidedly many more Eurasians than 'whites' and they occupy many of the highest posts in the country. They are also admitted into every social circle and inter-marry with the 'whites'. What they have to complain about in comparison with their brethren in other Eastern colonies is therefore difficult to see. The natives took the Eurasian movement as an example and now the Java Government has its hands very full indeed in keeping down a mooted native rising.[24]

One year later, in 1913, the centennial commemoration of Dutch freedom from French occupation was also celebrated in the Dutch East Indies. One of the other leaders of the *Indische Partij*, Soewardo, took the opportunity to publish a leaflet entitled: 'when I was a Dutchman.' Soewardo said if he himself were a Dutchman, he would never want to celebrate such an anniversary (100 years of freedom) in a country (the Dutch East Indies) that continued to be occupied 'by us' (the Dutch). Before celebrating, the suppressed people (meaning the Indonesians) had to attain their freedom.[25] This was a demand for home rule, in a similar manner to that in British India. In the end, the creole nationalism in the Dutch East Indies failed due to unbridgeable differences in the religious sphere – namely, the Indo-Europeans were mostly Christian and indigenous people were mostly Muslim.[26]

On 13 July 1919, the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* was founded, in the words of its founders, 'out of self-defence'.[27] At the inaugural meeting, chaired by the prominent Indo-European journalist and editor Karel Zaalberg, the founders stated that the League would position itself in opposition to the older creole nationalistic organisation *Insulinde*. Indigenous people could not become members, but Dutch people could become members as long as they lived in the Dutch East Indies permanently.[28] The objective of the IEV was to promote the social and economic interests of Eurasian people of the Dutch East Indies and to lobby the government.[29] Membership was restricted to those Europeans who had settled or wanted to settle permanently in the Dutch East Indies, including European families who had lived for many years in the Dutch East Indies.[30] From the beginning, internal division and conflicting interests within the League frustrated the goal of maintaining their place in (post)colonial society. This division emerged soon, despite the fact that the necessity of forming one united Indo-European front was explicitly stressed at the foundation meeting. The discord was partly caused by the fact that the board members and most of the editors were from well-to-do Indo-European families, while they wanted to represent the whole Indo-European community. The IEV was based on shared interests and its target audience were various groups and classes of society, but the composition of the board was not representative of the target group.[31] In the end, only the editor in chief of the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad,* Karel Zaalberg, who had chaired the first meeting of the IEV, came from humble origins.[32] Indo-Europeans from the lowest classes were excluded because the membership fee was high.[33] At a conference, members of the department of Makassar proposed to lower the contribution, but this was rejected by the general board. According to the board, it led to too much administrative hassle, and the lower classes were already part of the organisation's supporters, even though they were not members.[34] The IEV considered education an important way to improve the situation of its members. It established a large number of schools, both in the plains and at the hill stations, and also developed a well-organised education and funding system, which was

meant to help the lower classed Indo-Europeans achieve a higher position in society.[35]

From the start, the IEV's main purpose was to reduce the distance between the privileged 'totok' Dutch and the Indo-Europeans and to maintain the hierarchical distinction between Indo-Europeans and indigenous people.[36] While this sounds like a political objective, the IEV was rather a 'social-ethnic' association that used politics as a means of achieving its goals.[37] Although the IEV was not a true political party, it did have a say in the People's Council of the Dutch East Indies. The People's Council was founded in 1916 as an advisory body to the colonial government. The constitution of 1925 acknowledged the institution as a legislative institution. The fourth People's Council (1927-1931) possessed the same legal powers that western powers had, except for the right of enquiry.[38] In 1924, the IEV-chairman Dick de Hoog made a noteworthy remark in a debate with the indigenous member Soeroso on salary issues in the People's Council. The remark illustrated the ethnic and symbolic difference in status between indigenous people and Indo-Europeans. At that moment, many Indo-Europeans were already threatened with downward social mobility, which would reduce their position to that of the indigenous population. De Hoog urged Soeroso to pay less attention to his high principles and more 'to his shoes', because shoes were 'a necessity for the average Indo-European but an undesired luxury for the average Indonesian.'[39]

At this point in time, Eurasians started to increase their attempts to organise at as a separate group at the international level and between the various colonies. An opinion article published in 1934 in *The Straits Times* suggested that the League of Nations should create a homeland for Eurasians in which they could become rooted in the soil as agricultural workers:

