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# A Preacher's Perspective

## *Sytze Roorda van Eysinga's Representation of the Dutch East Indies*

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### Abstract

This article presents a critical, postcolonial analysis of the travel accounts of the Dutch church minister Sytze Roorda van Eysinga (1773–1829), who travelled within the East Indies archipelago in the 1820s as ‘visitator’ of the churches and schools in the colony. Which elements are characteristic of the preacher’s perspective? What did he emphasize in his travel texts? How did he represent the indigenous people who had to be Christianized eventually? So far, only little attention has been paid to the preacher’s perspective in general and to the work of Sytze Roorda van Eysinga in particular. First, Roorda’s representation of the tropical landscape is analysed. Then, his ideas about the indigenous people are discussed, mainly using the theoretical framework of the book *Missionary discourses of difference. Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840–1900* by Esme Cleall (2012).

### Keywords

Dutch East Indies – preacher’s perspective – travel writing – postcolonial approach – illness – violence

## 1 Introduction

On the morning of 6 January 1827, a ship carrying Hendrik Wieënkotter arrived in Batavia. A former baker from Amsterdam, he had presented himself to the Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap (Netherlands Missionary Society) in 1820. This institution had been founded in Rotterdam in 1797 after the example of the London Missionary Society. Shortly upon his arrival, Wieënkot-

ter, together with the German Rev. Karl Gützlaff, made his way to Sytze Roorda van Eysinga (1773–1829), a preacher with the Hervormde Kerk (Reformed Church) in Batavia since 1819. He lived 'at Kramat', in the suburb of Weltevreden, seven kilometres southeast of the *kota* (old city). The servants informed the travellers that the minister was just taking his afternoon nap. As they were about to depart again, Roorda suddenly appeared. He received his fellow countrymen with a glass of wine and told them about the journey he had made to Makassar and the Moluccas (De Jong 2002).

Roorda then went on to sing the praises of his second spouse, Geertruida Catharina Dibbetz, whom he had married in Ambon in 1823. At the time of the marriage, the girl had been a mere fourteen years of age, while he was fifty. Allegedly all the single men in Batavia had envied the minister and, in the theatre, devoured his bride with their eyes because of her 'perfect' figure and 'Raphaelesque features' (Vervoort 1979:15). By now, they had two children, Sicco and Sytse (their first child, a boy, had died in 1824 shortly after his birth on Ternate). Sicco had been born in 1825; he would achieve notoriety for his sensational 'Vloekzang, de laatste dag der Hollanders op Java' (1860) and *Uit het leven van Koning Gorilla* (1887), a pamphlet targeting King William III.

In the short time they spent with Roorda, the missionaries formed a good impression of him. He enjoyed respect in the Indies, not least because he was a confidant of the governor-general. Godert van der Capellen had personally seen to his appointment as a preacher in Batavia upon his arrival there. Roorda had read Divinity in Franeker. Prior to his departure for the Indies, he had worked as a preacher in Kuinre and Westzaan. Prospects of a better position had made him decide to go to 'the East'. He arrived in Batavia in May 1819, after a five-month voyage by sailing ship. His then wife, Eyda Catharina Piers, and their three daughters—Sara, Josina, and Adriana—accompanied him. Their son Philippus Pieter was to join them later that year. Two daughters stayed behind in the Netherlands. Disaster struck in the Indies, however. Worn out by sickness and the climate, Eyda died at the beginning of 1821. The death of this 'good, tender, loving and virtuous' woman, with whom he had lived for over 25 years and had hoped to spend a 'cheerful life's evening in Asia', crushed him (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:102).<sup>1</sup>

Her death tore Roorda's family apart. Daughter Sara married and settled in Surabaya (she died in 1824); Josina and Adriana first attended school in Batavia and then returned to Europe shortly afterwards. Roorda himself fell seriously

1 In this article, the use of italics in the original (19th-century) quotations has been slightly adapted.



FIGURE 1 Portraits of Eyda Catharina Piers (1773–1821) and Sytze Roorda van Eysinga (1773–1829)

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ill and, in the hope of restoring his health, set out on his travels. It was in the Moluccas that he met the girl who was to become his second wife. In early 1825, he returned with his young bride to Batavia, where he resumed his duties as a church minister. It was there that the two missionaries met him two years later. At the time, Roorda could not surmise that he would soon leave the Indies.

For health reasons, towards the end of 1828 he boarded *Het Schoon Verbond*, to be taken back to the Netherlands. His dearest wish was to see his beloved fatherland again, but he died on 1 April 1829, during the journey, 'of a decline in strength'.<sup>2</sup> Roorda was buried on Saint Helena. The island, to which Napoleon Bonaparte had been exiled in 1815 and where, six years later, he breathed his last, was a popular port of call for sailing vessels on their voyages to and from the Indies via the Cape of Good Hope (cf. Van 't Veer 2016). A greater contrast was unimaginable, according to Roorda's son Philippus: the minister who had dedicated his life to preaching the gospel across Europe and Asia was now laid to rest beside the conqueror Napoleon (Vervoort 1979:19). His death left Mrs Roorda a widow at the age of nineteen. She later travelled to the Netherlands

<sup>2</sup> *Javasche Courant*, 11–8–1829.

and settled down in Winterswijk, where she died in 1895, eighty-six years old. She remained unmarried for the rest of her long life.

This article focuses on the accounts that Sytze Roorda van Eysinga wrote of his journeys to and within the Indies. Unfortunately, as far as we know, no other texts by Roorda that could shed light on his religious and colonial ideas—such as sermons, letters, or treatises—have been published. Sytze's travel texts were published posthumously by his son Philippus Pieter Roorda van Eysinga, entitled *Verskillende reizen en lotgevallen van S. Roorda van Eysinga* (1830–1832). The work was split into four volumes: his father's travel accounts take up the first volume and the first half of the second volume. The remaining space was devoted to Philippus's own travel experiences (cf. Honings 2021). As yet, literary-historical research has paid relatively little attention to Sytze Roorda van Eysinga's texts. This is regrettable, because they are written with an eye for detail and give a crystal-clear picture of the Indies in the early nineteenth century. Even Rob Nieuwenhuys's *Oost-Indische spiegel* (1978:91) mentions him only briefly. On the other hand, Spoor (1996), Wertheim and Wertheim-Gijssse Weenink (1968:47–101), and Knappert (1927) have written about him. Parts of Roorda's travel texts have been included in the anthology *God in Indië* (Boomgaard, Poeze and Termorshuizen 1997:11–28). Yet, however interesting these articles are, they all adopt an exclusively biographical perspective. A post-colonial perspective that aims to analyse representations in the text and seeks to tie in with international insights has not as yet been applied to these texts. Siegfried Huigen (2015) has given some impetus to research along such lines but his article is fairly exploratory in nature.

