

Colonial Complicities

Catholic Missionaries, Chinese Elite and Non-kin Support for Chinese Children in Semarang During the 1930s

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This article focuses on practices of non-kin support for Chinese children by Catholic missionaries in the orphanage of Kebon Dalem in Semarang in the Dutch East Indies during the 1930s. Catholic missionaries considered this city a kingpin in their efforts to convert the Chinese of the Dutch East Indies to Catholicism. The orphanage operated on the basis of a mostly tacit partnership between these missionaries and the local Chinese elite, that is only partially revealed by the missionaries. The care arrangements for underprivileged Chinese children at Kebon Dalem disclose colonial complicities that challenge current conceptual approaches of missionary non-kin support for children interpreted as strategies to 'save' children from their parents, kin, community and culture. In the case of Kebon Dalem, Catholic missionaries collaborated with Chinese partners who valued European standards of child-rearing and education and financially supported the project, which reveals a sense of communal responsibility for underprivileged Chinese children.

Catholic missionaries regarded these children as 'cultural circuit breakers' that would facilitate instituting Western, Christian principles. To the local Chinese elite, uncared-for children potentially tarnished their already challenged claim to self-rule. By taking co-responsibility for the orphanage of Kebon Dalem, they apparently aimed to demonstrate capable leadership of their community as much as they honoured Chinese charitable traditions. Their support enabled European Catholic missionaries to seek out underprivileged Chinese children for missionary care arrangements, not separated from but in the heart of the religiously plural and tolerant Chinese community of Semarang.

Deze bijdrage draait om de praktijken van zorg die katholieke missionarissen gedurende de jaren 1930 verleenden aan Chinese kinderen met wie zij niet verwant waren. Het onderzoek spitst zich toe op het weeshuis van Kebon Dalem in Semarang in Nederlands-Indië. Voor de missionarissen vormde deze stad het centrum van hun bekeringspogingen van de Chinese minderheid in Nederlands-Indië. Het weeshuis functioneerde op basis van een bondgenootschap tussen deze missionarissen en de lokale Chinese elite. De zorg voor kansarme kinderen in Kebon Dalem laat onvermoede vormen van samenwerking tussen beide partijen zien, waarover de missionarissen publiekelijk niet geheel open waren. De zorgpraktijken waarvoor deze samenwerking de basis legde, kunnen als koloniaal getypeerd worden: georganiseerd volgens westerse normen en geworteld in christelijke concepties van mens, samenleving en gezag. Deze 'koloniale samenspanningen' tarten gangbare conceptuele benaderingen van de zorg en opvoeding van kinderen als strategieën van katholieke missionarissen om deze kinderen van hun ouders, familie, gemeenschap en cultuur te 'redden'. De geschiedenis van Kebon Dalem laat zien dat missionarissen juist samenwerkten met Chinese partners, die waardering hadden voor de Europese opvattingen over het opvoeden en onderwijzen van kinderen. Zij waren bereid dit project financieel en organisatorisch te ondersteunen, waaruit een besef van gedeelde verantwoordelijkheid voor kansarme Chinese kinderen spreekt.

Voor katholieke missionarissen belichaamden deze kinderen 'culturele schakelaars' via wie westerse, christelijke grondslagen gemakkelijker post zouden kunnen vatten in de koloniale samenleving. Voor de lokale Chinese elite betekenden verwaarloosde kinderen uit de eigen gemeenschap een potentiële ondermijning van hun aanspraken op zelfbestuur. Door medeverantwoordelijkheid voor het weeshuis van Kebon Dalem te nemen streefden ze er kennelijk naar te laten zien dat zij de eigen gemeenschap bekwaam wisten te besturen, terwijl ze tegelijkertijd recht deden aan charitatieve tradities van die gemeenschap. Dankzij deze steun konden Europese katholieke missionarissen kansarme Chinese kinderen voor hun missionaire zorgaanbod zoeken, niet gescheiden van maar juist in het hart van de religieus pluriforme en tolerante Chinese gemeenschap van Semarang.

Introduction¹

Caring for the poor and needy was part and parcel of the religious vocation of Dutch Catholic missionaries in the Dutch East Indies. Setting up and running large-scale orphanages formed the core of their civilising projects.

1 Maaïke Derksen MA generously shared her knowledge and sources related to the Catholic mission in the Dutch East Indies. Robin Smeenk MA meticulously transcribed the interviews used for this article. I presented an earlier version of this article as a keynote lecture at the Missionary

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Through this provision of non-kin support for children, missionaries defined themselves as God's instruments designed to help these children.² Western, scientifically informed but at the same time sentimentalised notions of childhood that called for the rescue of these children determined the organisation of their orphanages in the Dutch East Indies in the late colonial period. Recent historiography critically evaluates the universalised notions of childhood operative in such missionary projects that modulated the differences between children worldwide while accentuating the dissimilar opportunities of local children and their parents. The missionary entitlement to 'save' the children – from their 'heathen' context and their dismal prospects in society – rested precisely on this claim of universal similarity between children. Modern notions of childhood and innocence that travelled from Europe to settler and non-settler colonies alike underpinned child rescue discourses that disqualified parents, kin and community on account of class and race and transformed children into 'imagined orphans' in need of non-kin support.³

Missionary discourses on and practices of 'rescuing' children produced difference that supported colonial mechanisms of control. As such, they were integral of colonial governmentality, enabling colonial power to create governable subjects.⁴ Because of such deep entanglements with colonial cultures Claire McLisky urged scholars of colonialism to acknowledge the lasting social and cultural impact of the Christian missions as colonial projects in contemporary postcolonial history.⁵ Karen Vallgård demonstrates that the investigation of 'imperial childhoods' discloses how racial and social hierarchies have been formed and transformed in modern colonial projects to which missionaries were party. This approach ties in with a solid tradition of scholarship by historians and anthropologists about the pivotal role of gender and family relations in colonising and civilising projects. For the Dutch East Indies, Ann Laura Stoler identified the regulation of sexual practices and gender relations as key to colonial power relations.⁶ Such 'intimacies

2 Compare Karen Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions on South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke 2015), with respect to Protestant missionaries. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137432995>.

