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Colonial Calvinism: colonial ideologies of Dutch clergymen in Batavia, ca. 1700-1850

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Propositions

1. The Dutch Reformed Church in Batavia was no mere transplant of the metropolitan church but a hybrid order shaped by European and local actors alike.
2. The transition in Batavia from VOC rule to the nineteenth-century colonial state was marked more by continuity than rupture, underpinned by a deeply anchored ecclesial culture.
3. Through its regulation of poor relief, orphan care, and church discipline, the Dutch Reformed Church embedded colonial hierarchies in everyday life and functioned as an instrument of empire.
4. By providing a social safety net for manumitted Christian enslaved, the Batavian diaconate not only sustained slavery by relieving owners of responsibility, but also used slavery as a missionary tool by offering monthly alms and manumission in exchange for conversion.
5. Since its foundations were forged in the colonial frontier, understanding Dutch colonial ideology requires moving beyond the metropolis.
6. Centring the agency and perspectives of local people and intermediaries is necessary to move beyond the Eurocentrism of colonial sources.
7. A truly shared Indonesian–Dutch study of the colonial past remains underdeveloped; real progress requires joint academic programmes, structural (teaching) staff exchanges, and serious engagement with each other’s historiographies.
8. The legacies of Dutch colonialism continue to shape today’s power structures; confronting these enduring consequences is as urgent as confronting the past itself.
9. Academic boycotts of Israeli universities are legitimate only if they are applied consistently to universities in other countries where the same arguments for a boycott hold.
10. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will transform the Humanities beyond recognition; unless curricula embrace digital humanities and AI literacy, the field risks sliding into irrelevance.
11. Colonialism was entangled with capitalism, but treating them as identical distorts our ability to confront present-day challenges. The task is to reckon with capitalism’s destructive traits and legacies, while also recognising its potential to sustain social welfare states and to address today’s climate crisis.
12. Public debates on colonial history have swung between pride and condemnation. What is needed instead is historical literacy: the ability to recognise the complexities of past actors without reducing them to heroes or villains. Such complexity reminds us that the contradictions of colonial actors are also recognisable in our own lives, and that moral clarity rarely captures the fullness of the human condition.