## 2 The Preacher's Perspective

Over the past decades, travel-writing studies have received a boost internationally. Occupying a special place within the field is the study of colonial travels. The ideologies hidden in travel accounts have garnered great interest. At first glance, these texts often appear to be objective, but they are not. In the words of Tim Youngs, professor of Travel Studies at Nottingham Trent University: 'The biggest fiction is travel writing's own claim to being an objective genre.' Travel writing is always bound up with gaining knowledge and power (Youngs 2013:10–12). The genre has been strongly influenced by notions about gender, class, and race. As travellers ended up in a colonial context, they were forced to write about the 'Other' and, consequently, about themselves. In this sense, travelling invariably implies a confrontation between 'alterity and identity' and between 'difference and similarity' (Thompson 2011:9).



FIGURE 2  
Portrait of Philippus Pieter Roorda  
van Eysinga (1796–1856), 1833  
COLLECTION RIJKSMUSEUM  
AMSTERDAM, RP-P-OB-19.709

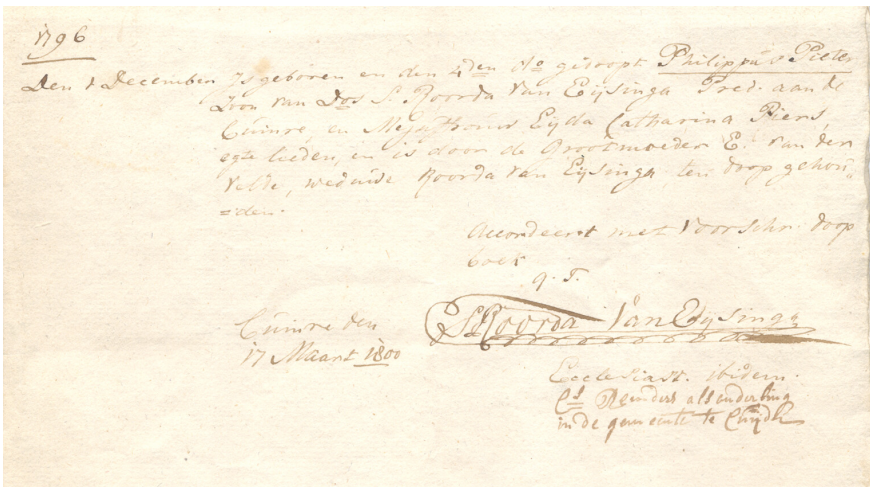


FIGURE 3 Extract from the baptismal book of the Reformed Church in Kuinre, mentioning the birth of Philippus Pieter Roorda van Eysinga in 1796, with his father's signature  
COLLECTION RICK HONINGS

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978)—a 'foundational text' for travel-writing studies (Thompson 2011:135)—we know that such travel texts, which frequently enjoyed a wide readership, did not simply contain reflections and representations of reality; they also helped shape it. According to Said, an 'orientalist' image was created of the East that was more powerful than reality itself. Since Said, researchers have embraced the idea that travel writing has made a crucial contribution to the legitimization of Western countries' colonial projects (Thompson 2011:53).

The most influential study in this field is Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. Although almost thirty years old, the book is still considered an important point of reference in travel-writing studies. In it, Pratt examines how European travel literature about non-European parts of the world forged an 'imperial order' for the domestic readership. She shows how the white ruler, the 'seeing man', not simply gazed upon the country but took possession of it at the same time. Travels always served to advance 'commercial and colonial agendas' that underpinned European colonialism, even though their original aim lay elsewhere (Thompson 2011:85). In order to illustrate this, Pratt discusses recurrent strategies, tropes, or 'codes' in a handful of English travel texts by various travellers (cf. Boehmer 2005:49). Pratt does not, however, deal with the preacher's perspective in her book; she primarily focuses on the travelling naturalist and, in addition, turns her attention to the gaze of the female traveller and of the 'Creole' traveller.

Other studies do, to a certain extent, touch upon the perspective of the preacher. Anna Johnston (2003) published the book *Missionary writing and Empire, 1800–1860*, in which she researched the activities of the London Missionary Society and reconstructed the discourse of missionaries in India, Polynesia, and Australia. Johnston shows that missionary writing is never 'innocent'. Like other colonial texts, they contain ideas about race, gender, and white degeneration (Johnston 2003). Building on this idea, historian Esme Cleall (2012) wrote *Missionary discourses of difference. Negotiating Otherness in the British Empire, 1840–1900*. Her book, the published version of her PhD thesis, deals with missionaries in southern Africa and India and their publications in journal issues of the London Missionary Society. Neither Johnston nor Cleall pay specific attention to travel writing. Furthermore, they only focus on missionaries of the London Missionary Society. To this day, only very little has been written about the gaze of the travelling preacher in the Dutch East Indies. Cleall's insights, which will be examined below, are a good starting point for an analysis of Sytze Roorda van Eysinga's travel texts.

Colonial travel literature in general and travel literature about the Dutch East Indies in particular have to date attracted relatively little interest in the

Netherlands. If the genre has been studied at all, it is almost exclusively from a literary-historical angle or as a source of historical information. A postcolonial perspective, analysing the colonial discourse embedded in the texts, has only rarely been applied to this corpus. For years, Siegfried Huigen has been a lone voice calling for more attention to be paid to the importance of travel literature; yet, as stated above, his research mainly targets South Africa (Huigen 2007). Mikko Toivanen (2019) has recently published his exploration of elements of ‘proto-tourism’ in colonial travel texts in English and Dutch. Although Rob Nieuwenhuys (1978) paid some attention to travel literature, there is, as yet, no reference study on Dutch East Indies travel literature. The only work in this field is *Een tint van het Indische Oosten: Reizen in Insulinde 1800–1950* (Honings and Van Zonneveld 2015).

This article analyses Sytze Roorda van Eysinga’s travel texts from a critical, postcolonial perspective. Roorda primarily travelled for health reasons, but there was also a formal side to his journeys: he had been appointed as ‘visitor’ of churches and schools (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, III:145). He inspected the work carried out by the mission and assessed religious education. What did he emphasize in his texts? How did he portray the indigenous population, who, after all, had to be Christianized? And to what extent was his perspective influenced by the fact that he was a preacher?

### 3 Three Times a Traveller

The three journeys that Roorda van Eysinga made between 1821 and 1824 take centre stage in this article. The first of these, in March and April 1821, after the death of his wife, took him, with the governor-general’s permission, across Java. The trip had the dual purpose of improving his health and visiting, on behalf of the government, the ‘vacant parishes’ and inspecting the state of Christianity, and would thus, so he said, combine business with pleasure (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:191).

Having departed Batavia on 9 March, he travelled via Buitenzorg (Bogor) to the nearby estate of Ciampea, where he holidayed. Roorda returned to Buitenzorg, from where he continued to the estate of Tjicoppo, which was also in the vicinity. He then took the Groote Postweg (Great Post Road), riding in a carriage towards the Preanger. Occasionally, and only when he diverted from the route, he would use horses or a sedan chair. On this journey Roorda stayed in Bandung and Cirebon. He preached five times in Bandung and baptized four children. Although this was by all accounts a comfortable journey, Roorda remained sickly. He had lost his appetite and was plagued by diarrhoea. Even

so, he managed to conduct a service in Cirebon and baptize no fewer than nineteen children, but he deemed it inadvisable to stay longer. He returned to Batavia via Bandung and Buitenzorg, where he recovered with the help of medication.

