
Representation of an Early Dutch Colonial State in the East, 1778-1826

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Abstract

This paper is a critical examination of the bi-polar view of the Indonesian archipelago: Java being the center and the rest of the territory as outer islands. A discourse surrounding the centrality of Java within the conception of Indonesia is created through a variety of mediums, including through education and the arts. Anti-New Order thinkers have attacked this image as part of the way in which the state rams down an essentialist Javanese image to everyone in the archipelago. Yet to say that this was the creation of an elite-Javanese controlled state is misleading. Instead of being a primordial expression of an ur-nationality smothered under the weight of a colonial empire, this paper wants to show that this process was contingent upon a series of historical development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century that allowed for the creation of territorial image of a state.

Keywords: *representation, early Dutch colonial state, Java-centric, territorial image*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji secara kritis pandangan bi-polar tentang kepulauan Indonesia: Jawa sebagai pusat dan wilayah lainnya sebagai 'pulau-pulau luar'. Wacana tentang sentralitas Jawa dalam konsep keindonesiaan diciptakan melalui aneka medium, termasuk pendidikan dan seni. Para pemikir anti-Orde Baru mengkritik pandangan tersebut sebagai satu cara untuk mengecilkan pengaruh cara pandang kaum esensialis Jawa terhadap siapapun di negeri kepulauan itu. Kendati demikian, mengatakan bahwa cara pandang yang menempatkan sentralitas Jawa sebagai cara pandang ciptaan negara yang dikontrol para elit Jawa adalah keliru. Alih-alih menjadi ajang pengungkapan gagasan primordial ultra-nasionalisme yang ditekan oleh pengaruh kekuasaan kolonial, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa proses terciptanya pandangan bi-polar berlangsung melalui peristiwa-peristiwa sejarah pada abad kedelapanbelas dan awal abad kesembilanbelas.

Kata kunci: *representasi, negara kolonial Belanda awal, Java-sentris, citra teritorial*

Introduction

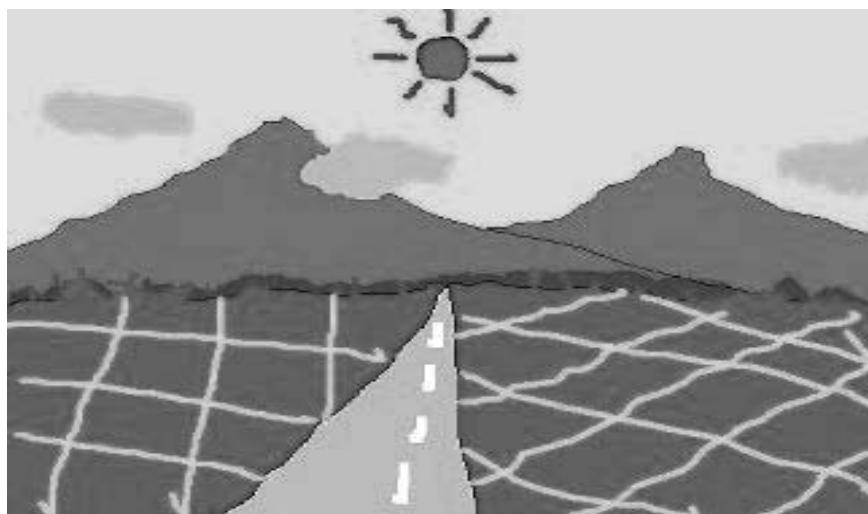
In 1998, the New Order regime fell in the midst of a general crisis engulfing the nation-state of Indonesia. The call for independence and separatist movements flared across the archipelago, from the resource rich extreme provinces of Irian Jaya and Aceh, to the newly annexed territory of East Timor. The cry for decentralization was heard in practically every provinces. A large part of the reason for the disbelief in the idea of Indonesia stems from perceived injustices that the state conducted toward various parts of the archipelago. There was a widespread belief that Java has been treated favorably in comparison to the other islands; that it enjoyed most of the industrialization of economic development, with more and better factories, infrastructures and facilities. And that this was being funded through the pillaging of the rich natural resources of the islands of the archipelago. The idea of that the state favored Java was thought to be the result of the “Javanese-ness” of the New Order regime with its head, the Javanese general Soeharto. Java covers today only around 7% of the nation’s territory even though it is also the residence of some 60% of the population.

A discourse surrounding the centrality of Java within the conception of Indonesia is created through a variety of mediums, including through education and the arts. As any Indonesian school children can attest, elementary school drawing lessons probably meant drawing a certain form of landscape that has become an essentialist image of the nation-state. The standard form from which every child must follow is an image of two mountains, rice fields, some farmers’ house and a big blue

sky complete with the sun and some clouds. But this image is not everywhere general. The river and forests would have been an appropriate image of people living in Kalimantan (Borneo) or Papua, islands, fisherman’s boats and the expanse of the sea would be more appropriate for people living in the Lesser Sundas or Riau archipelago. Anti-New Order thinkers have attacked this image as part of the way in which the state rams down an essentialist Javanese image to everyone in the archipelago.