3 Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New York 2006); Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods*; Karen Vallgård, Kristine Alexander and Stephanie Olsen, 'Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood', in: Stephanie Olsen (ed.), *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke 2015) 12-34. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137484840_2.

4 David Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', *Social Text* 43 (1995) 191-220. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/466631>; see also the introduction to this theme issue: Geertje Mak, Marit Monteiro and Elisabeth Wesseling, 'Child Separation: (Post)Colonial Policies and Practices', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 135:3/4 (2020) 4-28. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10871>.

5 Claire Louise McLisky, 'Introduction to Colonial Christian Missions: Social and Cultural Impacts and Ongoing Legacies', *Journal of Social History* 50:3 (2017) 457-465. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shwo44>.

6 Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Los Angeles 2010).

of empire' solidified into the 'soft' colonial rule that was entangled with the 'hard colonial rule' operative in the colonial administration. Difference was at the heart of colonial rule, Stoler argued, pointing out the problematic position of the offspring of (Indo-)European soldiers and indigenous mothers as a case in point. Considered European under the colonial code of law, the mixed ethnicity of these children potentially undermined the white supremacy and moral superiority on which European colonial rule rested. Upon the departure or death of their fathers, they were, therefore, often 'rescued': separated from their indigenous mothers, transferred to orphanages and forcefully raised according to European standards at the expense of the colonial government.

Religion as a significant marker of difference in late colonial society of the Dutch East Indies is not included in Stoler's influential analysis. Moreover, her analysis focuses on discourse, not on practices of non-kin support. As such, Stoler pays no attention to the involvement of Christian missionaries, nor on the agency and interdependencies of other parties involved in orphan care, such as local elites. Missionary sources afford such an analysis and indicate, first, that in the late colonial period Catholic missionaries invested in caring for and educating Javanese and Chinese children. In both cases, second, they were able to forge alliances with local elites that testify to colonial complicities that challenge current conceptual approaches to missionary non-kin support for children.⁷ These approaches emphasise child separation as a racially informed practice through which white missionaries 'saved' local children from their parents, kin, community and culture. The care arrangements for underprivileged Chinese children at the orphanage of Kebon Dalem, however, reveal a hitherto unknown and only partially acknowledged partnership between Catholic missionaries and the Chinese elite of Semarang. Catholic missionaries collaborated with Chinese partners who valued European standards of child-rearing and education and financially supported the project, which reveals a sense of communal responsibility for uncared-for Chinese children. This partnership testifies to dwindling rather than intensified boundaries between various population groups in late colonial Java.⁸

7 Compare Maaikje Derksen, "'On their Javanese sprout we need to graft the European civilization": Fashioning local intermediaries in the Dutch Catholic mission, 1900-1942', *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 19:1 (2016) 29-55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGN2016.1.DERK>; and, in this issue, Kirsten Kamphuis, 'An Alternative Family: An Elite Christian Girls' School on Java in a Context of Social Change, c. 1907-1939', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 135:3-4 (2020) 133-157. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10870>.

8 Compare Charles Coppel's assessment of the Chinese minority as a case in point for Java as a multicultural society: 'Revisiting Furnivall's "plural society": Colonial Java as a mestizo society', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20:3 (1997). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1997.9993975>; this has been comparatively elaborated for the twentieth century by Robert W. Hefner, 'Introduction', in: Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia* (Honolulu 2001) 1-58.

Unprinted missionary sources in the Dutch language, such as interviews with former missionaries, correspondence, egodocuments and photographs, demonstrate that – far from being in complete control – the missionaries had to rely on local Chinese networks and their material support.⁹ Wealthy and influential members of the Chinese minority took co-responsibility for the orphanage of Kebon Dalem, because uncared-for children in the Chinese quarter could reflect badly on the capability of the Chinese community to take care of such social problems. This potentially threatened their claim to self-rule. For this civilising project they granted the missionaries access to their community, enabling them to build up knowledge about its socio-cultural structures and pressures. Scholars of colonial childhoods draw attention to the harmful consequences of missionary interventions. As these were cast in European terms, such European values and norms explicitly or implicitly disparaged the socio-cultural and religious perspectives of the children involved.¹⁰ The involvement of

9 I analysed relevant interviews from the 'KomMissie Memoires' collection (hereafter KMM), held in the Catholic Documentation Centre in Nijmegen (hereafter CDC). The interviews were conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, under the assumption that missionaries represented a 'living archive', 'uncomplicated' repositories of knowledge about the Dutch Catholic mission. Despite the methodical problems and slippages on account of such assumptions, the poor training of the interviewers, and the rigid questionnaire articulated in a post-Vatican II vocabulary, these interviews proved to be valuable source material. Arnulf Camps, Vefie Poels and Jan Willemsen, *Dutch missionary activities: an oral history project: 1976-1988* (Nijmegen 2005) 11-30, offers a self-congratulatory review of the project by its coordinators. I also consulted the archives of the Dutch Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Providence (hereafter AR-Z140), held by the Heritage Centre of Dutch Religious Institutes in Sint Agatha (hereafter ENK). The archives of the Dutch Jesuits, held at the Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society in Leuven (hereafter KADOC), were consulted as well. However, the personal files of Jesuit missionaries in the Dutch East Indies in the late colonial period remained closed on account of the current European privacy regulations.

For further relevant information, I consulted their mission journal *Claverbond* and the related archive, held at the CDC.

10 Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Imperialism: Converting the World in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca 2015); Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods*; Larry Prochner, Helen May and Baljit Kaur, "'The blessings of civilisation': nineteenth-century missionary infant schools for young native children in three colonial settings – India, Canada and New Zealand 1820s-1840s', *Paedagogica Historica* 45:1/2 (2009) 83-102. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230902746495>; Amanda Barry, "'Equal to Children of European Origin": Educability and the Civilising Mission in Early Colonial Australia', *History Australia* 5:2 (2008) 1-16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2104/ha080041>; Sarah Emily Duff, *Changing childhoods in the Cape Colony: Dutch Reformed Church Evangelicalism and Colonial Childhood, 1860-1895* (London 2015). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137380944>; Felicity Jensz, 'Hope and Pity: Depictions of Children in Five Decades of the *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt*, 1860-1910', in: Judith Becker and Katharina Stornig (eds.), *Menschen—Bilder—Eine Welt: Ordnungen von Vielfalt in der religiösen Publizistik um 1900* (Göttingen 2018) 223-245. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666101564.259>.