Roorda was enthusiastic about the Great Post Road and praised the fine horses, new carriages, and experienced coachmen; yet he also had some less pleasant experiences en route. Near Buitenzorg, he fared badly with an inexperienced coachman and 'fractious' horses, 'with the leading horses knocking the teeth out of the mouths of the rear horses'. On the way back, near Sumedang, he almost crashed when one of the buffaloes that had been yoked in front of the horses for extra pulling power, stumbled. The accident sent the carriage 'flying into a ditch'. The coachman managed to extricate himself and reach safety but the buffaloes, now without a handler, brought down the horses. The coach was badly damaged, but fortunately Roorda was unhurt (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:192, 225–6).

His second journey, once again undertaken for health reasons, took place in July 1822. He had difficulty keeping his food down and was short of breath, making him crawl on the floor 'like a worm' at night. In order to recover his strengths, he decided to stay with a friend at the eighteenth-century estate of Tanjung Timur. There he recuperated. Back in Batavia his physician advised him not to resume his duties as yet. And so, Roorda set off for Makassar. Governor-General Van der Capellen instructed him to 'take over services, promote religious education and do anything else that he judged conducive to the flourishing and glory of Christianity' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:2, 4).

On 10 August 1822, he began his journey on the *Elisabeth*, but after five days the ship had to return to Batavia on account of a leak that could not be sealed. A closer look revealed that the ship was in such a bad state of repair that she was only fit for the scrapheap. It was not until 1 October that he embarked on the *Henriette Elisabeth*, the ship that had brought him to the Indies in 1818. His daughter Sara and her husband, a lieutenant stationed in Makassar, accompanied him. He initially moved in with the governor, Jan David van Schelle. When it became clear that Roorda would be staying for a longer period in Makassar, he hired a house of his own. He actively attended receptions of the governor and the indigenous princes. Wherever he went, he was treated as a dignitary and an important representative of the Dutch government.

Besides his normal duties (preaching, teaching Bible classes, baptizing), there was time for outings. He travelled, for instance, to Bantaeng and Bulukumba. This journey was not without its dangers, Roorda felt: the area was not yet in Dutch hands. For this reason, his travelling party came heavily armed. A 'sun helmet' and 'green glasses' were to protect Roorda against the sun (Roorda

van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:162; Huigen 2015:55). There were still very few paved roads and bridges. Crossing a river was similarly not always without risk—not to mention crocodiles. On the other hand, there were also more pleasant experiences to be enjoyed. A highlight was when Roorda, dressed in sarong and kebaya, took a refreshing bath in the river in the wilderness outside Makassar and enjoyed some ‘ice-cold’ wine and game: ‘Never has a meal tasted better’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:128–9).

In May 1823, Roorda left Makassar for the Moluccas, where he stayed a full year—his third journey in the Indies. En route he visited such places as Flores and Timor (where Professor C.G.C. Reinwardt had been before him) and even made some trips from Ambon, taking in Ternate and Menado as well. He visited churches and schools, assessing the quality of Bible classes and teachers. Roorda was welcomed by singing children in many a ‘one-horse village’. Though he baptized with a will on his travels, he recognized that he was fighting a losing battle. Unless more well-trained preachers arrived in the Indies, the mission would never be a success, he feared (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:169).

#### 4 The Indies as Prefiguration

In his texts, Roorda van Eysinga showed two sides of himself as a traveller: as a travelling missionary he primarily focused on the (im)moral state of the population, but when he was on a relaxing outing, it was the natural landscape that attracted his admiring attention. He was introduced for the first time to the beauty of the colony in 1819 as he stepped on land in Anyer. After months of deprivations at sea, he felt as if he was entering a beautiful garden. The beauty of the tropical landscape was overwhelming:

It was all a canopy of banana, coconut and cotton trees, besides a host of others that I cannot name. The smell of balm and flowers filled the air in a refreshing and invigorating manner. The fertility of the rich red soil, which resembled the virginal earth, was evident in every footstep. Everything was green and fresh in equal measure. Trees, hit by lightning, or set fire to by the Malay, or felled at the ground, were once again starting to sprout with youthful beauty. How many empty hands could find work here, in the certainty that a grateful earth would reward effort and diligence, and sevenfold, too. Everything was covered with plants and trees in youthful bloom. O! what could not be made of Java, if it did not want for industry and honest people.

ROORDA VAN EYSINGA 1830–1832, 1:178

A number of things stand out in this quotation. In his enthusiasm Roorda portrayed the Indies in an aestheticizing manner as a 'paradise': a land full of fruit trees, where balm and fragrant flowers scent the air. Needless to say, it was only a 'paradise' for the white colonizers, at the indigenous people's expense. Another aspect that is foregrounded is the country's fertility; this is a potentially profit-making area. If a tree topples over, it will duly regenerate itself. While the indigenous inhabitants are not exactly left out of the picture, they are represented as lazy. No industry whatsoever is to be found and the rich red soil is left uncultivated. Roorda stated elsewhere that the indigenous people, clad only in 'shabby cotton clothes', were still living in their 'simple natural state', as noble savages. They were poor but 'contented' with the uncomplicated, peaceful life they were living (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:177–9).

Not for the last time did Roorda depict the Indies as a Garden of Eden: 'Here, Paradise still seems to exist.' He repeatedly stressed the impossibility of expressing in words what his eyes took in. The Preanger not only impassioned him in terms of what he saw but also what he smelled and heard: 'Beautiful flowers waft a fragrant balm through the air. The birds warble charmingly, just as they do in Holland in spring, and their song alternates with the murmuring of a river, which often hides itself under the trees nearby.' Huigen (2015:60) uses the term 'locus amoenus' in this context, the rhetorical model to describe a charming place: lush vegetation, floral fragrances, and birdsong, alternated with the murmuring of a river. Unforgettable was Roorda's outing to the waterfall of Ciampea. The water hurtling itself down resembled 'fluffy snow' and a vapour rose up from the depths that looked like smoke. It moved him: 'I sensed the grandeur of the Creator, the delightfulness of luxuriant nature, and drank, to my heart's delight, from the spring of God's love' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:195–6, 203–4, 206).

This is one of the first instances in Roorda's travel account where the preacher seizes upon natural beauty as evidence of God's grandeur. This physico-theological world picture, which emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century, is characteristic of the preacher's perspective. By way of comparison, religion did not hold particular significance for the natural scientists of the period. The number of times that a traveller like Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt, the naturalist-founder of the National Botanical Garden in Buitenzorg, who made several journeys in the Indies between 1816 and 1822 (Weber 2012), uses the words 'God' or 'Creator' are few and far between. 'Saviour' or 'Redeemer' are not even part of his vocabulary (Reinwardt 1858). Reinwardt never let himself be carried away by the beauty of the Indies. To him, 'paradise' was above all a scientific area, where discoveries were to be made. His text is permeated with the kind of Latin, scientific names that are wholly

absent in Roorda (cf. Huigen 2015:60). Nature's overwhelming beauty did not so much inspire Roorda to perform research as spark his admiration and adoration.