Yet to say that this was the creation of an elite-Javanese controlled state is misleading. The New Order has a large amount of non-Javanese elites and this image has also been a part of the colonial Netherlands Indies. The state saw itself as being geographically divided between two major areas: Java and the Outer Islands or in Dutch *Buiten Bezittingen*. In almost any type of state classification: population census, economic census and so forth, the cleavage persists. That designation of being outer or other seems a paradoxical development of a state that had always grappled with the continental expanse of a fragmented territory. To understand when and how this image developed, it is necessary to understand the development of the colonial

Figure 1. The archetypal “Indonesian landscape”



Source: <http://ndorokakung.com/2007/01/09/citra-pecas-ndahe/>

Taken from a blog, the quintessential elementary school drawing everyone in post-Independence Indonesia drew.

state itself. Despite assertions of various post-independence Indonesian historians, it is difficult to believe that the image of such a varied and multicultural archipelago as becoming a united entity has always persisted during the pre-modern period (see for example, Sartono Kartodirjo, 1987: xi-xxiii). Indonesians have come to believe that its territorial integrity was the result of a pre-modern development of a coming together of the various peoples, cultures, religions and economies in an almost mystical progression. The colonial period was a historical aberration in which that progression was halted and in which independence has allowed it to come to its full conclusion.

Instead of being a primordial expression of an *ur*-nationality smothered under the weight of a colonial empire, this paper wants to show that this process was contingent upon a series of historical development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century that allowed for the creation of territorial image of a state. It is a story of how of a bunch of westerners; administrators, naturalists, artists and adventurers had created a representation of the archipelago. To do this, I will read and analyze the things they have written about the archipelago, either in the official newspaper of the time (the *Bataviaasche Courant* and the *Java Government Gazette*), the published material of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (*Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen*) and some of the scientific and travel books that have enjoyed popularity either within the small white-elite society living in the island of Java or in Europe (the Netherlands) itself. The link between state-formation and the image of a differential geography may hopefully be elucidated. And so we must come to the first inkling of the nascent state; during the tumultuous Napoleonic years that saw the death of a trading empire and the slow start of a territorial unit that would one day become Indonesia.

Other than Gerard Termorshuizen's study on the romanticization of Java brought about by articles of exploration published in the *Bataviasche/Javasche Courant* (Termorshuizen, 1993), most other books concerning Dutch discourse of the world covers a much larger scope of discussion. P. H. Pott looks at Dutch reception of various foreign cultures, some covering on the discovery of the Indies (Pott, 1962: 94-104). Angelie Sens wrote how the late eighteenth and early nineteenth Dutch discourse revolved around questions about whether black Africans can be considered humans, or how to deal with heathens (Sens, 2001). Susan Legene looks at the way people understood non-European culture through the writings of generations of families (Legene, 1998). None of them tries to look at the representation of non-western people, culture and geography within the development of a colonial state. But before we come to that, the story is also contingent on a paradigmatic shift that occurred in the end of the 1970s upwards that opened up the possibility to question colonial representation, that is how a particular colonial area or people were and are imagined to be.

Orientalism and the Colonial State

In 1979, Edward Said published his book 'Orientalism'. In the heyday of a Marxist inspired historiography, the book contends that the creation of empires required first the creation of an image of that empire. The idea that such 'soft' cultural products as the novel, paintings, books, maps and so forth actually created the empire itself is a heresy against the reigning explanation of economic determinism. He said 'we would not have had empire itself without important philosophical and imaginative processes at work in the production as well as the acquisition, subordination and settlement of space' (Said, 1989: 205-25). This means that the control of 'space', that is colonial territories, required an expropriation of its peoples,

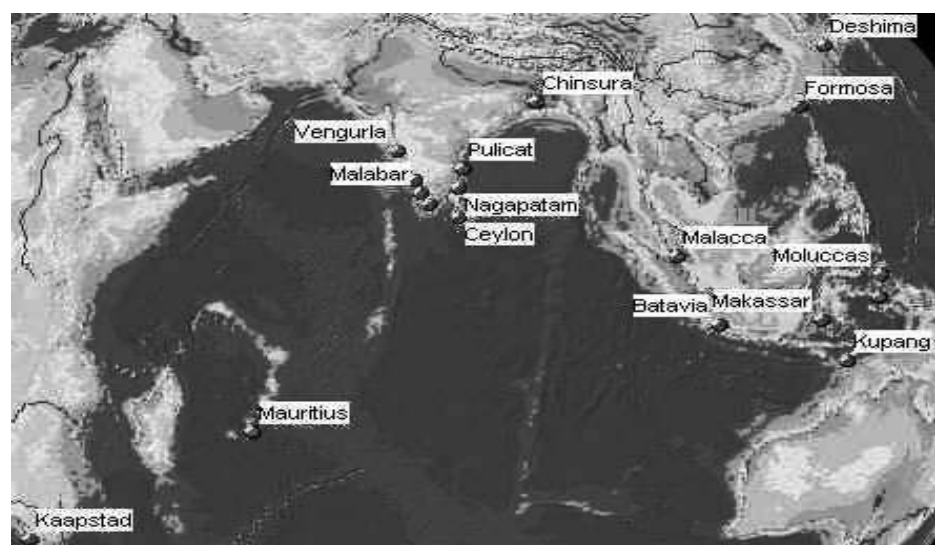
cultures, landscapes, histories and geographies that puts them within a unified image created by European in order for them to be fitted in nicely within a European representation of how the world works. Explanation and knowledge loses its non-political character. To write, even fictional prose, about the 'other' (i.e. non-westerners) represent a political act of repression and control because it tends to subordinate them within a grand narrative that is inherently unequal. The west is always culturally, morally and politically better than the rest.