> The problem of the Eurasian communities in the various colonies and countries in Asia is one deserving of more attention than is being received at present. [...] I wish to voice the Eurasian problem from a higher plane than that of the local political aspirations. I wish to stress the claim of humanity and the right of each race to live its own life.[40]

The Eurasians were defining themselves as a separate race, living in several colonies and now in need for a homeland of their own. According to the newspaper:

> The Eurasians have no country of their own, and as they refuse to merge into their maternal race, their existence is going to be a very difficult one in the near future. Like the Jews, they have no home; but unlike the Jews they lack the cement of cohesion which has made the Jews the financial and commercial, not to mention the political directors of practically every nation. The West and the East have been responsible for the birth of this new race and the Dutch, to their credit appear to be the only nation which is conscious of its obligation. If a few Jews are ill-treated or killed in Palestine, there is a world-wide outcry, but the Eurasians are being thrust into degeneracy and extinction by the races responsible for their existence but never a word of protest goes up. It is bad enough that their plight is so precarious, but ministers of religion have added to their disabilities. They have set Eurasians against Eurasians because of differences in religion. [41]

The Eurasians appealed to the League of Nations for help to create a homeland. It would be to the benefit of both the East and the West, and it was a plan that should be awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize, according to the newspaper.

> In the case of the Eurasian problem, the League can do an immense amount of good which will react to its credit. I doubt if there will be any opposition to any suggested solution, for both East and West will be glad to end the problem which reacts to the credit of neither. The Eurasians must be provided with a home [in New Guinea] and if the League can do this it will pave the way for a satisfactory solution. Such a scheme of colonisation requires a tremendous amount of money, and the Eurasians are as poor as church mice. I suggest that the League initiate a lottery for this special purpose, for the nations must realise that it is far more moral to provide for unwanted nationals than to continue the hypocrisy about the evils of sweepstakes. A solution of the Eurasian problem should merit the Nobel Prize, and provide full scope for some influential individual to exercise his or her charitable instincts.[42]

In 1936, the moderate nationalist Indonesian member of the People's council Soetardjo handed in a petition to that same body of the People's Council, which called for the establishment of a Round Table Conference. It was meant to put the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies on an equal legal footing.[43] At this Round Table Conference, plans would be made to give the Dutch East Indies independent status 'along a road of gradual reform over a 10-year period, or at least such a period as the conference deemed possible.'[44] The chairman of the IEV, Dick de Hoog favourably considered the Soetardjo petition. All seven IEV members in the People's Council voted in favour.[45] De Hoog pointed out that the IEV resented the fact that all decisions were made in the Netherlands without taking notice of the wishes of the people living in the Dutch East Indies in general and the wishes of the members of the People's Council in particular. However, De Hoog did not consider it a correct decision to set a definite time-period for the transition. Such a decision should be taken at the Round Table Conference. De Hoog also suggested the establishment of an 'Imperial council' which could mediate in conflicts between the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands and would replace the voice of the Dutch government in the Netherlands.[46] In 1937, IEV-leader De Hoog stressed once again the difficult in-between position of Indo-Europeans at the IEV-congress. According to him, his organisation was the most 'Indisch' oriented one among the European group and the most Dutch oriented organisation among the Indonesian groups.[47]

7.4 French Indochina: *Métis* organisations linked with Eurafricans

In Indochina, the Eurasian interest organisations were limited in size and they were not as much in the public eye as the people involved had wished for in order to have their demands met. In the only area of the Indochinese federation which was a real colony – Cochinchina in the south – *Métis* formed some organisations but the largest of these, *L'Amicale des Métis*, founded in 1895 and later renamed *Les Francais de l'Indochine*, had at most five hundred members. In 1938, this organisation was described as a club consisting of 'fathers of children of whom the mother is of Asian ancestry.' However, *les Francais de l'Indochine* only organised a small number of activities.[48] Shortly before decolonisation, *Métis* leaders founded *La Mutuelle des Francais d'Indochine*, which lobbied in favour of the French state remaining in Vietnam. They described themselves as a 'new race [...] born of a union of the French conquer-

or and the Annamite *conquise'* (conquered).[49] Just like the IEV in the Dutch East Indies, it was not so much a political party but more an aid association. The purpose of the group was to 'unite members through friendly solidarity and mutual assistance.' There also was an equivalent to the Indian National Congress and the People's Council in the Dutch East Indies in Indochina, at least in Vietnam: *le Conseil colonial de la Cochinchine* (colonial council of Cochinchina), founded in 1880. This council met at least twice a year, and took decisions about the budget and managed the domain. The right to vote was limited to French citizens and Vietnamese who paid a considerable amount of land taxes.[50]