Chinese stakeholders in the orphanage of Kebon Dalem, however, mitigated such effects. To the Catholic missionaries, ‘rescued’ children represented ‘cultural circuit breakers’ that would facilitate instituting Western, Christian principles.¹¹ By taking co-responsibility for the orphanage of Kebon Dalem the local Chinese elite apparently aimed to demonstrate capable leadership of their community as much as they honoured Chinese charitable traditions. Their support enabled European Catholic missionaries to seek out underprivileged Chinese children for missionary care arrangements, not separated from but in the heart of the religiously plural and tolerant Chinese community of Semarang.

The Chinese of Semarang

In the mid-1950s, the American sociologist Donald Earl Willmott analysed the Chinese minority in Semarang.¹² For the pre-war period he relied on the work of the local historian and journalist Liem Thian Joe.¹³ A seaport located on the northern coast of central Java, Semarang was defined by commerce, migration and population growth.¹⁴ Its Chinese quarter was situated in the hotter and more humid lower part of the city, near the harbour. In 1955, Willmott observed, it was still one of the most crowded areas, with very narrow streets,

- 11 I borrowed the term from Hugh Morrison, ‘The “joy and heroism of doing good”: “The New Zealand Missionary” Record and Late-Nineteenth-Century Protestant Children’s Missionary Support’, *Journal of New Zealand Literature* 28:2 (2010) 158-182. Compare Rhonda Semple, ‘Making missions through (re-)making children: Non-kin domestic intimacy in the London Missionary Society’s work in late-nineteenth-century north India’, in: Hugh Morrison and Mary Clare Martin (eds.), *Creating Religious Childhoods in Anglo-World and British Colonial Contexts, 1800-1950* (London/New York 2017) 23-40. See also Prochner, May and Kaur, “‘The blessings of civilisation’”, who define education as a forerunner of the broader politics of British colonialism. Hugh Morrison and Mary Clare Martin, ‘Introduction: contours and issues in children’s religious history’, in: Morrison and Martin (eds.), *Creating Religious Childhoods*, 3-20, focus specifically on the impact of religious formation of children in colonial contexts.
- 12 Donald Earl Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang: A Changing Minority Community in Indonesia* (Ithaca 1960).
- 13 Liem Thian Joe, *Riwajat Semarang* (Semarang [1933] 2004); Monique Erkelens, *The decline of the Chinese Council of Batavia: the loss of prestige and authority of the traditional elite amongst the Chinese community from the end of the nineteenth century until 1942* (doctoral thesis; Leiden University 2013) 36 and 38, explains that Liem had access to the archive of the Chinese Council of Semarang, which was later destroyed.
- 14 Johannes Widodo, *Chinese settlement in a changing city: an architectural study of the urban Chinese settlement in Semarang, Indonesia* (doctoral thesis; Catholic University of Leuven 1988) 47-98; Hans Gooszen, *A demographic history of the Indonesian archipelago 1880-1942*. *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 183 (Leiden 1999) 80-81.



This picture of pupils from the orphanage of Kebon Dalem was probably taken by a Jesuit in the late 1930s. Whereas the boy on the right looks at the photographer, the others seem to observe a small picture, possibly a prayer card (in Dutch: *devotieprentje*) that Jesuit missionaries had a habit of handing out to children.¹⁵

15 Picture of pupils at Kebon Dalem. © KADOC
Leuven, Beeldarchief Nederlandse Jezuïeten, ANSI,
BE/942855/2078, 957.

rows of very small houses and hardly any open recreational space. In 1930, the approximately 27,000 Chinese inhabitants represented the largest ethnic minority of the over 217,000 inhabitants of Semarang. Accounting for over twelve percent of the population, they doubled the proportion of Dutch and Eurasians in Semarang and greatly outnumbered the two percent average of Chinese inhabitants in the Dutch East Indies.¹⁶ This predominantly urban minority earned its living through ‘trade’ in the broadest sense: from small peddlers to keepers of convenience shops (*tokos*) and executives of large, international businesses. In case of economic instability or adversity, those in ‘trade’ proved to be vulnerable. Family ties determined the structures of business, whereas business in general determined the structures of local leadership and communal responsibility.¹⁷

In Willmott’s study, the term ‘Chinese’ comprised Indies-born or Peranakan Chinese of mixed Chinese-Javanese descent, as well as *totok* Chinese born in China. The more recent *totok* migrants from China were distinguished as *singkeh*. This difference gained significance in the Dutch East Indies during the first decades of the twentieth century as the colonial government attempted to end the existing Chinese self-government. In Semarang, business ties and interests with China accounted for more peaceful relationships between Peranakan and *totok* Chinese.¹⁸ Historically, Chinese self-rule wielded by a Chinese Council of officers reflected the practice of racial segregation in local administration in the colony. The officers were appointed by the Dutch, who generally preferred members of old, distinguished Indies-born Chinese families. They maintained order in the Chinese quarters and safeguarded Chinese interests and social welfare.¹⁹

The complex legal position of the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies reflected racially determined colonial ambivalence, as the Indies-born Chinese became Dutch subjects under the Nationality Act of 1910 – without full citizenship, however – retaining the status of ‘Foreign Orientals’ that distinguished them from the Javanese and the Europeans in the colony.²⁰ This inconsistency infused different orientations in political emancipation from the 1910s between Peranakans displaying colonial leanings to the Dutch, and China-backed *totoks* demonstrating a pan-Chinese activism. Such antagonisms intensified after 1911, when the proclamation of the Chinese Republic drove out opponents and economic migrants and led to an increasing number of

16 Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, 10-12.

17 Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, Chapters I and II.