However, many critics points out the dangerous flaw of determining the world as if it were absolutely divided between two opposing camps of the west and the rest. His reviews of such seemingly innocent English novels as Jane Austen's always points out the hidden but constant colonial mindset. In this way, he believes that almost every writing the 'west' produces were part of that imperial discourse of subjugation. In a strange way, his ideas mirror that of conservative colonial historiography that sees 'the east' as being a total creation of the west, in which agency is bereft from those 'other people' and that there were few, if any, interaction between westerners and 'easterners' that can somehow determine the end result of that particular discourse of representation. Critics point out that by reading too much into these cultural products, he fails to distinguish clear cause-effect linkages nor the ability of writings to be ironic, that is instead of a support of imperial policy, some of them are actually critical of it (Mackenzie, 1995: 1-15). Another major criticism

is the fact that through such disparate readings, he actually loses the historical context in which we can begin to understand empire and its relation to modernity. Instead of looking at western cultural production of the east as the primary cause of empire, people contend that it has to be seen in conjunction to the divergence of the west from other civilization as a result of a modern technological and economic development, which helped it to expand in a novel way. Europe's prerequisite 'remake' of the world in its image, necessitates an understanding of the way the west thought about the world.

The effectiveness of such a 'creation' rests upon the ability of that product of the colonial project, the colonial state, to internalize such images and imagination to the future nation. Benedict Anderson contends that the nation-state appeared through the creation of an imagined community. Nation-states contain within them hundreds of thousands to hundreds of millions of people. For the nation to exist, all these people need to imagine themselves as being part of a particular unit. They need to feel to belong and to internalize that sense of belonging within a nationalist framework (Anderson, 2006: 5-7). But is it possible to

Figure 2. VOC possession before the Napoleonic War



Source: http://www.histotheek.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=953&Itemid=60
The scattered, web-like trading stations of the VOC did not have a compact geographical form.

say that for the colonial state to work, the administrator of the new state must also need to imagine it into existence? If many colonial state were the product of arbitrary delineation of border that put together and/or split apart geographically older forms of identity markers (ethnicity, religion and so forth), shouldn't the state try to create new images of geographical boundaries? As a result, this representation would have to be an inherent part of state formation.

Going back to Indonesia, the Netherlands Indies state was the creation brought about by the hiatus of the wars that ended in 1815. New, freshly off the boat, administrators came from Europe and were given the task of creating and maintaining a nascent state. Carrying with them an enlightened cultural baggage, they encountered a territory in which borders, peoples and cultures were fluid and vaguely known. What that resulted was an extraordinary project of information gathering. It was a large shift of imagining the geographies of the colony. The VOC territorial

possessions consist of strategic port cities as part of its trading empire. Despite being the main hegemon in the Indonesian archipelago, it administers very few territories and most of them concentrated on the island of Java. Its trading empire, though, stretched far wider than the archipelago: from the Cape Colonies in Africa to the small artificial island of Deshima off the coast of Nagasaki, its possession fans out throughout Asia and Africa. What was left after 1815 was a relatively compact archipelago with a formidable colonial neighbour in the Malayan peninsula and a fuzzy, developing boundary.

A handful of administrators, naturalists, painters and adventurers numbering at the most a hundred people were given the arduous task of classifying, measuring, depicting and explaining the expansive archipelago. Their goal was to create an imagined unity from which a future administration of the territory was possible. It was the imagined integration of the archipelago into one unit before the economic and political logic of state expansion was to cement it in more rigid form. It was

Figure: 3. Map of Present day Indonesia



Source: www.ling.cornell.edu/ppii/index.html

What was to become Netherlands Indies has a compact semi-contiguous geographical form

also limited in the amount of people that consumed and internalized the image: mainly its administrator. The nation is a long way off in the future; this image was made for the Europeans connected to the colony. In a way, the project confirms Said's vision of a one-sided knowledge production from which it would then be imposed on the hapless indigenous inhabitants. At this time, the inhabitants neither knew nor care of this gathering of information. They were also unaware that they were being inextricably and imaginarily linked with other people in the archipelago from which their descendants would bear the brunt, under a nation-state that is paradoxically disclaiming the origin of its inheritance. But also notice that this unifying discourse, once created, had a mind of its own. The state continued despite its 'orientalist' origins. In order to understand the background from which such representation is created, let us turn to the period prior to Raffles's government of the Indies.

The Bataviaasch Genootschap and the VOC (1778-1800)

The scientific revolution of the enlightenment came to the Indies in the form of the Batavian Society for the Arts and Sciences. It was created along the lines of the Dutch Society for Science in, set up in 1752. This was the first European type learned society in Asia. The Batavian Society itself was an extension of the Haarlem Society and was formed in 1778. What the Batavian Society brought that was different from the variety of scientists and adventurers that have come to the Indies before was an institutionalization of information gathering. Through its journal or 'transactions' or in Dutch *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (or *Verhandelingen* for short) a variety of topics were published including among others on agriculture, fishery, health science and literature. Although the company allowed the

society to use its printing press to publish their journal, it was always suspicious of people writing on their territories in the Indies. All its members were or had been working for the company. Political ideas were barred from being discussed and they were only allowed to talk about the sciences and arts. As for newspapers, aside from the unsuccessful *Bataviasche Nouvelle* (1744-1746), its policy of secrecy and need for total political control of its areas resulted in none being published (Termorshuizen, 2001: 27-32).