La Mutuelle stressed solidarity and sympathy with similar *Métis* groups with Eurafricans in the French African colonies. Because of the link with this group, they could publish articles in the journal of the *Union internationale des Métis*, called *l'Eurafricain*. In this magazine, *Métis* from all French colonies were presented as belonging to a global French family.[51] The policy in Indochina regarding *Métis* was seen as a blueprint for the policy for the *Métis* population (including children) in the African colonies. The *Métis* problem was regarded similarly in French Africa.[52] Regular references were made to the existence of a *Métis* group in *Afrique Noir* when discussing *le problème des enfants de la colonie* in Indochinese newspapers.[53] If the French authorities would not take decisive steps for them in Indochina, it was believed that this would also not happen in the French African territories. In thinking about those steps, they looked at the British and Dutch policies regarding mixed people. They wished that the French would take a similar route and not abandon their subjects.[54] In addition, *La Mutuelle* tried to create a new political-identity group led by *Métis* in Indochina. They were also known under the name *Les Francais d'Indochine*. The group was comprised of mostly Eurasians, with some Vietnamese, Cambodians and French people. They were philanthropists who were concerned about abandoned Eurasians and low-ranking colonial administrators. The organisation's goal was to represent the will of the permanent French population in the colony, which they regarded as consisting of Eurasians and Vietnamese equated with French people. They viewed themselves as a group with a new identity, they argued for equal rights to the French from the mother country, and sought Franco-Vietnamese collaboration. The government regarded them as a political threat and it was exactly this type of movement among *Métis* that made colonial officials anxious.[55]

There were also individual *Métis* people who became active in the Vietnamese opposition against colonial rule. An example is Eugène Dejean de la Batie. He was born from an affair between a high-ranking French diplomat and a Vietnamese shopkeeper in Hanoi. Dejean was recognised by his father and had French citizenship. In his early twenties, he became part of the rising radical Vietnamese opposition to colonial rule. In 1923, he launched the most virulent political opposition newspaper thus far published, *La Cloche Fêlée* (The Broken Bell). However, he suffered from inner conflicts between his French and indigenous identity and eventually he chose to follow the official French republican ideology.[56]

'Owing to their own privileged position, covering two races'

A group of French men married to Vietnamese women was linked to *Les Francais d'Indochine*. They disagreed in the 1930s with the way abandoned *Métis* children were treated. They believed the idea of racial superiority should be discarded and that all *Métis* should be considered real French citizens with the same rights and obligations. This would help to maintain colonial rule in Indochina.[57] Alternative instruments for community building among *Métis* people in Indochina were periodicals which were specifically directed at them. An example of such a periodical that represented the voice of *les Francais d'Indochine* was the weekly *Blanc et Jaune,* which appeared in Saigon between 1937 and 1940. It promoted specific discourse on Eurasians, that asserted that the place of Eurasians was a *trait d'union* (link) between colonial and indigenous society. *Blanc et Jaune* described itself as the newspaper

> [...] for the *Métis* and naturalised Frenchmen who form the indispensable link between France, the protector nation, and Indochina, owing to their own privileged position, covering two races.[58]

The associational activity which achieved more prominence in French Indochina than the above stated initiatives was directed at the protection of abandoned Eurasian children. In all parts of the Indochinese Union, associations which were active in 'protecting' abandoned Eurasian children were founded.[59] The *Jules Brévié Foundation,* continued its work by secretly seizing 'French and white-looking' children, even during the Japanese occupation. When they separated the children from their mothers, FOEFI-members worked closely with *l'Assistance Sociale* – a French colonial governmental organisation – that provided assistance in the form of medical care and aid to the poor and injured, irrespective of their race. They were aware that French soldiers had sex with local women. Therefore, *l'Assistance Sociale* returned to military camps nine months to one year after the French military had left and offered assistance to abandoned impoverished Vietnamese mothers of the soldiers' young children.[60]