18 Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, Chapter v; Erkelens, *The Decline*, 224.

19 Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia 1837-1942: A History of Chinese Establishment in Colonial Society* (Leiden/Jakarta 2001) 87; Erkelens, *The Decline*, 107-110 (concerning Batavia); Chen

Menghong, *De Chinese gemeenschap van Batavia, 1843-1865: Een onderzoek naar het Kong Koan-archief. Studies in Overseas History* 10 (Leiden 2011).

20 Patricia Tjiook-Liem (Giok Kiauw Nio Liem), *De rechtspositie der Chinezen in Nederlands-Indië 1848-1942: Wetgevingsbeleid tussen beginsel en belang* (Leiden 2009); Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina*, Chapter v.

Chinese immigrants to the Dutch East Indies. These newcomers considered themselves disadvantaged compared to the Peranakans under the officer system. Such socio-political tensions within the Chinese community coincided with a burgeoning anticolonial nationalism that sparked anti-Chinese sensitivities among the Javanese. Close connections between Chinese officers' families and the Dutch stirred such hostilities, as did Chinese activities in money lending, tax collecting and the sugar and rice business, which the Javanese identified with colonial power structures they suffered from. Their resistance supported Dutch aspirations to replace Chinese self-government with a new European municipal administration at local level that assumed control over all subjects.²¹

Already in 1907 the Chinese elite of Semarang considered the officer system obsolete and refused new appointments. This, however, did not mean that it relinquished its authority over the Chinese community. Traditionally, this leadership regarded administration, politics, commerce and organisation related to schools, mutual aid and religious societies, and charitable institutions.²² Communal responsibilities concerning the Chinese quarter shifted to the local Chinese chamber of commerce (*Sianghwee*, founded in 1907), cultural associations and mutual aid organisations. Wealthy Chinese families generally invested money in education and communal charitable projects. In this context, the orphanage of Kebon Dalem exemplifies the quest for new strategic alliances by the Chinese elite as the Dutch questioned Chinese autonomy.²³ For the Chinese, religious and ethnic boundaries between population groups seemed to matter less in this pursuit than effective solutions to urgent social problems while retaining administrative control. With respect to the Chinese of Semarang, Willmott observed religious tolerance as well as religious eclecticism, also among Chinese who converted to Christianity and easily combined Chinese and Christian religious rituals and devotions. Care for the poor and needy was part and parcel of both religious orientations.²⁴

Of the Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits took a particular interest in the Chinese minority. The Jesuits in Semarang, as will be elucidated in the next section, welcomed Chinese financial support for their missionary activities while striving to maintain as much operational control as possible. Moreover, they proved to be sensitive to aspirations of the Chinese elite for the preservation of their cultural identity combined with European standards of living and education. In the late colonial period, these corresponded to

21 Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina*, Chapter VII; Erkelens, *The Decline*, Chapters 5-7.

22 Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, Chapter VII; Erkelens, *The Decline*, 216.

23 Compare Erkelens, *The Decline*, Chapters 6 and 7.

24 Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, Chapter IX; compare with Peter Post and May Ling Thio, *The Kwee Family of Ciledug: Family, Status, and Modernity in Colonial Java. Visualising the Private Life of the Peranakan Chinese Sugar Elite* (Volendam 2018) 54.

new markers of identity that accorded with modern Western lifestyles and forms of sociability, mobility, technology and Western education and dress codes that were adopted by wealthy, mostly Peranakan Chinese elite.²⁵ They engaged in what Tom Hoogervorst and Henk Schulte Nordholt define as ‘cultural citizenship’, which took shape through the Dutch language and a Western lifestyle. Through their positions in trade, commerce and media, the Chinese community of Java played a prominent role in these processes of modernisation that revised the socio-cultural stratification of the Dutch East Indies during the late colonial period.²⁶ For their ambition to raise and maintain their social and cultural status in colonial society through European education, Catholic missionaries seemed suitable allies.

Catholic missionaries seeking new allies

In Jesuit sources the orphanage of Kebon Dalem is portrayed as the personal project of the Jesuit Simon Beekman (1896-1972).²⁷ He arrived in Semarang in January 1925, three years after his ordination, seemingly inspired by his training at the British Jesuit College Stonyhurst which also fuelled the militant zeal of Dutch Jesuit pioneers of the indigenous mission in Java.²⁸ Jesuit sources portray Beekman as the Father of the Chinese (‘Chinezenpastoor’): a dexterous organiser and fundraiser, well connected in the Chinese community.²⁹

The Society of Jesus had been charged since 1859 with the organisation of the Dutch Catholic mission in the Indonesian archipelago. The colonial administration was mostly concentrated in Java, which also served as the power base of the Christian missions. These were kept in check by the colonial administration, which, first of all, was cautious of religion as a potential source of social-political instability. For this reason, Christian missionaries were obliged to refrain from active proselytising among the Javanese, of whom about ninety-five percent were Muslim. Second, the colonial