Between 1779 and 1792, the society published six *Verhandelingen*. Many of the articles had to do with more practical issues concerning the agriculture and industries of the Batavian suburbs. What was interesting was differences in the way people wrote about Java in comparison to the other islands. This was more striking considering the fact that the VOC administered a territorial web that was much larger than the archipelago. Mr. J.C.M. Radermacher, energetic head of the society, and Dirk van Hogendorp, who had arrived in Batavia in 1788 and became Resident of Jepara in 1790, wrote a series of monographs on the various islands of the archipelago in the 1780s. These descriptive monographs were written through a third person perspective, zooming in from above. They were written in a generally monotonous scientific manner. Facts were presented as they were in an almost report like fashion. Islands like Sumatera, Borneo, Celebes, Sumbawa, Lombok, Timor and Bali were accordingly given space. The geographies, societies and histories of the places were also written. In some cases, like that of Celebes, the history of the Dutch intervention was given prominence. The reports were expansive, within less than a hundred pages, the whole island of Sumatera was described, including the British settlement of Bencoolen (Bengkulu) and its the products and 'industries'. In a way, this brings a watershed to the previous trope of travel writings. People like Huygens van Linschoten,

Joan Nieuwhof and Francois Valentijn were adventurers of sorts, which contained within them vivid personal accounts where opinions were openly brought forth and whose tropes were meant to elicit interest in the reader.

Neither Radermacher nor van Hogendorp had traveled to the islands above for the specific scientific investigations. Most of them were rehashed reports from administrators either who had either worked or visited the area. What the scientific revolution brought was the value of perceived objectivity and neutrality. Within this trope, the efficacies of the report were created through the style of language. Tempered monotony became the norm from which an objective description becomes possible. No longer were opinion stated, like those in Valentijn's *Oud en Nieuw Indie*. Facts were presented as they were. On his 'Description of the Island of Borneo', Radermacher proclaims early in the paper that this would not be similar to Valentijn's. Although he gleaned the information from the travel conducted by Mr. Willem Adrian Palm, Resident of Rembang, the end product was not of the usual adventurous travel journey, but that of a government report on the conditions of the people and a few pages on the possibility of trade. Although the VOC was a trading empire, and although all the members of the Batavian Society were connected to the company, very few, if any, of these monographs were on the economic possibilities of the islands. Understandably, the VOC was very jealous of its trade secrets and a publication within such a public journal would have upset government officials. But another reason for this was that despite a number of practical articles on the sugar industry of the Ommelanden, the Society was keen to create the impression of a true scientific community.

Curiously, the trope above disappears when people started writing about Java. It was only in the 1790s that articles concerning the hinterland of Java started appearing. Java was never described; it was descended into.

More precisely, it was ascended. The Javanese mountains were the first to have been traveled. Boekholtz wrote a series of articles on the journeys to mount Merbabu and Salatiga in the middle of Java. The rise of Javanese mountain coincided with the rise in the interest of the natural world. The adventurous European made his presence felt. The titles broke away from that monotonous word 'description' and instead used 'travels' and 'journeys'. With such title as 'Account of the Journey to the Fiery Mountain of Java', the romanticization of the landscape was possible. An excerpt from Boekholtz article reads: 'The forest was frighteningly wild, with no roads or any passage; huge trees existed of a different sort from the kind below the mountain. I continuously fired a round of shot from the pistol to scare the tigers, but there wasn't the slightest dangerous animal around, which I believe, was the result of the severe coldness, the thermometer being 8 degrees at 5 in the mornings: above freezing. After having climbed a steep gradient, at 6 in the morning, I got out of the woods and came to a small opening. The cold here was out of the ordinary, the thermometer measuring 7 to 8 degrees: above freezing. Under these conditions I was almost unable to speak, my hands and feet were half dead from the moist of the grass. It was here that it was truly unpleasant, and as a person enters a garden; 'there grows a short, stinking grass, full of flowers...' (Boekholtz, 1792: 2-3).

Java was dealt with personally. Its mountains were dangerous, adventurous areas, where tigers and other dangerous animals roam wildly. Its forests were places in which the European would test their ability. Unlike the descriptions, here the writer used a resounding pronoun 'I'. It was 'I' that traveled the mountains, 'I' that shot the pistols and scared the tigers, 'I' that had walked through the frighteningly cold patches of openings. Instead of the neutral, scientific monographs, here opinions were openly made, descriptions were

de-contextualized: it could have been anywhere. These travel stories have little administrative or scientific value. Landscape becomes the primary guiding instrument, not the description of geography, history or culture. The Javanese were absent. In fact, no one was there except the writer; a lone man in a lone journey. What was conveyed was a sort of intimacy with the landscape. The Javanese may not be present, but for the Europeans that have been living here, the landscape of even the mountains of Java becomes part of their image of the islands.

Consider the passage from Boekholtz's article on the town of Salatiga, near the mountain he had just journeyed: 'The Europeans', he says, 'who have lived here for 30 or 40 years, confesses to have never been sick and live to the highest of old age, and strong too. For the two years of my residence here, I have met with the 46 European women and children, and they have never been sick and very few have died' (*ibid.* p. 21). Good news for Europeans living on the coast that wants to get away from the high death rate of Batavia or Surabaya. The intimacy of the landscape is here replicated through another personal account of the writer, though in a different way. 'They have here important mineral water, but the Europeans usually drink churned milk for the whole day. There the drink is distributed around each morning for the price of nothing' (*ibid.*). Here was a community of healthy Europeans who drinks milk distributed in the morning. What was interesting about the description of Salatiga was the absence of the natives there. The landscape became Europeanized. Intimacy was attained on a more basic level. The island contained within them a community, a home from which even such a European drink as the milk was daily obtainable.

