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# Serving Colony, Christ, and Country: The Political Career of Levinus Keuchenius<sup>\*</sup>

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This article explores the career of Levinus Keuchenius to elaborate on how democratic governance lay at the heart of negotiating imperial power, as well as who belonged in the Dutch political community. Throughout his career, Keuchenius balanced being a colonial expert with his faith as orthodox Calvinist. However, political representation of the Dutch colonies depended on the willingness of members of the bicameral parliament in The Hague to take an interest in the overseas territories. Colonial rule had been a royal prerogative ever since the Congress of Vienna restored the kingdom of the Netherlands as an independent state with colonial possessions in modern-day Indonesia and the Caribbean. As the last remaining stronghold of royal authority, the colonies became instrumental in this metropolitan power struggle. Keuchenius's parliamentary career coincided with a transition from an era where the notion of MPs' independence was valorised towards one where party members were increasingly expected to act on behalf of an exclusively metropolitan electorate.

**Keywords:** Netherlands history; colonial representation; Levinus Keuchenius; Dutch East Indies; Anti-Revolutionary Party; Calvinism; settler identities; remigration

One day was how much time Levinus Keuchenius allowed himself in Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) to consider the telegram notifying him of his election to the Dutch parliament in July 1879. Even though Keuchenius sent word to accept his election soon after receiving the news, his official letter would never reach his constituency within the required three weeks as stipulated in the Election Act, 'which apparently had never considered elections of persons who lived in the Indies'.<sup>1</sup> Compatriots in Batavia congratulated him and 'considered his appointment as a blessing for the Indies, which was in dire need of powerful and loving support in the chamber'.<sup>2</sup> This episode encapsulates the strenuous relationship between the colonies and democratic governance in the Netherlands.

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<sup>1</sup> Archief van Abraham Kuyper (hereafter AAK), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, inv. nr. 121–318, Correspondentie zoals beschreven in het 'Brievenboek', 1879–februari 1880: L.W.C. Keuchenius to A. Kuyper, 26 July 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek (hereafter KB), Nagelaten Papieren van Levinus Wilhelmus Christiaan Keuchenius, 68, E 18 – Kamerverkiezingen, 3. Gorinchem 1879: Van Nispen to Keuchenius, 14 June 1879.

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Political representation for the Dutch colonies depended on the willingness of members of the bicameral parliament in The Hague to take an interest in the overseas territories. In the Hague, however, colonial rule had been a royal prerogative ever since the Congress of Vienna (1814–15) had restored the kingdom of the Netherlands as an independent state with colonial possessions in modern-day Indonesia and the Caribbean. The absence of a legislature meant that the executive branch dominated the colonial government. Until 1900, maximising financial profit characterised colonial rule. At the same time domestic politics were dominated by the struggle between liberals and conservatives over the balance of power between king and parliament. As the last remaining stronghold of royal authority, the colonies became instrumental in this metropolitan power struggle.<sup>3</sup> This article explores Levinus Keuchenius's career to elaborate upon how democratic governance lay at the heart of negotiating imperial power as much as negotiating who belonged in the Dutch political community.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Re-Migrant and Parliamentary Culture*

In the first decades of the 19th century, returning expats, or re-migrants, played a numerically marginal role in metropolitan politics. From the 1850s onwards, their numbers would gradually increase, and it is safe to suggest that this increase went hand in hand with the growing reliance of the Dutch state budget on profits derived from forced labour in the Netherlands Indies and the growing say of parliament in the colonial budget. The Dutch state received a direct income from overseas, but it restricted migration to the Dutch Indies.<sup>5</sup> A headcount tells us that former colonial officials or entrepreneurs could never outweigh the other MPs or ministers in the period between 1814 and 1900. Their share in executive positions (22.1 per cent) was significantly higher compared to their stake in parliamentary seats (5.4 per cent). Whereas studies on Dutch elections and politicians' socio-economic backgrounds have noted this colonial connection only in passing, returning expats from the Netherlands Indies – so-called *oudgasten* – did become a phenomenon in the Dutch elite.<sup>6</sup> Liberal MP Daniël van Eck, for example, wrote an insightful parliamentary memoir in which he described his colonial peers as members of the officious 'East India Club'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Maarte Janse, 'Representing Distant Victims: The Emergence of an Ethical Movement in Dutch Colonial Politics, 1840–1880', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* (hereafter *BMGN–LCHR*), cxxviii (2013), 53–80.

<sup>4</sup>For the conventional position of Keuchenius in parliamentary history, see Jouke Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag. De Uitvinding van de Tweede Kamer 1848–1888* (Amsterdam, 2008), ch. 5.

<sup>5</sup>For the cultivation system responsible for the taxation generating the income, see Janny de Jong, 'Van Batig Slot naar Ereschuld: Een Onderzoek naar de Ideeën over de Financiële Verhouding tussen Nederland en Indië in de Negentiende Eeuw', Rijksuniversiteit Groningen PhD, 1982. On restricted migration, see Ulbe Bosma and Kees Mandemakers, 'Indiëgangers: Sociale Herkomst en Migratiemotieven (1830–1950). Een Onderzoek op Basis van de Historische Steekproef Nederlandse Bevolking (HSN)', *BMGN–LCHR*, cxiii (2008), 162–84.

<sup>6</sup>Jaap Moes, *Onder Aristocraten: Over Hegemonie, Welstand en Aanzien van Adel, Patriciaat en Andere Notabelen in Nederland, 1848–1914* (Hilversum, 2012), 102, 255, 260; J.Th.J. van den Berg, *De Toegang tot het Binnenhof: De Maatschappelijke Herkomst van de Tweede Kamerleden tussen 1849–1970* (Weesp 1983).

<sup>7</sup>*Memoires van een Enfant Terrible: Politieke Herinneringen van de Zeeuwse Liberale Afgevaardigde Mr. Daniël van Eck aan Vijfendertig Jaar Kamerlidmaatschap 1849–1884*, ed. Daniel Van Eck and C.A. Tamse (Middelburg, 1975).

What unites historical studies of the re-migrants in Dutch politics is a search for group formation among them that is to some extent quantifiable.<sup>8</sup> And yet the lack of coherent voting or formal political organisation, which has led historians to doubt whether an 'autonomous colonial party' emerged in the Netherlands during the mid 19th century, should not be reason to dismiss the East India Club as merely an 'imagination' dreamt up in a parliamentary memoir. Rather, it should invite us to think again about what united re-migrants' contribution in parliament if their colonial background did not necessarily translate into similar votes or party allegiance? The following study, which draws on Keuchenius's private papers, election adverts, speeches and popular publications, offers an alternative explanation for the lack of group-formation among colonial re-migrants in parliament. Keuchenius balanced being a colonial expert and an orthodox Calvinist in a parliamentary context that was moving from the ideal of the independent MP towards a context in which MPs were increasingly expected to identify with a party, and to act on behalf of the interests of their exclusively metropolitan electorate. So rather than striving for a colonial lobby, each repatriated politician had to find his place within a parliamentary culture shaped by domestic concerns.

As other contributions to this special issue indicate, the boundaries between metropole and colony in political careers were fluid. In particular, John Mitcham shows how ideas of imperial expertise and transnational Britishness enabled politicians to forge careers that crossed national borders.<sup>9</sup> The politicians he discusses built on a 19th-century tradition whereby MPs claimed to represent the concerns of colonists and commercial interests at Westminster, a process which, as we shall see, had its parallels in the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup> A thriving literature is exploring the development of imperial careers and how they shaped the exchange of political ideas in the British empire during the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly through the figure of the 're-migrant', returning after experience in the colonies.<sup>11</sup> In the Netherlands, prime ministers who started their careers in the colonies have attracted the attention of biographers, as has the broader topic of (post)colonial biographies.<sup>12</sup> But what happens if we put political-imperial careers under scrutiny to see how the colonies have also shaped Dutch metropolitan political culture?

<sup>8</sup>For key analyses, see S.L. van der Wal, 'De Nederlandse Expansie in Indonesië in de Tijd van het Modern Imperialisme: De Houding van de Nederlandse Regering en de Politieke Partijen', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, lxxxvi (1971), 47–54; Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag*, 7–13; Siep Stuurman, *Verzuiling, Kapitalisme en Patriarchaat: Aspecten van de Ontwikkeling van de Moderne Staat in Nederland* (Nijmegen, 1983), 310–11; Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism. Colonies and Foreign Policy, 1870–1902* (New York, 1991), 45–6.