25 Post and Thio, *The Kwee Family of Ciledug*.

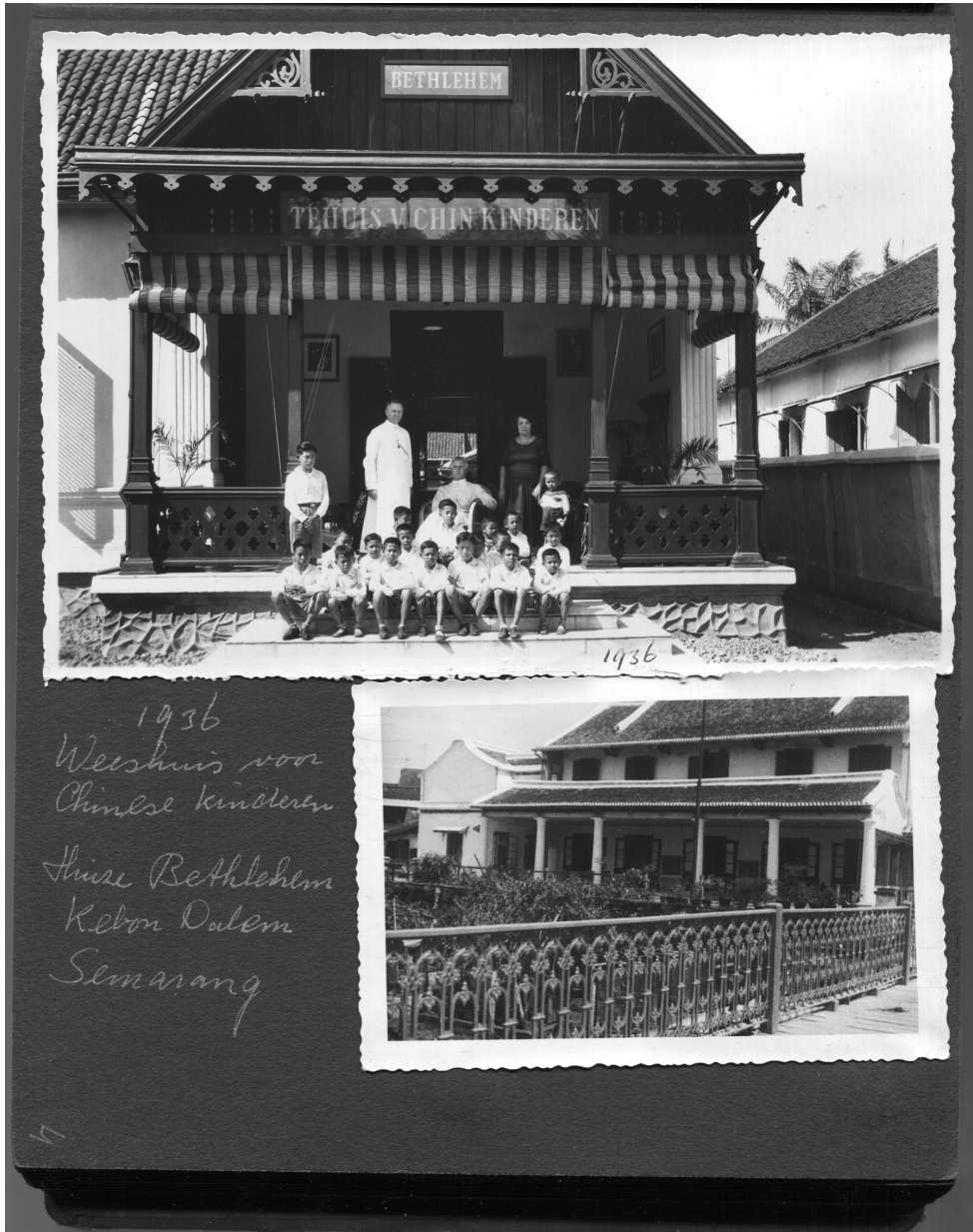
26 Tom Hoogervorst and Henk Schulte Nordholt, ‘Urban Middle Classes in Colonial Java (1900-1942): Images and Language’, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 173:4 (2017) 442-474. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17304002>. See also Post and Thio, *The Kwee Family of Ciledug*; Didi Kwartanada, ‘Bangsawan prampoewan: Enlightened Peranakan Chinese women from early twentieth century Java’,

Wacana 18:2 (2017) 422-454. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v18i2.591>.

27 CDC, *Claverbond* 121, laudatio of Beekman on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his ordination as a priest.

28 Gian Ackermans, “‘Een bestemming die al mijn idealen doodde’: Vorming en zelfbeeld van Frans van Lith SJ (1863-1926), pionier van de Javanen-missie”, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* 8:2 (2005) 46-57; Derksen, “‘On their Javanese sprout’”.

29 CDC, *Archive of the Claverbond*, 121.



▲ These pictures are included in a photo album compiled by Sisters of the Divine Providence, documenting their version of the history of Kebon Dalem and its inhabitants. Top of page: Simon Beekman sj on the porch of the orphanage at the back of Mrs. Goei's villa. The Dutch caption reads '1936. Orphanage for Chinese children', whereas the sign above the entrance reads in Dutch 'Home for Chin(ese) children'. Bottom of page: Kebon Dalem, the new location of the orphanage for Chinese children after its purchase in 1936.³⁰

30 Photo album compiled by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Providence. © Heritage Centre

of Dutch Religious Institutes, ENK, AR-Z140, 8170.

administration was wary of interconfessional rivalries between Protestant and Catholics in the metropole spilling over to the Christian missions. From 1902 onwards, the Jesuits started to share administrative responsibility for the Catholic mission with other male religious institutes.³¹ They also enlisted congregations of Brothers and Sisters, which, since 1917, had money and manpower to spare for the colonial mission, as the Dutch government funded their schools in the Netherlands on an equal footing with state schools.

The Jesuits came to consider the Chinese as relevant to their missionary ambitions, but had no clear strategy concerning the complex socio-political position of this minority.³² Their mission comprised over 8,000 Catholics, of whom Chinese and Eurasian Catholics represented about twenty percent.³³ On account of its substantial Chinese minority, they envisioned Semarang as the centre of their mission in Java. In this multi-ethnic and multilingual context, Beekman considered the Chinese well suited for an intermediary position between the local, Javanese population of the Islamic persuasion and the Europeans.³⁴ The wealth of Chinese merchants and business owners enhanced this suitability.³⁵ For his orphanage in Semarang, Beekman found an ally in Mrs. Goei Ing Hong-Be Soen Nio, whose late husband ran a large trading company and belonged to one of the oldest and most respected Peranakan Chinese families in Java. After his death in 1920, his widow became a patroness of many causes. Historian Peter Post explains that ‘becoming a patron or patroness of a society or an institution was an honorable but also responsible position in the hierarchical and status-minded Peranakan Chinese minority of colonial Java. Patrons and patronesses were expected to help in times of (personal) crises, psychological and material discomfort, and financial problems’.³⁶ Raising money for the education of Chinese children proved to be a core activity of wealthy benefactors such as Mrs. Goei.³⁷

Remarkably her name and those of other benefactors go unmentioned in the missionary sources. Beekman apparently did not consider their names relevant to the readership in the Netherlands. Also, in accordance with

31 Karel Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia, 1808-1942: A Documented History. Volume 2: The Spectacular Growth of a Self Confident Minority, 1903-1942*. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 232 (Leiden 2007). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004254022>: the eastern part of the archipelago to the Fathers MSC (1902) and then the eastern half of Western Java to the Fathers of the Holy Cross (1927).