Like that of his mountain journeys, the account of Salatiga's European community represented a different way of imagining between that of Java and the other islands of the archipelago. That also goes for other colonies

of the VOC: from faraway Cape to Ceylon and Nagasaki. Is the reason simply geographical proximity? Batavia lies on the western part of the island of Java and along the north coast, port cities like Semarang and Surabaya had for more than a century been European residences and it was only in Java that a large part of the territory came to be administered in a more direct manner. What these writing show was that Java had started to be regarded in a different manner much early on. They were different from the previous adventure travel writings of Valentijn and co. and that difference lies in the readers of the texts. With almost no pretext as a scientific monograph, the writings about Java were written for a European audience on the island of Java. This explains the reason for the lack of intimacy in the writings on the Moluccas, for instance, a place that had a European community in Ambon and Manado. An enlightened European community based on Batavia and the island of Java was now intimately connected enough to the island to start a systematic information gathering of the islands surrounding Java in a scientific manner, while at the same time revel in its own intimacy through adventurous landscape descriptions of the islands interior.

The years after 1800 represent a period of hiatus. Some people were still employed to conduct knowledge gathering, such as Thomas Horsfield in 1804, but because there were no newspaper nor *Verhandelingen* published, no sources of such knowledge gathering is available. This period of silence would then change to a new period where government participation in information gathering becomes central and practically everyone within that project was employed by the government. The imagining of the Indies became a government project.

Raffles's Island: the Ascendancy of Java (1811-1816)

Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles lieutenant-governorship on Java represented a watershed in the representation of Java. Born on the ship *Ann* journeying to the British colony of Jamaica in 1781, Raffles grew up to become an enlightened liberal, who came to see that the investigation into the Javanese and its civilization as being an important part of his duty. According to Trevelyan, Raffles was 'perhaps the first European who successfully brought modern humanitarian and scientific methods to bear on the improvement of the natives and their lot' (Trevelyan, 1948: 138-40). It was also under his tutelage that the Batavian Society received a fresh burst of life. He saw European life in Batavia as a 'castle of indolence' and wanted to bring a fresh élan to the society. Being British, he was influenced by the efforts of the colonial government in India in delving deeper into India's culture, including its society and history. He tried to replicate this cultural *mission civilisatrice* on Java, which, for him would culminate in the publication of his magnum opus, the *History of Java* in 1817. This élan was not only suffused into the morbid Batavian Society, but also into the Indies only newspaper, the *Java Government Gazette*. Already in its first number, the editor of the gazette promised to bring forth articles on the Indies, 'a country which deservedly excites so much curiosities'. Although the gazette never fulfilled its initial promise (Termorshuizen, 2001: 39-44), the Batavian Society did publish two *Verhandelingsen* during Raffles's tenure.

With the exception of Java, the British navy seized all Dutch possession in the archipelago in 1805. Raffles was posted in Penang in 1805 and quickly learned the Malay language. He had always a peculiar interest to the island. It was Raffles who convinced Lord Minto to send him to Java instead of the original objection duty to administer the Moluccas. He said '... from this moment all my views, all my plans,

and all my mind were devoted to create such an interest regarding Java as should lead to its annexation to our Eastern Empire...' (Bastin, 1994). Raffles came to the island after Dutch capitulation in 1811. The Napoleonic war had virtually cut off Java from the Netherlands for more than a decade. As a result, much of the information concerning the islands was lost to the new generation of administrators. In a speech he gave at the Batavian Society on 11 September 1815, he reiterates his feelings toward the island. After a brief discussion on the aspects of the outer islands, he said: 'I shall not longer detain you with notices on our external relations, while so wide and interesting a field attracts attention at home;-on Java, and that range of Islands, which modern geographers have classed under the denomination of the Sunda Islands. I have hitherto refrained from noticing the extensive traces of antiquity, foreign intercourse, and national greatness, which are exhibited in the numerous monuments of a former worship, in the ruins of dilapidated cities, in the character, the institutions, the language, and the literature of the people, in the hope that abler pens would have attempted a more correct sketch than either my humble abilities or limited information enable me to contemplate or embrace; the subject is so extensive, so new, so highly interesting, that I must claim your indulgence, if, in aiming at conciseness in representing the appearances and facts which have most forcibly struck my attention, many still more important particulars pass unnotices' (Raffles, 1816: 5-6).

To the enlightened Raffles, Java represented a new opportunity for scientific knowledge gathering. Although Raffles mentions the Sunda Islands, it is clear that his main interest during the years lies mainly on that particular island. 'If to the Naturalist Java exhibits these extensive and wonderful varieties, to the Antiquarian, the Philologist and the Philosopher, she in like manner offers subjects of equal novelty and even of higher interest,

whether we investigate the splendid remains of her Temples and her Cities, her Languages and her Literature, or the character, institutions and customs of her Inhabitants' (*ibid.* p. 27). What the Javanese forests and mountains offered for the undaunted naturalists, its people, civilization and history also offers those of the newly emerging sciences of anthropology, archaeology, philology and history. Also like that of the naturalist, their main concern was in the ability to describe, map, measure and classify the chaotic objects presented at their field of vision.

What this meant was a shift in the way people saw and represented the island. No longer mainly a landscape from which the adventurous European ventured, its civilization became its main object of inquiry. The people and its history gradually became central. Instead of the language of travel 'journeys' and 'adventures', a more scientific language developed. The titles have shifted: 'On the mountain people of Bromo' or 'A record concerning the Javanese of the eastern part of the island'. A new image of the Javanese as noble people who has had a long and illustrious history replaced the older one that Valentijn had provided: as an indolent, murderous, cheating nation. Van Boekholtz article in the *Verhandelingen* wrote 'among the various peoples that inhabits the east, the Javanese nation, especially in the eastern provinces of the island, are undoubtedly one of the best' (Boekholtz, 1816: 3). The Javanese, according to him, 'are generally well built in stature' (*ibid.* p. 4). His celebration of bodily perfection becomes exhilarating; the people were one of the most extraordinarily beautiful, their womenfolk were separable from other nations from its well-formed hands and feet. One finds few, if any, Javanese that are crippled and misshapen. This description of the Javanese nation ennobles them; his worst characters the results of environment, while his greatest as part of his biology and culture. Old prejudices challenged by new ways of thinking.