<sup>9</sup>See also David Thackeray's article in this special issue.

<sup>10</sup>Miles Taylor, 'Colonial Representation at Westminster, c.1800–65', in *Parliaments, Nations and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660–1850*, ed. Julian Hoppit (Manchester, 2003), 210, 212.

<sup>11</sup>Amongst the key contributions are Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge, 2002); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815–1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester, 2005), esp. 5; David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction. Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects', in *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Career in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge, 2006), 1–31; Marjory Harper, *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600–2000* (Manchester, 2005); Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-century History* (Princeton, NJ, 2011), esp. 12, 68–9.

<sup>12</sup>The most prominent example is Paul Consten, *I.D. Fransen van de Putte (1822–1902). Het Leven van een Selfmade Politicus* (Nijmegen, 2019). See also *Tropenlevens: De (Post)koloniale Biografie*, ed. Rosemarijn Hoeffte, Peter Meel and Hans Renders (Leiden, 2008).

I shall discuss the difficulties colonial men experienced in obtaining a seat in parliament and making their mark in political debates. Colonial newspapers complained that attempts to organise the re-migrants from the Netherlands Indies in an electoral club failed because of a lack of interest and as a result of the activity of the former entrepreneurs and officials.<sup>13</sup> The rise of colonial re-migrants entering politics from the 1850s onwards coincided with a growing anti-revolutionary spirit in the Netherlands, characterised by classic republican fears about commerce's tendency to weaken the spirit of patriotism.<sup>14</sup> According to the published writings of a colonial civil servant, Dutchmen in the colonies lived by the adage 'make money and go home'.<sup>15</sup> 'Coffee, sugar and promotion' occupied their minds at the expense of their attention to politics, literature, music and painting.<sup>16</sup> This anti-revolutionary spirit notwithstanding, the fiercest political debates concerned colonial matters, which caused even the anti-revolutionaries in parliament to bolster their ranks with a colonial expert: Keuchenius.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Dutch Political Community, Parliament and 'Those Colonial Gents'*

The introduction of direct parliamentary elections in 1848 led to debate about the role of colonial men in the Dutch political community. Former financial director-general in the Dutch Indies, Johan D. Kruseman published the pamphlet *Bold Thoughts on Colonial Matters*. If the revised constitution of 1848 increased parliamentary control over colonial affairs, Kruseman argued that more MPs in the Netherlands should have imperial experience: 'Only those who for several years have served the state in either civil, military, or commercial capacities, or had owned or ruled estates, far away from their fatherland, in the East or West Indies' knew how to deal with colonial affairs, he claimed.<sup>18</sup> The spiritual father of the revised constitution Johan R. Thorbecke, however, thoroughly disagreed:

For [Kruseman] presupposes the assembly will follow the lead of the specialists. While the opposite is true ... The MP vigorously safeguards his independence. Besides, the so-called expert does not make a fine legislature. Experience matters little if thinking had not been involved in mastering a matter; when insight of the rules was not based on facts.<sup>19</sup>

Thorbecke's rejection of colonial specialists as MP resonated with the small Dutch male electorate. The colonial future looked dark according to former governor general Baud, 'with voters who did not see the added value of electing some colonial torch bearers in the

<sup>13</sup> Gerard Termorshuizen, *Journalisten en Heethoofden. Een Geschiedenis van de Indisch-Nederlandse dagbladpers 1744–1905* (Amsterdam, 2001), 153–4.

<sup>14</sup> James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2012), 82.

<sup>15</sup> G.J.P. Valette, *Baren en Oudgasten: Indische Schetsen* ('s-Gravenhage, 1880), 217.

<sup>16</sup> *Eer en Fortuin: Leven in Nederland en Indië 1824–1900: Autobiografie van Gouverneur-Generaal James Loudon*, ed. Henk Boels, Janny de Jong and C.A. Tamse (Amsterdam, 2003), 29.

<sup>17</sup> G.J. Schutte, 'Groen van Prinsterer en de Koloniën', in *Groen van Prinsterer in Europese Context*, ed. Jorien de Bruijn and George Harinck (Hilversum, 2004), 126.

<sup>18</sup> J.D. Kruseman, *Vrijmoedige Gedachten over Koloniale Aangelegenheden* ('s-Gravenhage 1848), 14–15.

<sup>19</sup> J.R. Thorbecke, *Bijdrage tot de Herziening der Grondwet* (Leiden, 1848), 30.

Chamber to make sure exploitation did not unearth in subversion'.<sup>20</sup> In 1850, other Dutch notables complained about 'the total lack of colonial representation', for the Caribbean did not have a representative at all in parliament.<sup>21</sup> Even though Thorbecke later altered his view on the role of specialists and generalists in parliament, this did not change the unpopularity of colonists as potential MPs.<sup>22</sup> Voter reluctance proved so resilient that former colonial civil servant Engelbertus de Waal – Thorbecke's confidant and tutee – publicly discussed the theme in the 1860s:

Those colonial gents, as many Dutch gather, have become unaccustomed to the Dutch way of contemplating state, provincial or council matters. After spending several years in societies as members of the ruling class, where subjection to that class determines the populace's character, authority is everything, they can hardly accommodate to Dutch circumstances. Not raised in the Dutch constitutional forms, nor trusted with purely Dutch matters through sustained contact, here they are almost aliens.

Quoting Thorbecke, De Waal noted that they "continue the colony as a separate community in the motherland". They shun, lament Dutch society. Is the Dutch voter to blame, when he, considering these objections, prefers to delegate his "own" men?<sup>23</sup>

De Waal did not blame his compatriots for believing that MPs should be born and bred in the Netherlands. He repeated Thorbecke's claim that colonial men had no place in the Dutch political community, because their absence from it had estranged them from its ways. As such, he believed their presence in parliament would trigger the creation of a separate grouping within Dutch political society. Colonists should only enter parliament if they had the general qualities to represent the whole community: 'A colonial man, possessing the moral and intellectual credentials for a Dutch representative, should be delegated because of those qualities rather than his colonial ones'.<sup>24</sup> Thorbecke and De Waal believed that politicians' actions should be guided by their conscience and that colonial experience would be of little benefit to the prospective MP. However, as the remainder of this article will demonstrate, while some of Thorbecke and De Waal's peers concurred with their stance, MPs with imperial experience were sought after for the reasons outlined by Kruseman. Yet, once elected, those MPs did not necessarily base their claims for expertise on their own imperial experience. MPs' adaptability, together with Thorbecke's dismissal of the value of lived imperial experience, has prevented historians of parliamentary history from properly

<sup>20</sup> *De Semi-officiële en Particuliere Briefwisseling Tussen J.C. Baud en J.J. Rochussen*, ed. W.A. Baud (3 vols, Assen, 1983), iii, 270; Baud to Rochussen, 22 Nov. 1848.

<sup>21</sup> *Groen van Prinsterer. Schriftelijke Nalatenschap: Briefwisseling*, iii (s-Gravenhage, 1949) no. 95; C.L. van Woerden to G. Groen van Prinsterer, 18 Sept. 1850, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> *Handelingen Tweede Kamer* (hereafter *HTK*), 1852–3, 8 July 1852, p. 308.

<sup>23</sup> Engelbertus de Waal, *De Koloniale Politiek der Grondwet en Hare Toepassing tot 1 Februari 1862: Een Historisch Handboek, met Eenige Opmerkingen* (Groningen, 1863), 360–1.

<sup>24</sup> De Waal, *De Koloniale Politiek*, 361–2. For debates about Dutch identity and imperial citizenship, see Henk te Velde, 'Between National Character and an International Model: Parliaments in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Ideal of Parliament in Europe since 1800*, ed. Remieg Aerts, Carla van Baalen, Henk te Velde, Margit van der Steen and Marie-Luise Recker (Basingstoke, 2019), 25–40; Lauren Lauret and Karwan Fatah-Black, 'Imperial Citizenship in the Netherlands', in *The Oxford Handbook of Dutch Politics*, ed. Sarah de Lange, Tom Louwerse, Paul 'T Hart and Carolien van Ham (forthcoming); For the idea of the ideal MP as a 'generalist' around this time, see Erie Tanja, *Goede Politiek: De Parlementaire Cultuur van de Tweede Kamer, 1866–1940* (Amsterdam, 2010), 99.

assessing re-migrants' impact on domestic political culture. A case study of Keuchenius's career offers the opportunity to reassess their impact, as he became a prominent figure in Dutch politics, meaning he had to deal with the above-mentioned prejudices regarding colonial men. Although his personal priorities made his political style singular in the eyes of contemporaries and historians alike, his struggle to abide by the conventions of the Dutch parliament deepens our understanding of parliamentary representation of the colonies in the age associated with democratisation.