For Roorda, the Indies landscape constituted a prefiguration of the paradisaical afterlife that he hoped to enter one day. Nature prompted wistful reflections on his deceased wife. He was to see her again in a place of 'eternal spring'. The Preanger gave him a foretaste of this 'heavenly bliss'. Where naturalists laced their writings with specialist botanical terminology, the Reverend Roorda larded his travel account with biblical quotations. Such was the Preanger's splendour that he exclaimed with St Peter (Mark 9:5): 'Master! It is good for us to be here; let us make [three] tabernacles!' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:202, 214, 224).

It was not only in the Preanger that he found earthly 'paradise'; Celebes (Sulawesi) affected him in similar ways. The area around Bantaeng was the most beautiful he had ever gazed upon. His party set off by the light of a clear moon. As the sun came up, the landscape presented itself in all its glory to the travellers: 'There was nothing empty, nothing full to bursting, nothing monotonous. Here no honour accrued to a human hand, no! God has chosen such rich variety.' The view was so phenomenal that Roorda, by his own account, felt like a child who looks into an 'optical mirror' for the first time (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:134–5, 138).

The waterfall of Maros, north of Makassar, which he visited in November 1821, also caused him to wax lyrical. Again, God was not far away: 'The whole was arresting, delightful, and beautiful beyond all imagination. This led me to the following thought: How majestic must not He be, who could create all this effortlessly from nothing!' In this spot, Roorda and his travel companions had breakfast, which consisted of a whole suckling pig. They continued on their way towards higher grounds. Roorda hurt his leg during the ascent but the view was ample compensation: 'It was so quiet here, so enjoyable, that one could forget all the turmoil of the world, all the nations' wars, all mankind's passions, and could imagine oneself back in the dawn of the earth, or the golden era. Thus it will be everywhere one day, when the realm of peace has spread far and wide, and no distress is caused on the mountain of God's holiness' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:1, 7, 9, 12).

Their next port of call was a stalactite cave, in which they changed into sarong and kebaya, enjoyed a glass of Madeira, smoked cigars, and cooled off in the river. A thunderstorm threatened and the sunlight was filtered through the clouds. Suddenly, however, the sun broke through and a beautiful swarm of butterflies appeared: 'We kept very still and the dear creatures, not used to disturbances in this peaceful place, continued to entertain us untroubled for



FIGURE 4 The waterfall of Maros, South Celebes/Sulawesi. Source: M.T.H. Perelaer, *Het Kamerlid van Berkenstein in Nederlandsch-Indië* (1888–1889), Vol. II, next to p. 154. Lithograph after an original water colour by J. Rappard  
COLLECTION NATIONAAL MUSEUM VAN WERELDCULTUREN, TM-H-3367

a considerable time. What diversity in creation, what a magnificent display of colour, what beauty in all of them.' No wonder that Roorda felt he was 'living in paradise' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:15, 19–20).

## 5 Energy and Laziness

Given Roorda's emphasis on finding God in nature, his gaze differed from the naturalist's. In another respect, however, they corresponded: Roorda also foregrounded the country's natural resources (Thompson 2011:38). This particular interest already came to the fore in his first introduction to the Indies (quoted above). But there are many more instances in his text where Roorda remarks on the rich diversity of fruit and vegetables. He never tired of talking about the fertility of the country. All one needed to do was put a little 'sprout' into the soil, and a cabbage would come up within three months. Marvelling at the rice fields and coffee gardens in the Preanger, he wondered why certain areas had not been cultivated yet (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:193, 204, 209). At



FIGURE 5 Back of Tanjung Timur or East Tandjoeng (also known as Groeneveld) in Meester Cornelis, Batavia, c. 1930, where Roorda van Eysinga met Willem van Riemsdijk  
COLLECTION LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, KITLV 107050

such moments, he resembled a government inspector rather than a preacher (cf. Huigen 2015:58).

Like so many European travellers, Roorda created a dichotomy between the Dutch and the Javanese. Where the former are energetic and enterprising, the indigenous group is portrayed as lazy and indolent. At the very beginning of his account of his trip across Java Roorda remarks what great pity it is that the Javanese are so ‘flabby’: they leave the ‘most beautiful lands undeveloped’, ‘out of sheer laziness, even if they suffer hardship until the next harvest’. This is in marked contrast to how the Dutch operate. During his stay on the estate of Ciampea he observed how the owner, Willem Vincent Helvetius van Riemsdijk, went about its cultivation. ‘Birds’ nests’, a costly delicacy, were efficiently harvested by ‘slaves’, who were lowered into a shaft. Since the area was rich in good clay, he had had a brickyard built. The clay was mixed with water, crushed with the help of buffaloes, ‘pressed’ into moulds and fired: ‘What can industry not achieve, while, amid nature’s bounty, the lazy Javanese barely survive in huts made of bamboo?’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I, 194).

Nor was this the last time that Roorda spoke plainly in his travel account and concluded that the Dutch effected what the Javanese had neglected to do for countless years. Water pipes, roads, locks, and bridges had by now been built in a good number of places. Roorda regarded Van Riemsdijk as the epitome of the ideal colonizer: not only did he cultivate the land, but he treated

the indigenous people under his protection well; he even built them a mosque. His 'soft' approach was generally appreciated: 'His wise and careful behaviour' ensured his safety far more than if he had had 'ten pieces of artillery' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:198–200).

What is more, the Indies had become a safer place on account of the Dutch. Tiger attacks had been the order of the day and the Javanese had been powerless against these bloodthirsty monsters, but the Dutch presence put paid to that. Once, a large tiger lurking in a coffee garden had scared the Javanese workers so much that they refused to enter it. The Dutch then lopped off the lowest branches so the animal could be chased away. The tiger was subsequently captured and killed. Roorda had a utopian vision of what might happen if the Indies were to be colonized further: 'The sawah fields would expand, the population increase, the alan[g] alan[g] [the high grass] would be burnt, the wild beasts, which hide in it, would have to move on' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:210–11). The Indies would be even more magnificent.

## 6 Water in a Mud Pool

What approach did Roorda van Eysinga the missionary take to the indigenous population? As noted earlier, Esme Cleall's study *Missionary discourses of difference* is a useful starting point for answering this question. It analyses accounts dating back as far as 1840 by missionaries who had worked for the London Missionary Society and had written about southern Africa and India. Cleall stresses that notions of 'difference' led Europeans to seek out unconverted areas. While gender and religion were important factors, ethnicity was the main mechanism of division. A watershed was systematically constructed between 'white' and 'black' and, concomitantly, between a Western self-image as 'civilized' and Christian and a representation of indigenous people as 'uncivilized' and 'pagan'. Nuance had no place in this; to all intents and purposes, there were two 'species'. 'Other' automatically meant 'less' (Cleall 2012:3–6).