'Men accused the Javanese as being excessively untrustworthy, but I must attest, that such character of them is not greater than that of any other nations of the world' (*ibid.* p. 6).

Such remarks were in line with Raffles's own view of the Javanese. His book, *History of Java*, presented the Javanese in a way that he knew would make them appear civilized for his British reader. '...it may be noticed, that of the three chief nations in these islands, occupying respectively Java, Sumatra, and Celebes, the first has, especially by its moral habits, by its superior civilization and improvements, obtained a broader and more marked characteristic than the other' (Raffles, 1965: 57), which he reasoned was caused by the fertility of the soils. Raffles's liberal and humanitarian outlook affected the way he judged these eastern people. Instead of the downright condescending stereotypes of previous travel writers, his was a modern, paternalistic one, imbued from the relatively new belief that Europe, especially Britain, possesses an inherently superior form of civilization and from which they had the moral duty to save the natives from the despotism of their kings and government. The shift in this image of the Javanese can also be explained from another perspective: Raffles needed to convince the British that the island is worth keeping, by positing the potentiality of Java and the Javanese people and civilization. Through the 'discovery' of the Javanese civilization and creating a European standard civilized past, colonial government obtains the moral legitimacy of ruling over a people unaware of their own potential.

To construct this, they also needed to discover Java's past. Interests in antiquity had already been developing in Europe for some time, the 'discovery' of Javanese antiquity happened under Raffles. Ancient cities and monuments began to be visited and studied. Under Raffles, the Borobudur temple, the largest Buddhist temple in the world, was 'rediscovered' in 1814. 'A journey to examine the remains of an ancient

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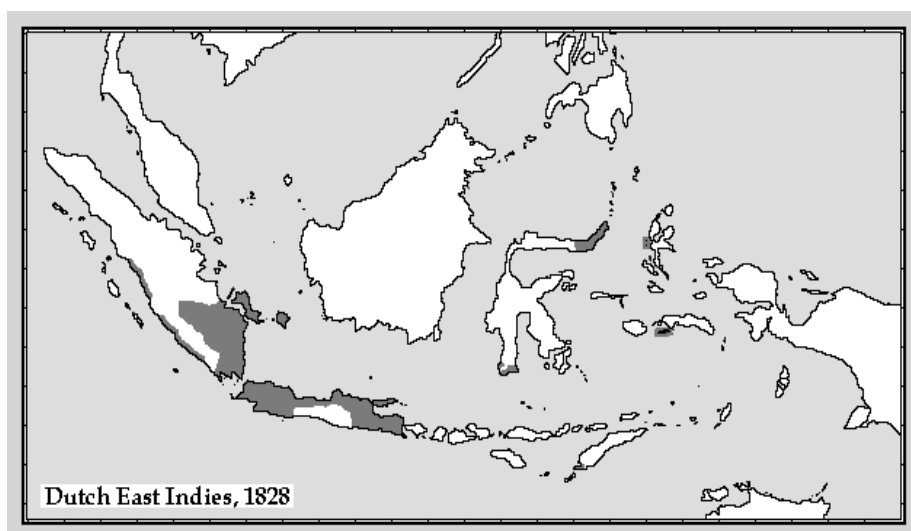
city and temple at Brambana (Prambanan) in Java' was written in the *Verhandelingen* by Luitenant-Colonel Colin MacKenzie, Surveyor-General of Madras and Chief Engineer of the British Expeditionary force to Java in 1812, a year after the British attack on the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. At the same time, a more scientific investigation into the geology, geography and biology of the island continued. The American Thomas Horsfield was commissioned to study the geologies and geographies of parts of Java. 'An essay on the Geography, Mineralogy and Botany of the Western Provinces of the Territory of the Native Princes of Java' was written by him in honor of the request by Raffles and Java's medicinal plants and its famous 'poison tree' have also gotten proper attention. Surveyor such as Major Hermanus Christiaan Cornelius and Captain Godfrey P. Baker supplied him with drawings and surveys of the major Javanese temples. Many Residents and Governors in Java were requested to send in details and drawings of temples and sculptures of Javanese antiquities (Bastin, 1965: vi-viii). This rise in Java within the representation of the archipelago is partly the result of contemporary European definition of civilization: which includes grand architectures and monuments, ancient texts and literatures, something which the Javanese did have.

Van der Capellen's Outer Territories (1816-1826)

In August 1816, the archipelago was given back to the Netherlands conforming to the

London Convention of 1814. King Willem I appointed a Commission of three men to prepare for the transfer. It was composed of C. Th. Elout, J.J. Buyskes and Godert Alexander Gerard Philip, Baron van der Capellen, who would continue to become Governor General in 1820. His rule would be one of the most liberal the colony experienced and it would be under him that the colony started to be described differently within a slowly unifying picture of an integrated archipelago. Born in Utrecht in 1778, he had never ventured to the Indies before coming as part of the commission. Like Raffles, he was an enlightened liberal who saw the gathering of knowledge and information as a value in its own right. But, he was not an intellect, he did not write any massive magnum opus and on a letter to Colonial Minister Baud in 1820 who had asked his opinion on the

Figure: 4. Dutch East Indies



Source: <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/histatlas/seasia/haxindonesia.html>

Dutch East Indies slowly taking shape, the purple shaded areas were directly administered by the state. Not yet conforming to today's Indonesia, but in the process of imagining its integration.

dissertation of Roorda Eysingha of a Malay script, he replied that he 'wasn't better over reading Malay texts than a blind can discuss about colors' (Kommers, 1979: 154).