*'Never to be Marked as an Indies Specialist'*

Born in Batavia in 1822, Levinus Keuchenius studied in the Netherlands and – with remarkable speed – climbed the colonial career ladder as lawyer, civil servant, and councillor at the high court. A stroke paralysed half his face, seriously hindering his speech, although rumours circulated claiming the Javanese had poisoned him.<sup>25</sup> While on an extended period of leave in the Netherlands, Keuchenius strengthened his metropolitan network by serving as secretary general at the colonial office (1854–9). His tenure largely coincided with the appointment of another Batavia-born man on leave in the Netherlands as minister of colonial affairs, Pieter Mijer. He appointed Keuchenius to the council of the Indies in 1859.<sup>26</sup> As a council member, Keuchenius closely followed parliamentary politics in the metropole, assisted by influential friends in the Netherlands, such as minister of colonial affairs Jan J. Rochussen.<sup>27</sup> Keuchenius reported his frustrations to Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, the political leader of the anti-revolutionaries in the Netherlands: 'I dare to say so loudly, and I allow you to do so on my behalf, that most speeches in parliament have led to irritation in *Indië*', since they boiled down to 'no reform nor improvement that will harm the colonial revenues'.<sup>28</sup>

Keuchenius's first election and term as MP in 1866 has been presented as a significant moment in the history of emerging party politics. Contemporaries and historians alike view him as the successor to anti-revolutionary frontman Groen van Prinsterer.<sup>29</sup> Yet Keuchenius's election must also be seen as a consequence of a seismic shift in colonial rule that seriously impacted metropolitan political culture. During Thorbecke's second cabinet, parliament had accepted a new bill in 1864, effectively granting itself the final vote on how to spend profits derived from the forced labour and crop culture of the cultivation system on Java. Cities with high stakes in international trade were addicted to these colonial profits, which explains why Amsterdam elected Rochussen – former governor general (1845–8) and Conservative minister of colonial affairs (1858–61) – as its MP at a byelection in November 1864. A cartoon depicted the Amsterdam city virgin, who personified Amsterdam, presenting Rochussen with his mandate and stating: 'Go, my son, and especially

<sup>25</sup> Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag*, 246 n. 74.

<sup>26</sup> *De Briefwisseling van J.R. Thorbecke*, ed. G.J. Hooykaas and F.J.P. Santegoets (7 vols., 's-Gravenhage, 1975–2002), vi, 382; Thorbecke to R.F.K. Thorbecke, 31 Oct. 1859.

<sup>27</sup> KB, 68 E4, no. 310: J.J. Rochussen to Keuchenius, 24 Mar. 1860.

<sup>28</sup> *Briefwisseling Groen van Prinsterer*, iii, 593; Keuchenius to Groen, 14 Mar. 1863.

<sup>29</sup> Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, *Parlementaire Studiën en Schetsen* (3 vols., 's-Gravenhage, 1866), i, 20; S.L. van der Wal, *De Motie Keuchenius. Een Koloniaal-historische Studie over de Jaren 1854–1866* (Groningen 1934), 113–16; Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag*, 95.



look after the millions, and after the coffee'.<sup>30</sup> Amsterdam had also elected a Liberal former colonial civil servant in Cornelis van Heukelom, and Zwolle was represented by the Conservative former attorney general Pieter Mijer. Keuchenius was convinced that he could become an MP for the anti-revolutionaries: 'Had I aligned myself under the Conservatives or Liberals, I would not have dared to become a representative of the people, knowing that in my place a hundred other and better [candidates] could be found'. As an anti-revolutionary, surrounded by many, but all too many 'silent friends', however, Keuchenius believed refusing his election would be 'faint hearted'.<sup>31</sup> In other words, among the anti-revolutionaries Keuchenius felt his colonial expertise could make a significant contribution as a clear alternative to the elected Liberal and Conservative colonial specialists.

Keuchenius has earned his reputation in history for shaping parliamentary culture in general. He had been such a new MP that he had asked his peers for advice as to which instrument was suited for expressing his disapproval of the appointment of the minister of colonial affairs Pieter Mijer as governor general of the Dutch Indies. Keuchenius followed his colleagues' advice to table a motion of order, rather than an amendment to the chamber's response.<sup>32</sup> A majority accepted the motion and the ministers left the chamber in protest, which blew the motion's effect out of proportion. Adding to the drama, Conservative MP H.A. Wttewaal van Stoetwegen suffered a fatal heart attack just outside the chamber.<sup>33</sup> The ministerial retreat raised the motion of order to a cabinet-matter, leading to the king dissolving parliament. Conservative MPs deemed a *homo novus* such as Keuchenius unqualified 'to co-operate in toppling the cabinet'.<sup>34</sup> Rochussen denounced Keuchenius's motion as 'a presumption, a usurpation', meaning he disapproved of the chosen political instrument as well as the motion's content.<sup>35</sup> Here Rochussen's disapproval shows there was little camaraderie between the colonial MPs. And yet, with the Keuchenius motion, he would – eventually – bring down the Conservative cabinet within his first weeks in Parliament.

Revisiting the motion through the eyes of colonial politicians involved helps us understand why a new colonial MP took such a bold move. For Keuchenius personally, the motion had been years in the making. As a member of the council of the Indies he had witnessed 'the detrimental influence of the parliamentary disputes over art. 56 and 60 [in the colonial statutes] on proceedings in the Indies and its development'. Article 56 discussed the forced crop cultures in very opaque terms, whereas article 60 prohibited the re-introduction of the notorious market tax, previously a major – and much-abused – part of the colonial revenues.<sup>36</sup> When Minister Mijer outlined plans which Keuchenius deemed to postpone solving the colonial question, he decided to 'use the earliest opportunity available to press for a solution'. This moment presented itself when Mijer, 'who repeatedly relished in his

<sup>30</sup>Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Spotprent met de Amsterdamse Stedenmaagd en Rochussen, 1864, Johan Michaël Schmidt Crans, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.570923> (accessed 4 Oct. 2023).

<sup>31</sup>KB, 68 E8: Keuchenius to Fransen van de Putte, 5 Jan. 1867.

<sup>32</sup>Tanja, *Goede Politiek*, 237; *HTK*, 1866–7, p. 155.

<sup>33</sup>Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag*, 147.

<sup>34</sup>Tanja, *Goede Politiek*, 237. The motion was accepted with 39 votes in favour and 23 votes against.

<sup>35</sup>Tanja, *Goede Politiek*, 116; Diederick Slijkerman, *Het Geheim van de Ministeriële Verantwoordelijkheid: De Verhouding tussen Koning, Kabinet, Kamer en Kiezer, 1848–1905* (Amsterdam, 2011), 156–66.

<sup>36</sup>Cornelis Fasseur, *The Politics of Colonial Exploitation: Java, the Dutch, and the Cultivation System*, trans. R.E. Elson and Ary Kraal, ed. R.E. Elson (Ithaca, NY, 1992), 26, 66, 79, 130.