While missionaries acknowledged that the colonized too had been created by God as part of one big family, in their writings they foregrounded the fact of their severe moral underdevelopment. In its optimism, the Enlightenment took a stadial approach to 'race': indigenous peoples would eventually climb up along a 'single route of "progress"' and join the Europeans in civilization. Not until the end of the nineteenth century was a biological explanation sought to account for any differences. Yet whatever the missionaries' views about the indigenous, their ambition invariably harboured a contradiction. On the one hand, they wished to bring civilization; on the other hand, though, the indi-

genous would never catch up. However hard they strove to adapt to European standards, they would always be inferior (Cleall 2012:4–6).

What is Roorda's position on this? Inspired by the Enlightenment, he regarded indigenous people as underdeveloped, yet he also believed that progress was possible. He repeatedly described 'pagans' as 'fellow humans in their natural state', who had simply not been touched yet by Christian revelation. It was too facile to call them 'numbskulls and nitwits', as some know-alls did. There definitely were indigenous people with a keen mind; they had simply been led astray by their 'superstition'. It was as though they were still drinking 'from a pool of mud'. This would change once the 'waters of life' also flowed in the Indies (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:154; II:80); then they would automatically progress up the ladder of civilization. Roorda's verdict on indigenous people was, in other words, relatively mild (cf. Huigen 2015:55).

A good example of what the mission might achieve was set by the wife of preacher and missionary Joseph Kam, who had been spreading Christianity on Ambon since 1815. In 1815 he had married an 'indigenous' (Roorda meant 'Indo-European') woman. Roorda does not give her name, but we know that she was Sara Maria Timmerman, born in Ambon in 1816 (Köffler 1907:19). Even though she was of Indies descent, Roorda found her to be virtuous and kind, with a good head on her shoulders, and in possession of discernment 'and a most felicitous memory'. This had everything to do with the Christian education she had received from her mother: 'Her heart, cleansed by pure godliness, beats for the true virtue.' Despite her skin colour, she was a Christian, and that was the only thing that mattered. Roorda praised the 'pleasant and truly Christian life' that Kam's wife led (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:101).

For all that, the contradiction pointed out by Cleall also featured in Roorda's accounts: ultimately, the indigenous (and Indo-Europeans) would always remain 'different' and never become the Europeans' equals. While staying in Makassar he sarcastically remarked that he would never fall in love with an 'Indies beauty', because her colour 'takes away so much from the impression, which a beautiful poise and occasionally a finely chiselled face would make'. White would always remain superior. Whatever they did, however high indigenous people climbed the ladder of civilization, they would forever remain inferior, 'almost white but not quite', or: 'almost the same, but not white' (Bhabha 2004:123, 128).

## 7 Immorality and False Faith

The manner in which missionaries portrayed the indigenous legitimized both their mission and their presence in non-Western areas, Cleall argues. She explored three themes in her book: family, sickness, and violence. First, her analysis centred on how missionaries described indigenous family structures in their texts. Notably, they usually looked favourably on any similarities to European culture they observed and frowned upon such deviations as polygamy. Indigenous families were frequently represented as 'perversions of what was "natural"' (Cleall 2012:46). 'Miscegenation' of European and indigenous cultures was therefore considered dangerous. Missionaries in India made repeated mention of ill-treatment of women. In any event, such representations legitimized intervening in the lives of non-Western people.

Unlike the English missionaries, Roorda rarely touches upon indigenous family relations. This can be explained by the fact that the 'colour line' had already been drawn in the British empire by the 1820s, whereas this did not happen until around 1900 in the Dutch East Indies (cf. Rosen Jakobson 2018:37–40, 44–6; Van 't Veer 2020). Given his specific task—to survey the state of Christian education and Christendom—Roorda favoured more generalizing descriptions of 'immoral' scenes in his travel text. He fiercely criticized the, in his eyes, shameless 'lasciviousness' that he observed, the great number of 'illegitimate' children, and the many 'instances of whoring and adultery'. He occasionally even refused to baptize a person because of his or her conduct, as happened with a girl who was cohabiting with someone in an 'improper relationship' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:77, 156). This was common practice, even among the Christianized population of Makassar, Roorda found to his horror:

Morals fare no better, since almost all Christians commit adultery, which they call *living with a Njai*. All the children, baptized by myself in both places, are illegitimate. None blushes with shame at his behaviour, while another does the same and habit has made the vice an established practice. Is this Christianity? Are these disciples of the Holy Jesus?

ROORDA VAN EYSINGA 1830–1832, I:167

'Whoring', which attracted 'lechers', was also rife on the Moluccas. Girls had intercourse with several men: 'Amid such creatures, shame can find no place.' Matters were so bad, even, that Roorda refused to celebrate 'Holy Communion' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:152).

Another 'one-horse village' presented an equally disgraceful situation: 'Youngsters remain ignorant, uncivilized, and run wild.' Young men walked

around naked, so that European women had to be kept away from them for reasons of decency. But one could hardly blame them: 'These fellows are to be regarded, in a moral sense, as the equivalent of children.' This 'degenerate' situation justified the presence of the Dutch in the Indies: they were to bring Christian 'civilization'. This, in turn, called for education since most indigenous people were illiterate (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:130–1).

Roorda was particularly interested in people's religion; after all, this was part of his brief. He came into contact with 'pagans' as well as Christians. To his astonishment, the 'Alfurs' on Sulawesi did not believe in God. Priests, temples, a holy book: they had none. It should be easy to win them over to Christianity, he reasoned (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:123). Converting Muslims proved a great deal more difficult. In order to demonstrate that this mission was far from hopeless, Roorda's chosen strategy was to represent Islam as a false faith. On Java, religion did not amount to much, he found: the Javanese seldom attended the mosque and scarcely followed the teachings of the prophet. Though they did not eat pork, they did drink alcohol, despite the Koran's prohibition. He arrived in Sumedang on the day after a feast, attended by many notables who, in defiance of the teachings of Muhammad, had drunk so much that they 'rolled under the table' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:200, 212).

Muslims were also immoderate, according to Roorda. In Makassar he attended a celebration held by a prince to mark the circumcision of his granddaughter and four other princesses. Roorda does not say a great deal about this misogynistic ritual. He noted that the circumcision was usually not mentioned, with the 'dental filing' emphasized instead. During this ceremony, the girl's front teeth would be filed down, after which a splendid banquet was held. The room was so filled with food that it disgusted Roorda. How very different to the governor's 'neat, well-provided' table. The same immoderation was seen in house interiors. On Sulawesi, a prince put him and his party up in a room furnished with such gaudy curtains that it almost resembled a 'waffle stall at a Dutch fair'. Roorda's verdict: 'Things looked so grotesque that we kept each other awake with our droll banter and made each other laugh so much that we shook' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:27, 33–5, 39, 125).