Under the new, enlightened zeitgeist, colonial power necessitates new responsibilities.

Knowledge gathering became in itself a national prestige. King Willem I appointed Prof. C.G.C. Reinwardt as Director of the affair of agriculture, the arts and knowledge of Java and the nearby islands for the purpose of encouraging scientific research 'in order to resurrect the prestige of the Dutch name during the present period' (Scalliet, nd: 12). Reinwardt would continue his work in the Natural Sciences Commission (*Natuurkundige Commissie*) formed by van der Capellen in 1820. Painters were also commissioned, like A.A.J. Payen and A.J. Bik, both Belgians. In a circular sent in 1820, the Governor General encouraged everybody who 'was willing and able' to send in reports about the colony for 'the amusement or instructions of the reader. In the hope that the journal could become 'a means ... for the dissemination of knowledge among the inhabitants themselves, and a source from which in later times the historians, the naturalists and the geographer could extract important information' (Termorshuizen, 1998: 113). Although a Dutch enterprise, one sees the 'international' character of this massive effort: it is a project continued from a British lieutenant governor and included a variety of Europeans of different nationalities.

Different from the Java Gazette, the *Bataviasche Courant* had become instrumental in the dissemination of information, mostly concerning the interior of Java to the European population of the colony. Articles on journeys into the interior of Java became central again. The *Bataviasche Courant* published several articles written mostly by naturalists, like C.L.

Blume. What is interesting about these are the presence of the natives. Unlike earlier account which represented the interiors as a stage for European adventure, the natives were now being romanticized further. The fact that these stories were being disseminated through popular media means that Raffles's noble Javanese was coming to roost in the minds of Batavia's European populace. The natives were depicted in new characteristics and they were now 'simple', 'happy', 'cheerful' and 'hard-working'. On a remote district in West Java, Blume wrote: 'All the inhabitants of this place were kind and gentle; as Europeans very rarely visit their almost inaccessible wilderness, one may assume that their customs have not undergone significant changes and everybody who is familiar with such mountain people, will confirm their natural gentleness and mildness' (*ibid.* pp. 117-23).

Yet while the romanticization of Java continued, what is more important for the period was the effort of van der Capellen to study what would later be known as the outer islands. The new colony was different from the VOC's trading empire: it was a territorial power, with a slowly coalescing border that

Figure 5. The house of the Assistant-Resident of Banyuwangi by government painter Antoine Payen, 1928



Source: <http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/collectie/zoeken/asset.jsp?id=SK-A-3452&lang=nl>
Painters also helped to romanticize the landscape, not only of Java but also of the Outer Islands, as van der Capellen brought them along as well on his trips

encompassed a huge archipelagic realm. Knowledge of the islands have been minimal at best, mostly coming from the 'descriptions' of older generations. None of the tropes that have been used in describing Java has ever been used for these islands. They represented a terra-incognita, a frontier from which the government had the duty to map and understand.

Articles on the *Verhandelingen* began to speak on the outer islands on a more specific level. J.J. van Vollenhoven, resident of Palembang, wrote a 'Description of the capital of Palembang'. He starts off with a geographical description of the kingdom, including the latitude and longitude, its temperature recorded in Fahrenheit, the differences between morning and evening, the coldest and hottest months and the ebb and flow of the Musi river. He goes on to describe the etymological history of the word Palembang and a detailed account of the structure of governance, types of houses and boats that plies the river, and an ethnographic account of the inhabitants, including Chinese and Europeans (Vollenhoven, nd: 41-126). Another article written by Mr. Christiaan van Angelbeek on the Island of Lingga (Angeelbeek, nd: 3-62), in the Riau Archipelago near to the new British port of Singapore and a sketch of Bencoolen (Nahuis, nd: 211-45), Raffles's old post before it was given to the Dutch as part of the 1824 London Convention that separated Dutch and British influence in the Strait of Malacca. The borders were slowly being developed; because the southern part of Sumatra became part of the colony, effort by administrator to understand this territory was given priority.

The most interesting account of van der Capellen's effort of archipelagic integration though, must be his trip to the eastern part of the archipelago; the Moluccas. The term differ from its modern version, the Moluccas encompassed also the eastern Nusa Tenggara islands, Celebes and parts of Papua. On the 18th February 1824, a Dutch frigate sailed from the

port of Batavia at four in the morning carrying with it the Governor General van der Capellen and an entourage of painters, translators and administrators. The trip was the first official trip conducted by a Governor General after almost 200 years. On board was the adventurer Johannes Olivier who would publish his account in a two volume book entitled 'Travels to the Moluccan Archipelago to Makassar and others. Within the entourage of the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies conducted in 1824.' Olivier arrived in the islands in 1817 at the age of 28. Born on 27 July in the revolutionary year of 1789 in Utrecht, he worked at the general secretary in Batavia. He was transferred to a post as writer in the marine following an incident that landed him in jail (Hoppen, 1991: 13-5). As a writer for the marine he joined van der Capellen's entourage.