25 years of service and study of the Indies, had appointed in his place ... a man, who for his whole life had done nothing else but sell and ship sugar and coffee' and who would take over after having a mere 'four weeks in the council of state to learn how to read official papers'.<sup>37</sup> Keuchenius defended his motion and view on colonial policy in an open letter published in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in which he responded to criticism from other newspapers. Thorbecke privately confided that the letter 'again reveals Keuchenius to be an aspiring Groen ... who does not leave his mace in the corner'.<sup>38</sup> Wielding a sharp pen like this in the eyes of his peers in the Netherlands was not uncommon in the colonies, where newspapers were notoriously offensive and polemical, leading to a 'tropical style' in Dutch writing characterised by sarcasm, rancour, and viciousness.<sup>39</sup>

Keuchenius's action attracted mixed feelings in government circles. Former minister of colonial affairs James Loudon grew up in the Netherlands Indies and had become friends with Keuchenius when they were both climbing the ranks as lawyer and civil servant respectively. Loudon fully understood why Keuchenius opposed Mijer's appointment as governor general. Only in exchange for the highest office in the Netherlands Indies had Mijer accepted his cabinet post: 'he defended the colonial budget in parliament, made all sorts of fancy promises of his intentions as minister while his suitcases were packed to take up the throne of Buitenzorg'.<sup>40</sup> But what particularly irritated Loudon about Keuchenius's motion was that it 'stigmatised his former chief in the Indies and the Netherlands' by insinuating that Mijer's appointment was a bribe.<sup>41</sup> Apparently, Loudon cherished his relations with old friends from the Indies and presupposed more loyalty among fellow re-migrants in the Netherlands, which made Keuchenius's actions especially hard to accept. The pair subsequently became bitter enemies.<sup>42</sup> One of Loudon's colonial friends asked for his help in cleaning up the political mess Keuchenius had made. The king's private secretary Frits de Kock – born in Amboina (modern-day Ambon) – passed Loudon the draft proclamation issued on behalf of the king preparing the country for the elections.<sup>43</sup> The revised version no longer focused on condemning 'party interests' and MPs' 'personal views', but stressed the necessity of harmonious co-operation between cabinet and parliament in a more general sense. Lacking the ministerial countersignature, the document turned the king into the spokesman for the conservative interpretation of the constitution.<sup>44</sup>

The royal proclamation made Keuchenius's re-election a contentious issue. The anti-revolutionary electoral club *Nederland en Oranje* listed Keuchenius and Groen as candidates in Delft. Both men 'had fought for Christianity in opposition to the disbelief of our times, have taken the dearest interests of the people, in the motherland as well as the colonies, to

<sup>37</sup> KB, 68 E8: Keuchenius to Fransen van de Putte, 5 Jan. 1867.

<sup>38</sup> *Briefwisseling van J.R. Thorbecke*, vii, 213; Thorbecke to Ter Bruggen Hugenholtz, 18 Oct. 1866.

<sup>39</sup> Termorshuizen, *Journalisten en Heethoofden*, 21–2; A.M. Zuiderweg, 'Batavia Berijmd. Een Geschiedenis van de Compagnieliteratuur en een Overzicht van de Compagniedichters in Batavia', Universiteit van Amsterdam PhD, 2017, pp. 50, 56, 64, 75, 105.

<sup>40</sup> Loudon, *Eer en Fortuin*, 244.

<sup>41</sup> Loudon, *Eer en Fortuin*, 200.

<sup>42</sup> Loudon, *Eer en Fortuin*, 200. For Keuchenius's view on the root of their conflict, see KB, E8, no. 14: Keuchenius to Loudon, 20 Jan. 1872.

<sup>43</sup> Loudon, *Eer en Fortuin*, 245.

<sup>44</sup> Loudon, *Eer en Fortuin*, 276 n. 53; Slijkerman, *Het Geheim*, 192.

heart with manly rigour and courage'.<sup>45</sup> But according to 'a voter from Arnhem', Keuchenius had gained support *despite* his anti-revolutionary credentials from voters who cared very little for his political and religious beliefs.<sup>46</sup> This explains why the electoral club *Recht voor allen* lost members because of listing Keuchenius as their candidate in Arnhem, where he would eventually win the election.<sup>47</sup> Jouke Turpijn and Erie Tanja have already elaborated on how Keuchenius's motion inaugurated the two-year climax to the dwindling constitutional battle between parliament and government: henceforth, a cabinet that lost parliament's confidence had to resign.<sup>48</sup> But more than anyone else, Keuchenius dreaded that colonial issues had been used to solve constitutional issues. When he congratulated De Waal on his appointment as minister of colonial affairs, Keuchenius hoped that 'the colonial question, overruled by constitutional issues for two years, will regain its former importance'.<sup>49</sup>

The predominance of colonial issues in Dutch political life, and the role played by remigrants in discussing them, triggered a sneer from Conservative MP Van Goltstein: 'Indies specialists were special because they never seemed to know what they wanted ... The more advice from the Indies the thicker the fog surrounding us'.<sup>50</sup> What was needed instead, he claimed, was 'impartial and pure instruction' on colonial matters from MPs, which demonstrates how parliament constantly renegotiated the ways in which colonial representation was understood. Van Goltstein blamed heterogeneous policy advice from colonial MPs on the fact that they had been reluctant to settle permanently in a colony:

I believe the main reason for [their] uncertainty lies therein, that there exists no settled European society in the Netherlands Indies. The core element for such a society is lacking: a population that resides there for several generations, whose history is that of the colony, whose interests exceed the current situation but have aligned with the future, a European element that has identified itself with the indigenous or has repressed it.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly appealing to the notion of greedy colonial money-makers polluting the Dutch political community with their personal interests, Van Goltstein tried to undermine the authority of colonial specialists.

Keuchenius's speech opened the proceedings the following day and he – perhaps surprisingly – repeated Goltstein's warning about biased Indies specialists taking up most of the debating time on colonial issues: 'First of all I wish never to be considered as an Indies specialist, nor to be believed for that reason'.<sup>52</sup> Second, he urged his peers to refrain from

<sup>45</sup>KB, 68 E 18 – Kamerverkiezingen, 1. Delft (1866), Aan de Kiezers van het Hoofd-Kiesdistrict Delft, 23 Oct. 1866.

<sup>46</sup>*Arnhemsche Courant*, 17 Oct. 1866.

<sup>47</sup>C.J.C.H. van Nispen and C.H.W.I. van Dorth published an advertisement announcing their resignation: *Arnhemsche Courant*, 30 Oct. 1866.

<sup>48</sup>Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag*, 142–9; Tanja, *Goede Politiek*, 10, 16, 87–9; Slijkerman, *Het Geheim*, ch. 4.

<sup>49</sup>Nationaal Archief, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA), 211 E. De Waal, inv. nr. 2: Keuchenius to E. De Waal, 7 June 1868.

<sup>50</sup>HTK, 1866–7, 11 June 1867, p. 1112.

<sup>51</sup>HTK, 1866–7, 11 June 1867, p. 1112.

<sup>52</sup>Cited in O.J.H. Graaf van Limburg Stirum, 'Mr. L. W.C. Keuchenius. Proeve van een Karakterschets', *Indische Gids*, i (Amsterdam, 1896), 471 n. 1; *HTK*, 1866–7, 12 June 1867, p. 1118.

taking the words from colonial MPs on colonial matters at face value. Instead Keuchenius encouraged *all* MPs to study colonial affairs and to scrutinise ‘what so-called Indies specialists say’, in line with the convention of MPs as generalists rather than specialists.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, former governor general Rochussen apologised for speaking; he could not deny being a colonial specialist himself. While obstructing Keuchenius’s wish for the other members of this house – ‘the 75 Western wisemen’ – to speak their minds on colonial issues’, Rochussen ignored Keuchenius’s personal claim about expertise, referring to him as ‘a great colonial specialist’.<sup>54</sup>

*‘An Indie-Gast in Parliament Seems to Horrify the Voter’*

Keuchenius opted not to partake in the parliamentary battle for the colonies again when his mandate expired in 1868, and he spent the next 11 years living in the Netherlands Indies. During this time, he published a *Letter to a Voter* providing further insight into his thoughts about representing the Dutch Indies’ interests in parliament. Significantly, Keuchenius compared his situation as a colonial MP to that of an Irishman: ‘As one calls a friend of Ireland an enemy of England, so one deems a friend of the Indies to be an enemy of the Netherlands’. As an orthodox Christian he countered this sentiment by stating that ‘the Word of God, which should also be taught to those who left for the Indies or were born there, universally appealed to one’s conscience’; hence, he maintained, caring about the Indies was a Christian’s duty. Being condemned for defending the Indies’ interests in parliament signalled a poor understanding of the Christian faith, according to Keuchenius.<sup>55</sup> Keuchenius returned to Batavia a disillusioned man. In private he lamented how his fellow anti-revolutionaries had ‘witnessed all the suffering done to me; all the injustice hitting me, in silence. Quietly, perhaps hand-wrenchingly, they made me depart with my wife and seven children to the Indies, to search for my bread and theirs’.<sup>56</sup>

Keuchenius took up the job of editor in chief for the *Nieuw Bataviaasch Dagblad*. He refused Mijer’s ‘gift of mercy’ to become president of the courts: ‘I would rather be the lowest merchant clerk ... than to accept a position, no matter how high, which places me on a lower civil rank than the position I once held’.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, he suspected Mijer wanted to silence him in this new role as editor. For lacking official political representation in either the colony or metropole, the press was the only way to hold the colonial government to account, even with a very restrictive press code in force.<sup>58</sup> Without his parliamentary stage, Keuchenius indeed used the paper in his battle against conservative colonial rule supported by the newspaper *Javabode*.<sup>59</sup> It is plausible that Keuchenius complained anonymously in

<sup>53</sup> HTK, 1866–7, 12 June 1867, p. 1118.