On 9 March 1945, the Japanese troops committed a *coup d'état*. Ambassador Matsumoto Shin'ichi, on behalf of the Japanese, visited the French Governor General Decoux at the headquarters of the French government in Saigon, and delivered an ultimatum demanding the surrender of French forces to Japanese command. Decoux was arrested and Japanese troops conquered administrative buildings and public utilities, took over radio stations, telegraph centres, banks and industries, attacked military and police positions and interned French civilians and military authorities.[61] On the night preceding the *coup*, Japanese soldiers surrounded *l'École d'enfants de troupe Eurasiens*, tied up school administers, and forced them at gunpoint to march out of the school. Later, the Japanese imprisoned them. According to later accounts, the students, using the drills they learned at school, maintained formation, weapons in hand, while the Japanese took over the school. In the weeks after, the Japanese military forced students to complete hard labour.[62] The *coup* was followed by the dissolution of the *Jules Brévié Foundation* and the colonial-run orphanages for Vietnamese children in January 1946 by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).[63]

Soon after Japanese occupation, institutional successors of the *Jules Brévié Founda-*

tion were founded, which carried out similar work. These were the *Fondation Eurasienne,* which was founded in 1946, and the *Fédération des Oeuvres de l'Enfance Française d'Indochine* (FOEFI, see further below) founded in 1950.[64] Their selection criteria for Eurasian children changed somewhat in the course of this period and resulted in a more inclusive racial policy. Before the war, these groups explicitly searched for white-looking Eurasian children and they left the darker-looking children in the indigenous milieu. After the war, political loyalty of Eurasians to the French cause (and therefore continuing presence in Indochina) became more important. Therefore, the selection included darker-looking Eurasian children. This change in French policies was also caused by contemporary developments during the First Indochina War that followed Japanese occupation. For instance, the Vietnamese government started to recruit Eurasian children to join the newly independent Vietnamese nation. Lastly, because France was losing authority in all her colonies, in Africa and Asia alike, French imperial prestige became more important and Eurasian children could contribute to this form of French *gloire* ('glory'). As summarised in a note destined for William Bazé, the president of the FOEFI, the most important recommendation was: 'supporting Eurasians in all circumstances for the profit, the appearance and the prestige of France in Indochina.'[65] From 1939 onwards, the child protection organisations had financed the education of 20,000 Eurasians, and some 3,000 of these orphans went to boarding schools throughout France.[66]

7.5 Comparison and conclusion: United 'out of self-defence'

In conclusion, a common characteristic of Eurasian associations was the division of opinions and possible policy solutions among their members. The heterogeneous composition of the Eurasian population in all three colonies, caused by class and race considerations alike, led to a more united attitude. This especially applied to the Dutch East Indies and British India, where many Eurasian organisations were established. They were divided and criticised each other severely from the beginning. Also within the organisations there was a lot of division. One of the topics on which there was disagreement was education. However, it was generally seen as an important means to elevate the status of Eurasians. It would give them better job opportunities and prevent them from harming white, European prestige.

In French Indochina, the picture was different because there was less associational activity among Eurasians than in British India and the Dutch East Indies. The reason for this was the young age of the colony, together with the more inclusive French colonial policy regarding *Métis*. The few influential associations in Indochina were focused on care for Eurasian children. They united orphanages and boarding schools under one organisation – the FOEFI. In that way, Eurasian interest organisations in Indochina did indeed influence the ultimate decision of the *Métis* to stay or leave. However, just like the Eurasian interest organisations in British India and the Dutch East Indies, differences in opinion frequently occurred. In the other two cases, the organisations could not do much. Only in Indochina could the child protection organisations really help the *Métis* children to get to France. The Eurasian interest organisa-

tions of the Dutch East Indies did not have much influence when Indonesia became independent, and the organisations from British India had done their most important work (safeguarding rights and privileges) before the actual independence of India. After decolonisation, most of these organisations gradually disappeared. This provides an additional explanatory factor for why people stayed or left: as more Eurasian people left, more organisations disappeared, which led to further out-migration as Eurasians did not feel as represented as previously and their community became increasingly less visible.