The journey was remarkable, as Olivier pompously wrote: 'it is of the most importance in the history of humankind, because the goal of the journey was none other than the improvement of the lots of a couple of millions of fellow humans, who have always been deeply dejected under an almost medieval governance and, without any violence, were put on the general path toward enlightenment and civilization' (Olivier, 1834: 1). The government chose a non-violent path for the betterment of the people who doesn't know how to be better. Native governments are depicted as treacherous, despotic, violent and unenlightened. 'Lucky was the inhabitants of the Moluccas for the main goal of the remaining Commissary General... the Baron van der Capellen, is the enlargement of public welfare and happiness in our populous East Indies possessions' (*ibid.* pp. 2-3). According to him, the kings of the archipelago treated his subjects as mere animals (Hoppen, 1991: 21-2). He reasoned that only the Netherlands could bring true peace and prosperity to the islands. The Moluccas was one of the first areas to have been in contact with the Netherlands. Ambon and Manado were one of the first 'colonial' cities

and had a healthy Eurasian population. With the war and Dutch expulsion from the islands, contact with the people there had to be renewed. Van der Capellen saw that to integrate the islands together, an entrepot in the Moluccas, either in Ambon or Banda, had to be set up to increase trade with Java. Legitimacy, at least for the readers in Europe or Batavia, was to be had through humanitarian reasons. This trip opened the way for the representation of the outer islands, like that of the Sumatran articles in the *verhandelingen*, it opened up the possibility for integration to occur within a unified representation of the archipelago

One sees this most succinctly in Olivier's book. The book is a standard travel journal depicting geographically, ethnologically and biologically the conditions of the eastern islands. Yet throughout its narrative, there crops continually comparisons of condition with the Javanese. Nature was described in comparison: 'It may be true that the heat of the island is overall as hot as that of Java, but as a result of the streams of winds, the air is much fresher' (Olivier, 1834: 40-1). This he talks of the island of Ambon. On a description of the village of Kema, he says 'Nothing is better than the charming scene, which the region offered us, as we viewed the highest of her mountains. We noted here that not only Java, but the farthest reaches of the East Indian archipelago, must also be known as natural paradises' (*ibid.* p. 8). What is interesting about the passages above is that Olivier, like Raffles, was in the effort of selling the Moluccas. This was a territory which had few, if any, economic relevancy to the Netherlands Indies. Its comparison to Java reflects the importance of Java within the representation of the Indies. But we must reflect that it wasn't talking about Java's economic or political importance, it was talking about its landscape and its beauty.

This was also true in the discussion on the people and agriculture. On a village in Ternate: '... the kampung itself is built and arranged

with an uncommon tidiness. The streets were straight and broad, unpaved, as in much of the Indies..., but with hardened sand and so smooth as if it were flattened by garden rollers. One imagines himself by strolling around the area, as if he were in the most beautiful villages of Java' (*ibid.* p. 233). And the produces of the islands: '... Celebes and the Moluccan archipelago are, in general, not less fertile than the fertile areas of the Indies, and also not less than that of Java, evidence is the highly extensive agriculture of the area' (*ibid.* p. 207). Agriculture and villages are compared to be not less than Java. He was in effect trying to disprove the already old notion that Java was, within the whole archipelago, the most developed civilization. On one occasion, he even succeeded in making Java look worse. In a visit to an indigenous nobleman (*pati*) in one of the Moluccan islands, two men came straight to seek redress from the Governor General concerning previous ill treatments they received from the *pati*. Van der Capellen has, as was expected, scorned the *pati* for his misbehavior. Olivier wrote: 'I cite this anecdote in the effort to give notice to the difference between the people of the Moluccas and that of Java. There on Java, a subordinate may have his boss killed, as a result of receiving an insult, but he would never have the courage to seek redress from the Governor General, and it would be a rare occasion, because in this instance would he put his life at risk by the later or of which the accused would wash his feet, that is becomes a murderer' (*ibid.* p. 109).

That comparison becomes part of the trope concerning the islands of the Moluccas was obviously only part of the whole story. Yet I must remark on the importance of this in the whole representation of the Indies. As the depiction of the despotic kings and the enlightened European rule had done, these worked to legitimate the kind of territorial unity the state wanted to border. Java had become, by then, the only island whereby state presence

had become a firm reality. For the rest of the archipelago, it was only represented through the occasional officials, living in his lowly place of residence, as unremarkable as it was quaint. Java thus became a standard from which other islands of the archipelago were and are judged.

Conclusions

The story above seems fairly obvious: Java being the centre of the Netherlands Indies happened way before the formation of a Netherlands Indies state during the time the VOC decided to create an administrative capital on the island. Yet Dutch power were lost during the Napoleonic war and there had either been the chance of Java being part of a grander British eastern empire or even a grander Dutch eastern empire which would include the Malay peninsula. Had that happen, wouldn't the economic and perhaps political centre gravitate toward the straights? Hindsight may sometimes hinder our understanding of the capriciousness of history. The idea of the archipelago did not have to be that way: with Java as the centre and the rest as an outer territory. As the state became much more entrenched on Java, it tried a lot to integrate the outer islands into a coherent economic and political system centered on Java, but even then it wasn't always successful. By the late nineteenth century, the outer islands were trading more with Singapore than with Java (Lindblad, 2002: 82-101).

It must be noted that Java had all the prerequisites of being romanticized: a long history of grand architectures, a mysterious court and literary culture and a major cultural production centre of the archipelago, yet the way it became a standard perspective in looking into other cultures and peoples of the archipelago need not have happened without the logic of integration. Mainland Southeast Asian culture who were just as complex as the Javanese had never become a standard yardstick. It seems clear that the main reason for such aggrandizement of the 'centre island' as opposed to its peripheral outer ones were the result of

state formation that started, accidentally, from Java. This period was a major epoch toward the creation of that imagined territorial integrity that would one day become that geographically awkward nation-state of today.

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