<sup>54</sup> HTK, 1866–7, 12 June 1867, p. 1123.

<sup>55</sup> L.W.C. Keuchenius, *Brief aan eenen Kiezer* (Leiden, 1868), 15–17. Keuchenius had rehearsed this argument in his letter of explanation to Fransen van de Putte.

<sup>56</sup> KB, 68 E8, no. 11: Keuchenius to P.J. Elout van Soeterwoude, 23 Mar. 1869.

<sup>57</sup> KB, 68 E8, no. 11: Keuchenius to Elout van Soeterwoude, 23 Mar. 1869.

<sup>58</sup> Termorhuizen, *Journalisten en Heethoofden*, 102–50. See also Keuchenius, *De Atjeh-drukkers-vervolging* (Batavia, 1874).

<sup>59</sup> Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Spotprent op Busken Huët en de Javabode, 1869. Twee redacteuren op Java, Johan Michaël Schmidt Crans, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.586202> (accessed 4 Oct. 2023).

his own newspaper about the contempt the Dutch electorate held against colonial MPs. An open letter signed 'een Oudgast' to the *Bataviaasch Dagblad* in 1869 stated how, 'an *Indiegast* in parliament, seems to horrify the voter. Hence, among 70 MPs one finds just three Indians'.<sup>60</sup> Electoral clubs in the Netherlands tried to have Keuchenius re-elected multiple times, but without success.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile Keuchenius published and corresponded with influential friends in the Netherlands.<sup>62</sup> Ottho G. Heldring shared Keuchenius's interest in evangelising the Indies and both were in favour of challenging the liberal drive to increase parliamentary control over Indies affairs. Keuchenius claimed 'what is necessary and useful for the Indies *could* only and *must* therefore only be considered in the Indies, deliberated, arranged and executed', leaving less room for the Dutch legislature to interfere in the colony.<sup>63</sup> Abraham Kuyper took over as anti-revolutionary leader from Groen and founded the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) in 1874. In line with Groen, Kuyper hoped Keuchenius would translate anti-revolutionary principles to colonial policy. Inspired by Keuchenius's letters and publications in the ARP newspaper *The Standaard*, Kuyper composed his party's colonial policy which focused heavily on evangelisation rather than legislation as means of reform. The free preaching of the gospel with the aim of christening all peoples of the Indies would be the aim, because 'conversion to the Christian life principle' alone gave them the prospect of 'population development in a higher sense'.<sup>64</sup> Patiently Keuchenius awaited whether:

He in His Wisdom deemed it right to call me to the Netherlands to glorify His Name and to serve the fatherland and its colonies ... If I am not elected, I will stay, for now at least, in the Indies: because to seek membership of the second chamber, has never been my [choice].<sup>65</sup>

The hierarchy of Keuchenius's priorities – Christ, country, colonies – is significant for understanding the role of colonial MPs in the Netherlands. Although Keuchenius claimed that he lacked the ambition to return to parliament owing to his submission to divine will, in this respect he conformed to Dutch political culture where personally seeking such a position was considered vulgar.<sup>66</sup> Upon receiving the telegram in 1879 informing him about his return to parliament, Keuchenius had aptly replied – in English – 'Elected I submit'.<sup>67</sup> Several newspapers documented the ovation he received upon leaving for the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Bataviaasch Handelsblad*, 17 July 1869.

<sup>61</sup> *De Standaard*, 9 June 1873.

<sup>62</sup> L.W.C. Keuchenius, *Eene Stem in Indië ook tot Nederland* (s-Gravenhage, 1869).

<sup>63</sup> KB, 68 E 8, no. 23: Keuchenius to Heldring, c.1874. See also Guus Boone, 'Modernism and Mission: The Influence of Dutch Modern Theology on Missionary Practice in the East Indies in the Nineteenth Century', in *Missions and Missionaries*, ed. P.N. Holtrop and Hugh McLeod (Studies in Church History, subsidia, xiii, 2000), 112–26; Hommo Reenders, 'Alternatieve Zending. Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804–1876) en de Verbreiding van het Christendom in Nederlands-Indië', Theologische Universiteit Kampen PhD, 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Cited in G.J. Schutte, 'Keuchenius als Minister van Koloniën', in *Het kabinet-Mackay: Opstellen over de Eerste Christelijke Coalitie (1888–1891)*, ed. Th.B.F.M. Brinkel and J. de Bruijn (Baarn, 1990), 194–5.

<sup>65</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 121–266: L.W.C. Keuchenius to D.K. Wielenga, 31 May 1879.

<sup>66</sup> Turpijn, *Mannen van Gezag*, 9; Tanja, *Goede Politiek*, 169–70.

<sup>67</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 121–294, L.W.C. Keuchenius to A. Kuyper, 20 June 1879.

<sup>68</sup> Van Limburg Stirum, 'Mr. L.W.C. Keuchenius', 522.

Upon re-entering parliament, Keuchenius felt he needed to make a clear statement in the chamber, especially since he believed the minister of colonial affairs had called him 'the representative of Batavia'.<sup>69</sup> It is worth quoting the statement at length as Keuchenius head-on addressed the debate over who could claim rights in a Dutch colonial polity and whose task it was to represent them:

Neither from Batavia's residents, nor from those residing in the Netherlands Indies in general, have I received a mandate. I am standing here as *Dutchman* and as *Dutch representative of the people*, but as such I am called to serve the interests of colonies and possessions, unto whose wellbeing, flourishing and wealth the Netherlands depend. Where I see the rights of the Europeans overseas curtailed – in whom one has to search the power of government in the Netherlands Indies and the means to develop the indigenous population entrusted to us – I feel obliged as Dutchman to act in defence of those rights and to warn the government against such curtailment.<sup>70</sup>

Freshly arrived from Batavia, Keuchenius trod a thin line in parliament: debates over who could claim rights in a colonial polity – and who they should turn to in case of infringement – ignored the binary between colony and metropole. Keuchenius personified the trespassing quality associated with colonists, and he did not shy away of complaining about the low esteem the Netherlands held for Europeans in the Indies. Over the past years they had been depicted as 'unworthy fortune seekers, which know and fulfil no other calling than personal enrichment at the expense of the indigenous population'.<sup>71</sup> During his second run as MP, Keuchenius vocally defended the interests of Europeans living in the Indies and supported introducing local representative government.<sup>72</sup>

Defending the rights of colonist compatriots went against the grain in a parliament that preferred to *talk* about improving conditions for the indigenous population. In November 1880, for example, Keuchenius proposed to install municipal councils – effectively giving European residents a stake in local government – but he presented it as a means to relieve the central colonial state from raising taxes for infrastructure projects in specific regions.<sup>73</sup> Such councils should consist of appointed 'leaders representing the indigenous, Chinese, and foreign oriental population, because they too contributed to the municipal infrastructure' apart from high officials and elected European residents. This was by no means a call for democratisation in the Indies, because Keuchenius believed 'the growing need for societal reform in the Indies should start at the top and [exude] from the highest authority, rather

<sup>69</sup> *HTK*, 1879–80, 23 Oct. 1879, p. 241. The proceedings recorded the minister of colonial affairs, Van Goltstein, saying that 'After all, the honourable speaker has chosen to [take up] the grievances of the Samarang trade' ('Eindelijk heeft de geachte spreker zich partij gesteld voor de grieven van den Samarangschen handel'): *HTK*, 1879–80, 22 Oct. 1879, p. 215.