32 Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia*, 5 and 66-67. Compare relevant interviews in the KMM collection: 3, 275, 366, 433, 487789, 794, 819.

33 Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia*, 381.

34 S. Beekman SJ, ‘De Chineezzen-missie te Semarang’, *Claverbond* 45:1 (1933) 197-214.

35 Beekman, ‘De Chineezzen-missie te Semarang’, 199-201.

36 Post and Thio, *The Kwee Family of Ciledug*, 67.

37 Post and Thio, *The Kwee Family of Ciledug*, Chapters 1 and 2 for examples of such private initiatives that have been underexposed in the historical studies of Ming Govaars, *Dutch Colonial Education: The Chinese Experience in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Singapore 2005) and Crystal Susiana Paruntu, *Resinicification in Education for Chinese in Netherlands-Indies on Early 20th Century* (Master’s thesis; Leiden University 2016).

the clerical leadership structures of his Church and ethnic sensitivities, he possibly wanted to avoid the impression that Chinese laity unduly affected Jesuit missionary projects. Nevertheless, thanks to Mrs. Goei, Beekman probably gained access to a broader network of Peranakan Chinese, who helped him purchase Kebon Dalem in 1936. Personally, she supported the establishment of St. Mary's Hall, a school where poor Chinese girls were instructed in good housekeeping. Although this was a Catholic school, it was open to Chinese girls regardless of their denomination. Mrs. Goei also rented out the back of the family mansion at Plampitan 9 to Father Beekman, where he started his orphanage in 1935 that was transferred to Kebon Dalem in 1937.³⁸ According to Beekman, this institute helped the Chinese community to face the economic and social adversity to which Chinese newcomers, the *singkeh*, proved to be particularly vulnerable. The orphanage was, Beekman stated, a 'magnificent advertisement for our faith and our Mission', as well as a project that – although dear to it – the Chinese community had not been able to carry through by itself.³⁹

Religion as a 'splitting' device

Whereas the Christian tenets of charity infused the ambition of the missionaries to provide aid and relief, their actions reflect a complex mix of moral superiority and 'positive differentiation' that defined their power over those they deemed worthy of their help. Vallgård defines these 'specific imperial habits of sensibility' in terms of sympathy through which missionaries defined, embodied and practised a 'humanitarian mode of difference'.⁴⁰ 'Splitting' is the term that Catherine Hall uses in *Civilising Subjects*, referring to the process of defining difference by splitting those conceived as 'others' into 'bad' or 'good'; the 'bad' group is identified in terms of absolute differences, whereas the 'good' group conditionally qualifies as potential allies.⁴¹ To missionaries in the Dutch East Indies, religion did not merely serve as a marker of difference, but also as a 'splitting' device, differentiating between potential Christians and hopeless heathens. In the view of the Jesuits, the Chinese in general belonged to the prospective converts. Beekman actively contributed to this 'othering' of the Chinese in his articles in the Jesuit mission journal *Claverbond*, by discursively enforcing both positive

38 Post, *The Kwee Family of Ciledug*, 68.

39 S. Beekman SJ, 'Bethlehem, het tehuis voor de Chineesche jeugd', *Claverbond* 47:1 (1935) 166-168, quotation on page 167 in Dutch: 'zoo'n pracht-reclamevlag (...) voor onzen godsdienst en onze missie'.

40 Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods*, 227-229.

41 Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge 2002) 18-19, with reference to John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas de Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (London 1991) 10-12 and 18-19.

and negative racial stereotypes that served to distinguish them from the Javanese population, and identifying them as suitable Catholic prospects. They were labelled as industrious and dedicated people, endowed with a mercantile spirit and respect for religion. As the Chinese ‘lacked’ a specific religion of their own, they needed to rely on what Beekman called ‘outside import’ (in Dutch: ‘import van buiten’). Although the Catholic mission could boast hardly any converts from this group, Beekman’s confidence was apparently boosted by occasional conversions that were duly reported in the *Claverbond*.⁴²

The Jesuits considered children’s education to be the most effective instrument for the transformation of Chinese into ‘proper Catholics’.⁴³ Here too, their interests met the existing awareness of the Peranakan Chinese elite that European education was a prerequisite for ‘proper citizenship’ on an equal footing with the Europeans in the Dutch East Indies. Historian Ming Govaars has documented the prolonged struggle of the Chinese community for equal opportunities through education, interspersed with competing identity politics through resinification or Europeanisation.⁴⁴ The establishment of the Dutch–Chinese school (in Dutch: ‘Hollandsch-Chineesche School’, HCS) in 1908 fulfilled the conditions of the Peranakan Chinese community, albeit not on the scale needed. In Semarang, the Franciscan Sisters of Heythuysen opened such a Dutch–Chinese school. The Sisters successfully enlisted the daughters of wealthy Chinese for their academic training in this privately funded school. With respect to religion, the school was less successful as only 17 percent of the pupils were Catholics.⁴⁵ Although Beekman considered this school the ‘seed’ in terms of contact and conversion, he wanted to reach what he called the ‘true masses’ in the Chinese quarter of which Kebon Dalem would be the Catholic heart.⁴⁶ Until 1931 this estate was the home of the Captain of Semarang. Beekman was able to first hire Kebon Dalem in 1933 and subsequently purchase it in 1936 with the help of Chinese benefactors, the Society of Jesus and a mortgage of over 30,000 guilders.⁴⁷ Restoration preserved the Chinese architectural elements, as well as delicate woodcarvings with which the buildings on the complex were decorated.⁴⁸ This respect for the cultural characteristics of the Chinese community reflected the missionary *modus operandi* of the Jesuits.⁴⁹ Its orphanage could

42 M. Timmers SJ, ‘n Praatje over Chineezen en Christendom in het vicariaat van Batavia’, *Claverbond* 47:1 (1935) 202–205.