The indigenous princes' clothing and jewellery were similarly over the top. The king of Goa near Makassar dressed in flashy, gold-and-silver-stitched gowns with solid gold epaulettes. His wife wore diamond-studded rings and their children were so 'hung with gold chains, rings, medals, and medallions' that they aroused Roorda's sympathy: the jewellery left welts on their neck, arms, and legs (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:29–32). Not only was this material excess in stark contrast to Christian austerity, but Roorda also implied that this wealth was tainted.

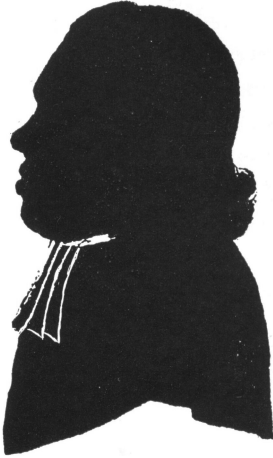


FIGURE 6  
Shadow portrait of Sytze Roorda van Eysinga  
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN WERTHEIM AND  
WERTHEIM-GIJSE WEENINK (1968, FACING P. 96)

Imams also came in for criticism from Roorda. Their knowledge of Islam proved limited. In the Moluccas he had a discussion with an imam who knew next to nothing about the prophet. Roorda, who had read the Koran thoroughly, turned out to be the more knowledgeable: 'He had no more answer to many questions and objections than: "*Tra boli lain, tuwhan Allah mau* (it can't be helped, it is God's will)."' With these words, he looked most devoutly up into the sky, and put his hand on his heart' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 11:64). If even an imam was unfamiliar with the teachings of Islam, it surely could not be difficult to convert the Muslims.

For the conversion to be successful, the Dutch had to emanate superiority; only then could the indigenous people's hearts be won over to Christianity. In Makassar he found that the missionary H.N. Buttenaar exacted payment for all his duties, even baptism. He was, therefore, no better than the indigenous princes who exploited the population. Roorda called him haughty, pretentious, and uncivilized. His sermons were bad and he sent pupils away from catechism classes without reason. What Roorda found most deplorable was that he forbade cohabitation with a '*njal*', yet surreptitiously lived together with a 'young slave girl' himself. The only way to improve the situation in the Indies was to send more 'lawful' preachers there (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:88–9, 90–2).

## 8 A Sick Colony

'Sickness' is a second theme in Cleall's study. With their focus on sickness and misery, missionaries portrayed the colonized as vulnerable, helpless, and dependent on the West. They thus forged a binary opposition between sick (the colony) and healthy (the West). This in turn led to missionaries being tasked with helping the colonized. After all, they had science on their side; it would be inhumane not to intervene and to leave the indigenous to their sorry fate. Christianity was represented as a medicine. This does not imply that missionaries were never ill themselves; but if they were, this was merely a temporary deviation from normal health. The idea was that the 'Western' body was far more complex than the 'Eastern' body. The illnesses of indigenous people would be easily cured (Cleall 2012:81–2, 97–8).

Like the texts of English missionaries, Roorda's account repeatedly focuses attention—occasionally in passing—on the sicknesses that the indigenous population was powerless against. Firstly, he argued, there were venereal diseases, which he linked to the 'immoral' lifestyles mentioned above. As he was touring Java, on his way to Cirebon, he noted that the 'horrible signs of venereal diseases' could be observed everywhere on his rides. Sulawesi, too, had a high incidence of 'venereal ailments', among Muslims and even among Christians, who were usually more set on 'cleanliness and purity': 'This dreadful ailment is rampant here with all those dreadful symptoms that we see mentioned in the Bible. One needs to be careful when buying something, as this disease is, indeed, contagious and transmissible. So *impure, impure!*' Given this biblical exclamation, Roorda probably ascribed the effects of the skin disease leprosy to a sexually transmitted disease (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:52–3, 217).

There were other diseases that the indigenous population could not arm itself against. In the vicinity of Cirebon, Roorda encountered many people suffering from leprosy, 'which illness is so well-known in the higher regions of Java'. In Makassar he rendered assistance to an 'unfortunate young man' suffering from leprosy, who had also been born deaf and dumb and lived in poverty. His situation filled him with pity, as he understood how limited the young man's ideas 'about God, the Redeemer, and immortality' must be. But Roorda realized that no more could be demanded from the boy than what he knew: he therefore prayed for the health of both his body and soul (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:217; II:59).

The plague had likewise caused great suffering among the indigenous. Off Cirebon lay a mudbank that contaminated the air and constituted a health hazard, Roorda noted. The Javanese, however, failed to tackle the problem: 'One

need not wonder at the terrible stench in many places, nor at the destruction, repeatedly wreaked in this little town by the plague.' At the time, *cholera morbus*, also termed 'Asiatic cholera', had especially claimed a great many victims. This was an infection of the gastro-intestinal tract that caused vomiting, severe diarrhoea, and 'cramp and pain in the intestines'. Roorda supported and tended to a number of sufferers up until their deaths. The disease hit the indigenous population mercilessly. Of the one thousand inhabitants of the island Kodingareng (off Makassar), 449 succumbed to the disease (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:221; II:60, 62).

Fortunately, the Dutch arrived, bearing medical knowledge. Roorda stressed in his travel text how Western physicians were conducting research into the cause of the illness. A want of 'cleanliness and purity' was one factor. Then, bad drinking water, 'miserable food, given the high prices of rice', and putrid bodies that were not given a timely burial all produced a negative effect. Europeans could catch the disease, but they usually did not die from it, Roorda knew from personal experience. One night, he was plagued by cold feet, belly cramps, and nausea. At five in the morning, he sent for a doctor, who administered some drops of laudanum, after which he recovered quickly, enabling him to resume his duties (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:42, 48; II:60).

Indigenous people were deprived of such 'modern' medical care. Roorda was amazed at the primitive remedies they turned to for protection. Some of 'these folk' wore high shoes to ward off the harmful influence that the damp soil in the monsoon season was believed to have on the chance of catching the disease. When a person was infected, the patient was left lying in a draughty place and made to drink brackish water. Many believed that an evil spirit—'Pangrola'—caused the illness. It was beyond Roorda's comprehension: 'He must have assumed a new office, then.' The indigenous tried to chase Pangrola off with loud knocking sounds. Roorda remarked sarcastically: 'He must be a rather nervous sort of devil' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:42–3, 48). And yet, this kind of 'superstition' deeply fascinated him. One day, Roorda accompanied the governor to a nearby kampong. Upon their approach, the 'natives' initially fled inside but, their minds eased by the governor, they reappeared one by one to talk:

They told us that *Pangrola* rode through the sky in a fiery chariot, and that they had heard, but not seen him that day. The *glarang* (chief) attested that he did not believe a thing about *Pangrola*. And was this man so much more enlightened than his contemporaries and co-believers? Oh no, but that is how people squirm their way out of something; he wished to appear a little better in our eyes. Unfortunately, he deceived himself

and became the more despicable because of his dissimulation. Still, had they not heard something? Oh yes, a waterspout, which passed above the forest and, also, the roaring of the sea. Thus, one could observe the same phenomenon in Holland, without the devil.