<sup>70</sup> *HTK*, 1879–80, 23 Oct. 1879, p. 241.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in Van Limburg Stirum, 'Mr. L. W. C. Keuchenius', 522 n. 2. See also *HTK*, 1879–80, 20 Dec. 1879.

<sup>72</sup> Schutte, 'Keuchenius als Minister', 198–9.

<sup>73</sup> H. W. van den Doel, *De Stille Macht: Het Europese Binnenlands Bestuur op Java en Madoera, 1808–1942* (Amsterdam, 1994), 115.

than from the lowest ranks of society'.<sup>74</sup> The minister of colonial affairs, however, pushed aside such a drastic reform of the centralised and autocratic colonial government.<sup>75</sup>

Keuchenius's standing among fellow colonial MPs in the chamber ranged from hostile to collegial. He had a difficult relationship with the Liberal Speaker Van Rees, a former civil servant and vice-president of the Indies council.<sup>76</sup> However, Keuchenius also sought to promote a more collaborative approach with fellow colonial specialists regardless of their political allegiances.<sup>77</sup> In this constructive atmosphere, Keuchenius repeated his call for municipalities in the Indies and this time he added a means to help bring about this decentralisation. Excluding himself, he counted 12 or 13 former members of the council of the Indies residing in this country, and suggested they would be qualified to form a state committee to advise the government on this reform. After other MPs had made similar pleas, the minister agreed and appointed the committee.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile a letter written by Pieter Brooshooft and signed by 1255 inhabitants of the Netherlands Indies was on its way to Keuchenius and five other colonial MPs at this time, asking them to form an *Indisch Comité*.<sup>79</sup> Following the example of British India, Brooshooft wanted a committee to strive for financial and legislative independence for the colony and establish an East Indian electoral club in the Netherlands. Keuchenius stored the letter in his personal papers without comment, which is little wonder given his care not to be seen as the 'representative of Batavia'.<sup>80</sup>

Considering that colonial MPs could be found in each of the parliamentary clubs and emerging political parties, the idea of an electoral club devoted to the interest of the Netherlands Indies seems to have been untimely for three reasons. First, Keuchenius was outspoken about reducing parliamentary interference with colonial finances: 'More and more one realises, this chamber cannot deal with the Indies budget with the earnestness it deserves'.<sup>81</sup> He believed the parliamentary approval destroyed the governor general's mandate and transferred it to parliament 'where 75 autocrats, perhaps informed by double the amount of friends from the Indies, dictate [to] the governor general'.<sup>82</sup> Second, colonial MPs were usually already members of the *Indisch Genootschap*, a body established in 1854 by liberal colonial specialists which became such an authoritative forum for developing colonial policy that it was dubbed the 'Indies pre-parliament'.<sup>83</sup> Third, establishing an electoral club devoted to electing colonial MPs went against the tide of parliamentary party politics. The editorial decision of parliamentary journalist Netscher to place Keuchenius's

<sup>74</sup> *HTK*, 1880–1, 22 Nov. 1880, p. 451.

<sup>75</sup> Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 116.

<sup>76</sup> Consten, *I.D. Fransen van de Putte*, 209–10; Leiden University Library, Collection KITLV H 895 29, Otto van Rees, Correspondentie, inv. nr. 12: Van Rees to his daughter, 11 Nov. 1881.

<sup>77</sup> See his speech in *HTK*, 1887–8, 17 Nov. 1887, p. 166.

<sup>78</sup> *HTK*, 1887–8, 17 Nov. 1887, p. 168; Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 117.

<sup>79</sup> KB, 68 F1, no. 6: printed open letter to Keuchenius and 11 others to co-operate in the formation of an Indian committee in the Netherlands, 1887.

<sup>80</sup> Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, 'Brooshooft, Pieter (1845–1921)', in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*, <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn1/brooshooft> (accessed 4 Oct. 2023).

<sup>81</sup> *HTK*, 1887–8, 17 Nov. 1887, p. 168; See also *HTK*, 1880–1, 19 Nov. 1880.

<sup>82</sup> Cited by Van Limburg Stirum, 'Mr. L.W.C. Keuchenius', 503, from *HTK*, 1865–6, 28 Aug. 1866.

<sup>83</sup> Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, 'N.G. Pierson en de Koloniale Politiek, 1860–1909', *BMGN–LCHR*, xciv (1981), 9–10; Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 118.

written portrait right before his chapter on 'Indies specialists' was indicative of this approach, signalling Keuchenius's colonial background was part of his political identity but it did not define his political persona as such.<sup>84</sup>

Keuchenius had grown into a well-known political figure, thanks not only to the anti-revolutionaries who came into their full force as a confession-based parliamentary party, but also thanks to comic political profiling coming of age.<sup>85</sup> Political commentators wrote portraits of MPs allowing us to see how they presented Keuchenius's style to the public outside parliament. His due diligence shone through in the mountain of papers he kept on his desk in the chamber and, unlike his peers, he sat in his seat throughout the full proceedings. 'Back in the day, Keuchenius could be overly dramatic, when defending the interest of the Indies; now that the ecclesiastical element appears to gain the upper hand; he has taken off his mask, which is regrettable, because a mask suits him', one commentator wrote in the *Indische Gids*.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, his distinctive appearance was a gift for political cartoonists. As a collection of political portraiture of 1889 noted, 'the whole of the Netherlands knows that tiny, curious figure; all illustrated magazines have depicted his facial features without end'.<sup>87</sup> According to stenographer Ising, however, his appearance tempered expectations whenever he arrived in the Chamber (Figure 1 and 2):

What, one thought, could that little, skinny man with the contorted mouth and teary eye, do ... But behold, when that ugly man girded himself for the session on the East Indian budget ... to discuss colonial matters with gravity and expertise, when his voice resonated loudly through the chamber and his brave words, slowly descended like hammer blows, Keuchenius turned out to be 'the merciless sword'.<sup>88</sup>

Whenever Keuchenius discussed colonial matters his preference for speaking in long and grammatically complicated sentences changed, at least according to a parliamentary chronicler: 'It is highly exceptional to hear his dry voice speak short sentences of withheld wrath, of an internal erection trying to restrain itself, and give air to grievances about matters of the Indies in poorly disguised ire'.<sup>89</sup> Here we clearly see the kind of stereotyping that a colonial MP with a visual handicap impeding his speech had to endure in the Netherlands. Commentators ridiculed his physical appearance and his style of speech was compared to an inward erection, openly questioning his manhood. In a similar fashion, the British empire had played a crucial role in disciplining metropolitan men by creating anxiety over the corrupting – feminising – influence of colonial luxury and diversity in religion and ethnicity.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Frans Netscher, *In en om de Tweede Kamer: Parlementaire Portretten en Schetsen* (Amsterdam, 1889), 73–80.

<sup>85</sup> Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, 'Beeldessay: "We Achten het Volkomen Geoorloofd dat Men Hen Carricaturiseert". Politieke spotprenten in Nederland, 1880–1920', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, cxxxiv (2021), 268–290; *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair*, ed. Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler (Berlin, 2013); R.G. Khanduri, 'Vernacular Punches: Cartoons and Politics in Colonial India', *History and Anthropology*, xx (2009), 459–86.

<sup>86</sup> *De Indische Gids*, ii (Leiden, 1885), 986.

<sup>87</sup> Netscher, *In en om de Tweede Kamer*, 75.

<sup>88</sup> Arnold Ising, *In de Kamers der Staten-Generaal (1850–1886)* (Den Haag 1892), 46–7.

<sup>89</sup> Netscher, *In en om de Tweede Kamer*, 78.