43 Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia*, 67.

44 Govaars, *Dutch Colonial Education*; Paruntu, *Resinification*.

45 CDC, *Claverbond* 50:1 (1938) 238; Timmers, ‘n Praatje’, 204–207.

46 Beekman, ‘De Chineezen-missie’, 208; in Dutch ‘de eigenlijke massa van ‘t volk’.

47 Beekman, ‘Bethlehem, het tehuis voor de Chineesche jeugd’, 166–168.

48 Post, *The Kwee family of Ciledug*, 64, describes the significance of architecture for elite Peranakan Chinese families as an expression of the amalgamation of a European style infused with symbolic references to the eight moral principles of Confucianism.

49 CDC, Archive of the *Claverbond*, 121. Compare Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia*, 66 and 71.

accommodate about 200 Chinese pupils – girls as well as boys. In *Claverbond*, Beekman alternately described its target group as uncared-for children (1933), Chinese boys (1935) and, finally, Chinese children (1935), tacitly admitting to the mixed composition of its population in terms of gender as well as of their social status: abandoned, neglected, exploited or orphaned.

Missionary sources depict the search for children for a missionary upbringing as a hands-on affair. Beekman roamed the narrow streets of the Chinese quarter, defying the stifling heat, in search of homeless children, children without parents to take care of them, and children who were put to work by ‘distant relatives’ who took advantage of them.⁵⁰ The sources describe his interventions as justified because of the incapacity of the Chinese community to care for these children. Catholic missionaries portrayed themselves as perfectly able to meet this community’s specific need, acknowledging only partially and reluctantly, it seems, the involvement and investments of the Chinese community, which testify to the concern that uncared-for Chinese children would reflect badly on this minority and its leadership. Beekman acknowledged that three prominent members of the Chinese community served on the board of governors of the foundation which administered the orphanage. Beekman presided over this board and here too, the names of the governors, who were part of a local network of benefactors that donated money, rice or oil, went unmentioned. They entrusted Beekman with the selection of the children in need, their upbringing and education. Beekman, in turn, enlisted the help of the Sisters of the Divine Providence in 1937. Although their professional engagement in the orphanage was defined in a contract with the board of governors, they were, in their own words, basically working for the Jesuits.⁵¹

Care and control by Catholic Sisters

As caregivers and educators, Catholic Sisters guarded and enforced racialised differences between colonisers and colonised. They functioned as gatekeepers of sexual relations, reproduction and child-rearing practices according to normative conceptions of race and class. Stoler rightfully identified white wives of European men as well as white professional women such as teachers, nurses and Protestant missionaries as such gatekeepers.⁵² Yet she overlooked Catholic Sisters who charged themselves with the regulation of bodies and sexuality in their missionary projects. The Sisters of the Divine Providence aspired to ‘civilise’ the pupils of the orphanage of Kebon Dalem; a

50 ENK, AR-Z140, 8169.

51 CDC, KMM 491 (interview with Sr. Christini Slangen).

52 Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge* and ‘Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison

in North American History and (Post)

Colonial Studies’, *The Journal of American*

History 88:3 (2001) 829-865. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2700385>.

missionary upbringing would serve to somewhat soften the boundaries that distinguished them from the Europeans, while simultaneously sharpening the social boundaries between them and the Javanese.

This congregation was established in Germany in 1842 and branched out to the Netherlands in 1879 on account of the anti-Catholic Culture Wars (*Kulturkampf*). Caring for orphans and providing primary education represented its core business. The Dutch branch took charge of an orphanage and a school in Bandung on Java in 1934, followed by Kebon Dalem in Semarang in 1938. These projects fitted the Jesuits' policy of transforming Semarang into the centre of the Catholic Chinese mission.⁵³ The sources in their archive allow for an analysis of the discursive operations underlying the Sisters' practices of caregiving, differentiating between caring and needy parties and defining practices of child separation as both necessary and natural.⁵⁴ They moreover testify to the internal contradictions of what theologian Annelies van Heijst defined as 'charitable care' provided by Catholic Sisters.⁵⁵ This care contributed to social justice and humanity, whereas it also enforced an assumed moral superiority of the caregivers, based on race and faith – being white, Christians and core members of the Catholic Church.⁵⁶ The ambitions and standards of care were bound by time and place, and mutually constitutive with contemporary social and cultural conceptions of gender, class and age. In the missionary setting too, care arrangements reflected power structures, as well as negotiations between the providers and the recipients of charitable care.⁵⁷

At Kebon Dalem, the Sisters were part of a multilayered collaboration under the supervision of the Jesuits, who financially relied on Chinese benefactors. A lack of government funding made the project 'truly missionary' according to the Sisters, emphasising that they did not have to abide by any government regulations.⁵⁸ Through long-distance financial

- 53 ENK, AR-Z140, 1657, Sr. Rodriga to Mother Vincentia (superior of the Dutch Province of the congregation) 28 February 1937; Mgr. Willekens to Mother Vincentia, 2 March 1937.
- 54 Compare Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge 1994).
- 55 Annelies van Heijst, *Models of Charitable Care: Catholic Nuns and Children in their Care in Amsterdam, 1852-2002*. Brill's Series in Church History 33 (Leiden/Boston 2008). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004168336.i-417>.
- 56 Annelies van Heijst, Marjet Derks and Marit Monteiro, *Ex caritate. Kloosterleven, apostolaat*

- en nieuwe spirit van actieve vrouwelijke religieuzen in Nederland in de 19e en 20e eeuw* (Hilversum 2010) 469-473 and 491-493. Compare Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge/London 1996) Chapter 19.
- 57 McLisky, 'Introduction'; Vallgård, *Imperial Childhoods*; Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Maori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham 2014).
- 58 ENK, AR-Z140, 1687, (retrospective) reports with respect to Indonesia [1938-1975], text written by Sr. Christini Slangen (1989).