ROORDA VAN EYSINGA 1830–1832, I:43–4

Roorda sets the superior Enlightenment of ‘the West’ against the ignorant ‘superstition’ of ‘the East’. The effect is clear: these primitive people are in dire need of Dutch help.

The fight against children’s diseases presented a rather similar picture. Smallpox led to massive child mortality rates in many places. Europe had by now come up with a remedy to protect children: cowpox vaccination. Resistance to receiving the vaccine was only offered in orthodox-protestant circles. In the Indies, many indigenous people who were Christians refused to be vaccinated, as, for instance, was the case on Ternate, where almost the entire population was Christian. Elsewhere in the Moluccas the Dutch had started vaccinating. There was a belief that once the indigenous people had been persuaded of the need to be vaccinated, things would progress more quickly. This again called for better education: ‘I believe that the problem lies with a lack of knowledge, and that its promotion is not being paid sufficient attention’ (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 11:175). Such were the ways, then, in which the Dutch aspired to make the ‘sick’ colony (more) wholesome. Roorda’s manner of representation perfectly matches Cleall’s findings, even when the specific diseases he focuses on in his text may be characteristic of the Dutch Indies context.

## 9 Horror and Violence

The last theme that Cleall turns to is violence. As the missionaries’ gaze was directed towards anything that was ‘different’, they also frequently wrote about matters that from a European perspective would be labelled cruel and violent. Indigenous people were not merely lazy and indolent but also murderous, belligerent, and dangerous. Their violent character was allied to the fact that they were ‘pagans’. Islam in particular was associated with tyranny and fanaticism. A focus on indigenous violence disguised the colonial violence perpetrated by the English. Depicting indigenous barbarism was one of the strategies used to justify Empire: the British would ensure that the world would become a place without violence. Colonialism was thus represented as a ‘friend of humanity’ (Cleall 2012:138).

This manner of representation clearly also features in Roorda's texts. He too almost incessantly portrayed indigenous people as cruel. Their true nature was very often already apparent from their looks. The number of 'villainous physiognomies' was great, he noted on Java. He travelled from Bandung to pay a regent a visit. Despite the latter's friendly reception of him, Roorda could not stand him: 'His physiognomy had something very unfavourable and repellent for me.' It betrayed his 'wicked heart', of which Roorda had heard many an example. Another indigenous prince showed his true colours while dancing: 'He danced the Malay way (*tandakte*), stamped his feet, screamed, [and] dashed towards us, as if we were to be stabbed' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:44–5, 207, 217).

Muslim leaders in particular came in for fierce criticism from Roorda. Their actions evidenced their belligerence and 'extreme envy, so that one happily sees the other's downfall, in order to build his own magnificence upon the ravages of the unfortunate's honour' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:27). Such 'heads' even tyrannized their own subjects:

The one of Siedinring [on Sulawesi] is extremely wealthy and has no need to oppress anyone. But if he is filled with hatred towards someone, his now eighty-six-year-old and grey head ponders the cruellest punishments. To have a human being, his hands bound upon his back, sprawled out in the sun, starve to death, or to tie a bag, filled with stones, around his neck and drown him in the sea, these are the trifling matters where he is merciful, otherwise, he has people flogged to death, or worse.

ROORDA VAN EYSINGA 1830–1832, I:36

The king of Goa on Sulawesi was possibly even worse. Besides cruel, he was greedy. If he found out that one of his subjects owned something of value, he had one of his own buffaloes untied, in the dead of night, and tied up under the innocent's house. In the morning a search would be held, with the buffalo found and the 'theft' of the beast allegedly proven. This was the king's opportunity to claim the 'unfortunate's' goods: 'This is how the lesser rulers treat their inferiors, and so it goes down to the level of the poorest.' When the paddy fields looked promising, the king's envoys would appear to make demands on the rice. The king subsequently gifted the ill-gotten goods elsewhere to create a good impression on the Dutch. Roorda, for one, was given a New Year's present of eight chickens by the ruler of Goa. He had earlier received a live buffalo. Knowing these to have been obtained through plunder, Roorda was not keen on them. Courtesy, however, did not allow him to refuse the gifts (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:36–7, 45, 70).

This 'cursed avarice' required firm action, Roorda argued: 'The people there and elsewhere would be happy under the Dutch government, and could easily pay fair taxes, but all this oppression and extortion makes one lose courage.' If these 'bouts of plundering' were forbidden, hunger and insurrection would likewise cease to exist. The population was to be protected against its own leaders: 'This country deserves better government under wise laws.' There was a role in this for preachers, too. If they succeeded in bringing 'enlightenment, civilization, consolation and improvement, the happiness of indigenous people would surely increase'. Roorda continued: 'At present, they are ignorant and obdurate Muslims, so that change is not to be thought of; but better days lie ahead, when Lord Jesus reigns here too. Blessed is the man who will pave the way for this, which I have been unable to do yet!' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:46, 58, 70, 73, 78, 138–9). In other words, Roorda also established a link between violence and Islam in his travel account.

That indigenous people were weighed down by the tyranny of their kings did not mean, incidentally, that they themselves were peace-loving. Roorda depicts them as thieves, robbers, and criminals. His house on Java had been burgled not once, not twice but as often as ten times, until his son fired a shower of shot at the burglar (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 11:320). The reverend did not flinch from using his pistol and double-barrelled gun himself: these were the only things that could scare these 'children of darkness'. The rule here was, in Roorda's words: 'Whoever attacks you thus by night must be shot dead at once' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 11:25, 54). The Westerner had the right to defend himself: he merely acted in response to indigenous violence.

Roorda's travel account is larded with all kinds of horror stories that aimed to illustrate the allegedly violent and heartless nature of indigenous people. The Makassar population, for example, was 'cunning, suspicious, false, lazy, greedy and murderous'. During his stay there, a sergeant was assaulted and knifed to death, and the entire floor covered in blood. His wife, a 'Makassarese woman', was unperturbed by his death. One morning a 'newly born child, still attached to the placenta' was found dead. It had been sewn in a bag and discarded by its Javanese parents. On another day, a 'native' stabbed a girl, injured his sister, and butchered his mother like an animal, because he suspected her of having committed adultery and to have been assisted by the girl and his sister. What shocked Roorda most was that the boy was not even insane or drunk or had used too much opium. According to Roorda, he had acted in 'cold composure' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:55, 72, 77; 11:73).

Poisonings were also frequent: 'If someone stands in another's way, if a woman is jealous of an unfaithful lover, some little nugget (*papje*) is soon

delivered that sends him to kingdom come.' 'Throats were cut' at the slightest provocation. Or, it would happen that a 'native' would run up dicing debts (usually with a Chinese gambler who had outsmarted him), would be unable to pay, and would then stab the creditor to death. This would not bring back peace, however: in his anger he would try to kill as many people as he could (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:77, 113; II:58).