<sup>90</sup> Josephine Hoegaerts, 'Speaking Like Intelligent Men. Vocal Articulations of Authority and Identity in the House of Commons in the Nineteenth Century', *Radical History Review*, cxxi (2015), 123–44; Karen Lauwers,



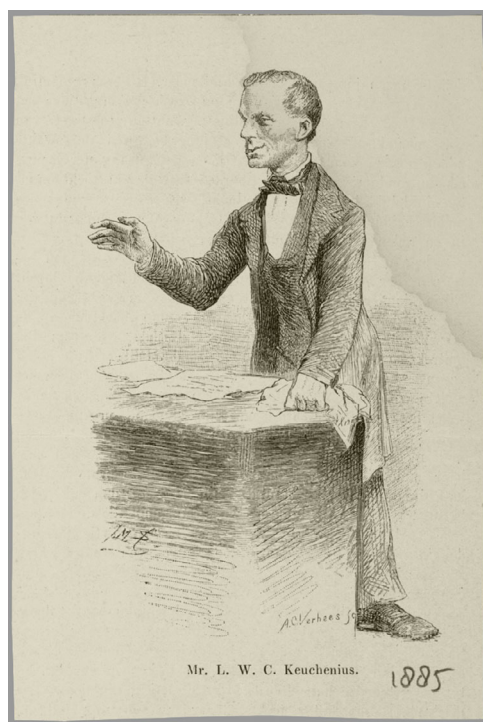


Figure 1: L.W.C. Keuchenius, portrait by A.C. Verhees, 1885: Collectie Veenhuijzen, CBG|Centrum voor familieschiedenis.

Studies on the Anti-Revolutionary Party have taken stock of Keuchenius's singular character and his struggle with party discipline.<sup>91</sup> On many subjects he wholeheartedly disagreed with his parliamentary leader De Savornin Lohman, but both men learned to respect their differences of opinion and style, and were neighbours on the benches for almost a decade.<sup>92</sup> 'The nature, the tone, and mode of your opposition was free', Lohman told Keuchenius. 'Only on the matter of voting, and to what extent *our side* should table political motions, there is prior deliberation'.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless Lohman told Keuchenius his relentless style of opposition would have matched the more powerful form of government that existed prior to the constitutional revision in 1848: 'In your corner you will have old-school statesmen; back in the day your tactic was, *and normal and good*'. Instead of Keuchenius's mode of

Ludovic Marionneau and Josephine Hoegaerts, 'Introduction: Oratory and Representation in the Long Nineteenth Century', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, xxix (2022), 733–44; Soile Ylivuori, 'Whiteness, Polite Masculinity, and West-Indian Self-Fashioning: The Case of William Beckford', *Cultural and Social History*, xviii (2021), 669–89; T.J. Schweiger, 'Planters, Mariners, Nabobs and Squires: Masculine Types and Imperial Ideology, 1719–1817', University of Chicago PhD, 2015.

<sup>91</sup>Schutte, 'Keuchenius als Minister', 198–201; Rienk Janssens, 'De Opbouw van de Antirevolutionaire Partij 1850–1888', Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam PhD, 2001.

<sup>92</sup>KB, 68 E5, no. 333: Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 19 May 1886.

<sup>93</sup>KB, 68 E5, no. 322: Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 1 Apr. 1884.

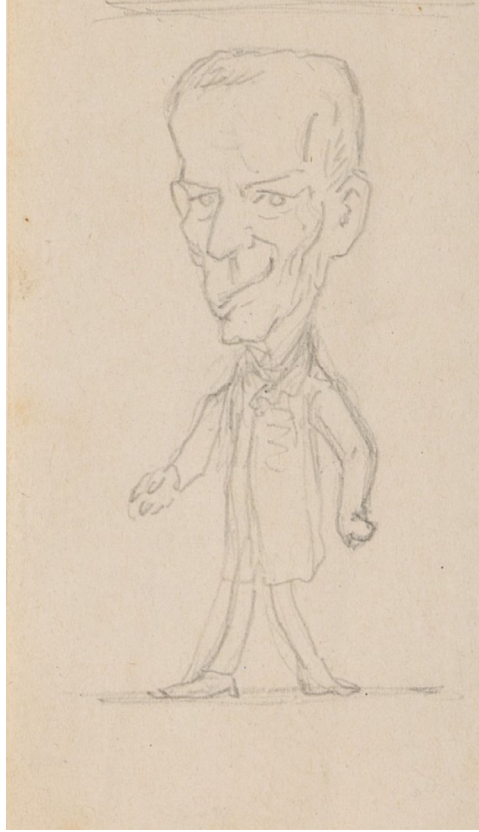


Figure 2: Detail from study for a caricature of MP Levinus Keuchenius for a political cartoon in *De Uilenspiegel* 1887 p. 135: J.M. Schmidt Crans. Collectie Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (public domain).

operation, Lohman preferred ‘the characteristic of the English “loyal opposition”’, which for him meant supporting the government.<sup>94</sup>

### *Cabinet Minister*

Unsurprisingly, Keuchenius suspected there was more to his appointment as minister of colonial affairs in the first confessional coalition cabinet, consisting of protestant anti-revolutionaries and Catholics. ‘You will break the power of the opposition’, he confessed to his party leader, Kuyper. But Lohman reassured Keuchenius he had been adamant on adding him to this cabinet for several reasons. For one, the ‘many warm friends among the people’ would be disappointed to see “‘de Kôch”, as the people call you’, omitted from this cabinet. ‘You do not have to deal with domestic politics too much, but you are part

<sup>94</sup>KB, 68 E5 no. 321: Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 31 Mar. 1884.

of it!<sup>95</sup> In that respect Keuchenius's elevation to the cabinet was necessary to 'supervise the church politics'.<sup>96</sup> Arranging equal state funding for religious schools was the most contentious issue the government faced and Lohman reminded the sometimes overzealous Keuchenius of his task as an anti-revolutionary specialist in the cabinet. 'You do not want to change the nature of *the public school* ... We have to bring our people from the public school *over* to our schools. I hope that in the Indies too you will further the principle of free schools'.<sup>97</sup> In short, it was time for Keuchenius to help incorporate the colonies into the anti-revolutionary orbit rather than advise the anti-revolutionaries on colonial affairs.

According to a fellow MP, Keuchenius's oppositional style assured he was in for a tough term as a member of cabinet: 'They will give you a hard time in parliament; and small wonder; you have more or less brought that upon yourself'.<sup>98</sup> Challenges appeared from day one in office. As Keuchenius noted, 'when I first set foot in my department ... there lay the telegram informing me [governor general] Van Rees would send his resignation letter with the mail that day'.<sup>99</sup> The outgoing governor general bluntly refused to co-operate in ensuring a smooth handover.<sup>100</sup> Keuchenius was not spoiled for choice in terms of picking a replacement, and in consultation with Kuyper and Lohman, he appointed Pijnacker Hordijk, a man without any colonial experience.<sup>101</sup> This gave Lohman reason to remind Keuchenius of another side of his calling when he spoke on the minister's behalf to an assembly of the anti-revolutionary Free University: 'There must come a time one does not have to search for, but is spoiled for choice between anti-revolutionary candidates for the throne of Buitenzorg'.<sup>102</sup> In other words, Keuchenius should make it clear to anti-revolutionary parents in the Netherlands that besides trusting their sons to the service of the Church, serving the state in the Indies was an equally honourable career. Keuchenius obeyed by appointing Lohman's brother as governor of Suriname, leading a political commentator to observe how 'members of this family rule the little blacks according to Christian-historical principles in the West Indies as well as in our parliament!'<sup>103</sup> What is important to note here is how colonial appointments had become a matter of party patronage rather than being shaped by a colonial lobby drawing support across party lines.

Keuchenius's weariness about the development of this party-oriented approach to colonial affairs perhaps made him more cautious as a minister than his contemporaries had expected. He believed the confessional coalition would be prone to parliamentary attacks if 'the minister of colonial affairs acted with too much haste'.<sup>104</sup> Restricted in his actions by fellow ministers, the council of state and the officials in the Indies, Keuchenius struggled

<sup>95</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 125–473: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 23 Apr. 1888.

<sup>96</sup> KB, 68 E5, no. 335: Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 3 Apr. 1888. See also Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands*, 160–1.

<sup>97</sup> KB, 68 E5, no. 337: Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 5 Apr. 1888.

<sup>98</sup> KW, 68 E3, no. 76: Fabius to Keuchenius, 21 Apr. 1888.

<sup>99</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 126–55: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 3 July 1888; Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 110.

<sup>100</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 126–143: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 6 Nov. 1888.

<sup>101</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 125–473: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 23 Apr. 1888.

<sup>102</sup> KB, 68 E5, no. 339: Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 24 June 1888.