The more inhospitable areas harboured horrors of a different kind. The island of Flores, Roorda claimed, was inhabited by 'savage Papuans' who beheaded and ate people: 'This sort of folk is a band of bloodthirsty murderers, who behead all white people wherever they can. They have a heavy knife, or parang, with which they attempt to decapitate someone in one stroke.' In the Moluccas too, 'headhunting' was still prevalent at the time. The head of a girl about to be baptized had been 'hunted' while she was fetching water. A headhunter was hero-worshipped and had the right to marry a girl. He could also 'lay claim to the first part of the skull; but at the feast of dividing it, he will also give something to the witnesses, to his blood relatives and friends. An ear, a tooth, yes! The hair is something of value' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:89, 150–1).

It was the missionaries' task to make the indigenous people understand that such deeds, even though they were part of tradition, were irreconcilable with the teachings of Jesus. 'Brother Kam' told Roorda that when he arrived in the Moluccas, 'headhunting' was still widespread. Fortunately, Christianity had greatly decreased the practice. Christianization made the Indies a better place: 'How desirable even for the government, and for the safety of the Christians!' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, II:126, 141).

As do the English missionaries in their accounts, Roorda largely cloaks the violence perpetrated by the Dutch. Only very rarely does he write about military actions. He represents the colonization of the Indies as a humanitarian project: the Dutch would put an end to indigenous violence and make the Indies a just and safe place. Sometimes, this required military force, as when the king of Tontoli on Sulawesi fired at some Dutchmen. He got his just reward: 'His dalem [palace], all the houses, the mosque, thirty-five warcraft, or heavy pirate ships, and another two hundred and sixty proas were burnt' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, I:188–9). But this act of violence was, again, in response to earlier violence and merely meant to bring peace.

In order to make a success of the colonial mission, the Dutch needed to display exemplary behaviour towards 'ordinary' indigenous people, Roorda felt, so as to underline their superiority. That in VOC times Christians had been involved in the 'accursed' slave trade in the Indies, which emanated from indigenous tradition, was 'bestly', Roorda thought. It was not only serfs who were

sold: 'whoever was out on the street alone at night was snared, stopped, his cries for help stifled, bound, dragged inside a house, and sold afterwards'. Happily, the government had meanwhile put an end to such scenes 'in honour of mankind' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:50–1).

## 10 Conclusion

This article has highlighted the texts that Sytze Roorda van Eysinga wrote about three journeys he made in the Indies archipelago between 1821 and 1824. To the present day, the study of travel writing has not specifically directed attention to the preacher's perspective. Roorda's is a good case study to analyse how the colony and its original inhabitants were represented by a clergyman. Because he was a prominent church minister and a friend of Governor-General Van der Capellen, it is quite possible that in his observations and opinions he also expressed points of view that were prevalent within the Dutch colonial administration. Unfortunately, no other sources have been preserved to provide information on this. We also do not know whether he was given a specific assignment by the government. But because Roorda was close to Van der Capellen, it is likely that his representations were more widely shared among the colonial rulers.

As he traversed the Indies, Sytze Roorda van Eysinga portrayed the colony as an earthly 'paradise', where he experienced the presence of God close by. This attests to his physico-theological world picture, which is characteristic of the early nineteenth-century perspective of the preacher. But his outlook was equally affected by the fact that he was a minister in government service, tasked with inspecting Christian religion and education in the colony. This may explain why he, like the naturalists mentioned above, also focused on the colony's fertility, natural resources, and future cultivation. In addition, he wrote extensively about the indigenous population while travelling. What is notable here is his belief in the indigenous people's ability to progress up the ladder of civilization. They might be slower, lazier, and more superstitious than Europeans, but once Christian revelation were to accrue to these 'fellow humans', this would automatically change. Roorda himself did not yet realize that this mission was doomed, given that indigenous people would ultimately remain inferior in the eyes of white society, however much they adapted to European standards of civilization. Roorda, in other words, was stuck in the optimistic stage of the Enlightenment. This is the reason why he repeatedly stressed that Europeans should also showcase their superiority through their actions: after all, they were to lead by example.

Roorda's representations of the indigenous population have been analysed using insights from the book *Missionary discourses of difference* by Esme Cleall. We have seen that he wrote about the moral state of affairs, sickness, and violence in ways that resemble how English missionaries in southern Africa and India wrote about these topics in the 1840s. Where he differed was that he paid less attention to indigenous family structures and wrote more about the population's overall moral and religious state owing to the specific nature of his brief. Yet, like the missionaries studied by Cleall, he portrayed the colony's indigenous population as 'different', 'sick', and 'violent', whereby he associated the latter trait with Islam, as did the missionaries in India in their accounts. Roorda, too, depicted Dutch colonialism as a noble cause, aimed at promoting charity and peace: it was a Christian duty to improve public morals, cure diseases, and combat violence—even if this required military force: that was collateral damage, a necessary side effect of bringing peace. The hunter thus heaped all the blame on his prey (Price 2018:41). Only then could an era of happiness and prosperity be ushered in in the Indies. This image matches the British representations of the early nineteenth century.

According to Roorda, the Dutch were duty-bound to intervene in the lives of the colony's original inhabitants. 'Pagan' traditions and rituals were to be dismantled. He did not concur with the view of the erstwhile governor of Makassar, H.T. Kruijthoff, that indigenous people 'were to be left alone and allowed to keep all their old *biasas* or customs, however sinful, superstitious and opposed to Christianity they might be, and to be granted the freedom whether or not to make use of church and school'. This opinion he shared with the Resident of Saparua, K. Smidt de Haardt, who, according to Roorda, took part in 'idolatrous feasts'. Roorda believed that in doing so he engaged in some 'dreadful politics' (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 11:153–4). In this respect, the English did a much better job, as they pursued a policy of propagating British morals and discouraging acculturation. Roorda regretted that this example did not continue following the restoration of the Indies to the Netherlands in 1816.

However strongly Roorda advocated showcasing European standards to the indigenous population, he could see for himself that it was far from easy to maintain such behaviour. He detested, for example, how Europeans accepted presents from indigenous people, yet he was unable to refuse them himself: this was, after all, the custom. He was rewarded, for instance, with a pair of fine, valuable golden shoe buckles by a man whom he had taught catechism (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 1:100).

Roorda showed an ambiguous attitude towards slavery. Even though he showed himself a vigorous opponent of slavery (he had not come into the world

to 'buy fellow humans for money'), he could not help acquiring a slave en route to Ambon, since he was unable to find a servant. He bought an indigenous boy from an 'elder' from Makassar, a thirteen-year-old lad with 'curly hair, snow white teeth' and a 'sturdy stature'. Roorda resolved to treat him well, bought new clothes for him, and occasionally slipped him a little 'pocket money'. But he soon found that the boy was 'depraved' and stole money. It was intolerable: Roorda gave him a sound thrashing and threatened to sell him to a Chinese buyer ('of whom all slaves are extremely fearful') (Roorda van Eysinga 1830–1832, 11:92–3). Ideals of showcasing the superior European culture and bringing 'civilization' were laudable, but reality could occasionally be unruly, his own actions show. In any event, Sytze Roorda van Eysinga's travel account provides a good insight into the colonial ideology of a preacher in the Dutch East Indies in the first half of the nineteenth century.

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