<sup>103</sup> Netscher, *In en om de Tweede Kamer*, 55–6; KB, 68 E5, no. 343: A. de Savornin Lohman to Keuchenius, 27 Apr. 1888. Keuchenius refused to appoint his own brother as vice-president to the council of the Indies: NL–HaNA, Pijnacker Hordijk, inv. nr. 94: Keuchenius to Pijnacker Hordijk, 28 Jan. 1889.

<sup>104</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 126–138: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 6 Nov. 1888.

to leave his mark. Explaining why Kuyper had missed so much of his anti-revolutionary spirit in the colonial paragraph which appeared in the king's speech, Keuchenius confided in him 'it had taken me much effort, to be allowed to say 'that Dutch rule ... may bless' instead of 'remain a blessing' for the Indies let alone anything more substantial.<sup>105</sup> As for any of his predecessors, the colonial budget was by far his biggest concern. Keuchenius hoped to convince parliament to start following the same procedure as existed for the budgets of Suriname and Curacao. In those colonies the partially elected colonial council approved the budget before sending it to the Dutch parliament for final approval. Keuchenius admitted to being unsure about who should be granted access to the council of Indies for this purpose: 'For the moment I would think it sufficient to ensure experts a larger stake in budget proceedings, without giving the [council] dealing with the budget the character of a permanent legislative body', which would mean the granting of a measure of self-government.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, he opposed the idea of establishing a council of Indies in the Netherlands as it would endanger the responsibility of the minister of colonial affairs.<sup>107</sup>

In short, Keuchenius believed the financial interests of the Dutch Indies were best dealt with in the colony itself and for that purpose organisational and constitutional reform was necessary, as long as it left the metropolitan hold over the colony intact. Withholding permanent representative government on a central level, however, did not stand in the way of Keuchenius's wish for decentralising the colonial administration. As minister he could command governor general Pijnacker Hordijk *urgently* to consider the installation of municipal councils, which Keuchenius had advocated for as MP in 1880 and again in 1887. Among his supporters he counted the planters in the Netherlands Indies and respectable associations and publications in the Netherlands such as the *Indisch Genootschap* and *Indische Gids*. The new governor general, however, opted to convoke the council of directors for advice, effectively delaying his answer to the urgent request by two years, too late for Keuchenius who by that time had left the cabinet.<sup>108</sup>

Besides his cautious budgeting, parliamentary opposition had mounted against Keuchenius as a result of his disregard for the division between Church and state. MPs were appalled by a minister imposing his own Christian views onto the colonial administration and subjects alike in the Netherlands Indies. In the first chamber Liberal spokesman and former colonial sugar-lord Fransen van de Putte called Keuchenius a 'Christian Hadji', whereas other (former) colonial MPs called the minister a 'dangerous religious zealot' and a 'fanatic without common sense'.<sup>109</sup> Liberals still dominated the first chamber and they took the unprecedented step of rejecting the colonial budget to demonstrate their disapproval of Keuchenius.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> AAK, inv. nr. 126–21: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 11 May 1888.

<sup>106</sup> HTK, 1888–9, 21 Nov. 1888, p. 222.

<sup>107</sup> HTK, 1888–9, 28 Dec. 1888, p. 84.

<sup>108</sup> Van der Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 118–19; AAK, inv. nr. 127–3: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 3 Feb. 1890.

<sup>109</sup> Cited in Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands*, 162.

<sup>110</sup> The budget was rejected by 20 to 19 votes: Schutte, 'Keuchenius als Minister', 209.

*'I Would Have Stayed Quietly in the Indies'*

The caricatured portrayals of Keuchenius, and the almost-universal contempt political contemporaries held towards him in private, have harmed his chances of being remembered as an MP acting in the interest of the Indies at a critical moment for the formation of modern political parties. By alienating his 'colonial friends' Keuchenius might have obstructed the formation of a colonial party, yet his swift transfer back to the second chamber is testimony to his impact on parliamentary politics, and democratic party politics in particular.<sup>111</sup> Throughout his career Keuchenius balanced being a colonial expert and an orthodox Calvinist in a parliamentary context moving from the ideal of the independent MP towards a context in which MPs were increasingly expected to identify with a party and act on behalf of the interests of their exclusively metropolitan electorate.

Keuchenius's singular attitude has led historians to focus on the irritation he caused to party leaders Kuyper and Lohman.<sup>112</sup> Keuchenius indeed demonstrated characteristic candour when the confessional coalition fell and the anti-revolutionaries lost the next general election in 1892.<sup>113</sup> He saw through Kuyper's suggestion of moving him to the senate, refusing to see the use and influence of his appearance in the first chamber. And even if he did 'the public, the Dutch people' would acknowledge no other reason than the *true* one, namely that Keuchenius had to make room for Lohman in the second chamber to prepare for a reconciliation of anti-revolutionaries and Catholics.<sup>114</sup> 'To be a hindrance for such a reunion and co-operation' Keuchenius considered for himself 'both honour and duty'. The party needed to find its way forward from its modest position rather than pursue another coalition with Rome. 'Had I foreseen this outcome, I would have stayed quietly in the Indies in 1879'.<sup>115</sup> In short, Keuchenius's imperial career shows the entangled trajectory followed by a Calvinist colonist turned MP and cabinet minister amidst the emergence of political parties contesting the boundaries of parliamentary power.

Revisiting Keuchenius's role in the early years of the Anti-Revolutionary Party through the prism of his colonial background will, it is hoped, encourage future studies of party politics to take this perspective into account; not to exhume a past canon, as outlined in this issue's introduction, but to better understand how the legacy of 19th-century colonial men in metropolitan politics has informed later political arrangements. During the inter-war period, for example, a new conservative Calvinist political party emerged and is still active until the present day as the Reformed Political Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*). Several new electoral associations claimed hatred for the ARP among their founding principles, not least because of its willingness to enter coalitions with Catholics. Several of these new associations adopted 'Keuchenius' as their name. According to Wim Fieret, Keuchenius's two-year term as minister of colonial affairs in the first confessional coalition cabinet

<sup>111</sup>KB, 68 E3, no. 77: Fabius to Keuchenius, 1 Feb. 1890.

<sup>112</sup>Schutte, 'Keuchenius als Minister', 200; Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands*, 162–3; Janssens, 'De Opbouw'.

<sup>113</sup>John van Zuthem, *Heelen en Halven. Orthodox-protestantse Voormannen en het 'Politiek' Antipapisme in de Periode 1872–1925* (Hilversum 2001), 92.

<sup>114</sup>AAK, inv. nr. 128–69: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 23 May 1892.

<sup>115</sup>AAK, inv. nr. 128–69: Keuchenius to Kuyper, 23 May 1892.

had escaped these new parties' attention.<sup>116</sup> I would suggest, however, that styling the new parties' electoral associations with Keuchenius's name could also be a clear message to the ARP leadership, which during the tense interwar period stood under the strict guidance of Hendrikus Colijn. Colijn had been a military officer engaged in the war atrocities that led to the subjugation of the Aceh sultanate in 1913 after four decades of bloodshed, whereas Keuchenius had advocated evangelising as a weapon to keep the Muslim population in the Dutch Indies in check.

Finally, as a vocal representative of the concerns of colonists and commercial interests in The Hague, Keuchenius's case study has also illustrated that this 19th-century political tradition was not an exclusively British phenomenon. Parliamentary representation of the Dutch colonies was a contentious issue. On the one hand, colonial men experienced difficulties in obtaining a seat in parliament because influential statesmen such as Thorbecke expressed suspicion of specialists' influence over other MPs and because the metropolitan electorate was averse towards them. Popular publications further nourished voters' low esteem for Europeans in the Indies by depicting them as exploitative fortune seekers, potentially corrupting the domestic political domain. So, whereas transnational Britishness enabled the politicians studied by Mitcham and Thackeray elsewhere in this issue to forge a career across borders, trespassers from the colonies were excluded from the Dutch political community as it was conceived within national borders. By the final quarter of the 19th century and parallel to the British situation, however, the idea of imperial expertise – embodied by a prominent politician like Keuchenius – helped prospective colonial MPs to become valued assets for the emerging political parties.

<sup>116</sup>Wim Fieret, 'De Verhouding Tussen de ARP en de SGP Tijdens het Interbellum', in *De Antirevolutionaire Partij 1829–1980*, ed. George Harinck, Roel Kuiper and Peter Bak (Hilversum, 2001), 160.