Internen Juli 1938

▲
Sheet of the photo album dedicated to the history of Kebon Dalem, compiled by the Sisters of the Divine Providence. It shows the tidily and uniformly dressed pupils ('Internen'), especially the boys on the left, of the orphanage in 1938, under close supervision of the Sisters.⁵⁹

59 Photo album compiled by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Providence. © Heritage Centre of Dutch Religious Institutes, ENK, AR-Z140, 8170.

‘adoption’ of pupils, they attempted to acquire extra funds from fellow Sisters in the Netherlands, their relatives or other relations who donated money to help raise orphans. Only sparse records of these donations are extant, specifying the status of the children either as a ‘heathen child’ or registered under its Christian name. Their benefactors were kept abreast about their progress.⁶⁰

To the Sisters, the poverty of Kebon Dalem and its orphanage manifested itself in the lack of clothes for the orphans, the absence of clean household linen, and the shortage of beds that forced the children to share them with three or more children. The Sisters were instructed by their Mother Superior that cleanliness and neatness would demonstrate their missionary capability.⁶¹ They invested in order, discipline and cleanliness as the pillars of their regime. They applied their norms by introducing fixed times for getting up, having meals and going to bed. Equally disruptive to the children was the practice of collective bathing, in groups according to age and gender.⁶² According to the Sisters, the fundamental reorganisation of their daily routines amounted to the mental discipline that would transform the children into industrious subjects for colonial society.⁶³ Pictures taken in 1938 – and presumably sent home to the Sisters’ superior – show tidily and uniformly dressed pupils, the accomplishments of the Sisters reflected in the ordered compositions and the children’s serious facial expressions.

The Sisters reported that the children seemed to be anxious when they first met them, as they wore a habit and a dauntingly big wimple that covered their hair and part of their faces. As the children grew aware that the Sisters meant well, things ran more smoothly from the perspective of the Sisters.⁶⁴ Such assessments need to be put into perspective, as the Sisters did not speak Malay or Chinese. They learned to say the Lord’s Prayer as well as the chaplet in Malay, although proselytising was expressly forbidden. It can be assumed – although the sources do not specify this – that Beekman issued this prohibition. Equally unclear remains whether he did so by order of his Chinese partners. The Sisters hoped nevertheless to contribute to the conversion of ‘their’ children by caring for them physically, emotionally and spiritually. Converting an unknown but in any case small number of pupils lived up to these hopes, perhaps strengthening their sense of belonging to the emotional community the Sisters and the Jesuits tried to form at Kebon

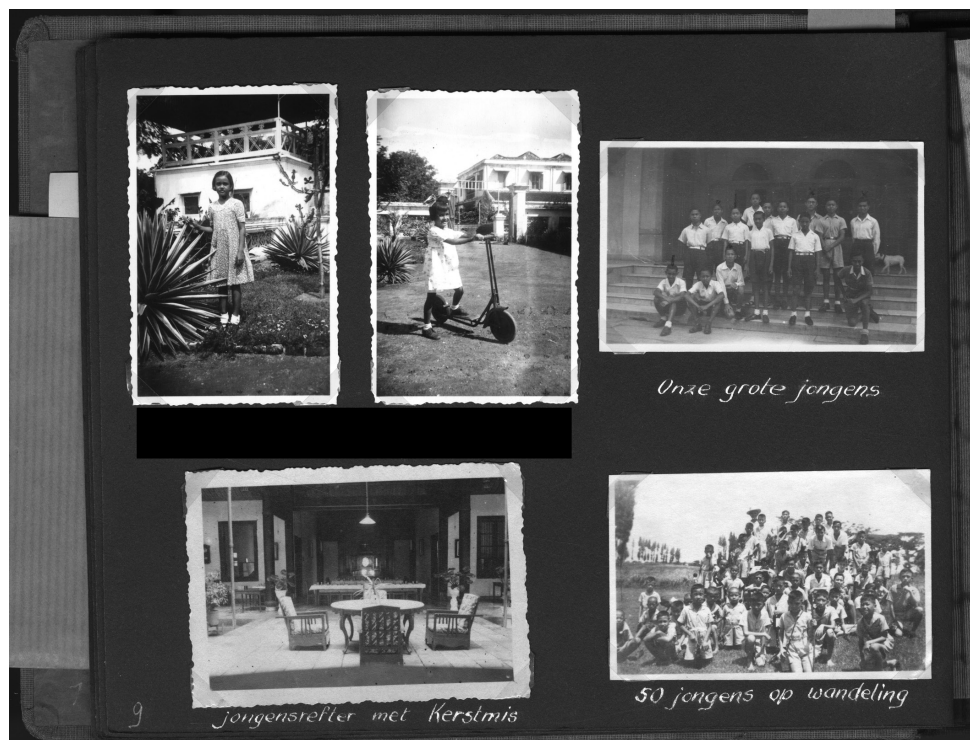
60 ENK, AR-Z140, 1666, financial matters related to the mission in the Dutch East Indies.

61 ENK, AR-Z140, 1660, Mother Vincentia to Sr. Aniëla, 12 March 1938; compare *ibid.*, 233 (fragment of chronicle).

62 CDC, KMM 324, October 1978.

63 Compare Barry, “‘Equal to Children of European Origin’”; Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*.

64 CDC, KMM 324, (14).



▲
 Sheet of the photo album dedicated to the history of Kebon Dalem, compiled by the Sisters of the Divine Providence, with various (posed) pictures of pupils and their living conditions. The captions identify some pupils not only by their names, but sometimes also by their status as orphan (in Dutch: *wees*). This information has been made illegible for the purpose of publishing this album sheet in this article. The captions generally testify to the Sisters' perspective of 'their' children, revealing a complex mix of familiarity, responsibility, joy, care and control.⁶⁵

65 Photo album compiled by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Providence. © Heritage Centre of Dutch Religious Institutes, ENK, AR-Z140, 8170.

Dalem.⁶⁶ In any case, the Sisters were well aware that Catholic converts represented but a small portion of the religiously pluralistic Chinese community of Semarang.⁶⁷

Their professional experience in the Dutch orphanages where they were trained had taught the Sisters the flexibility of the term 'orphan'. Some of the children they took in were indeed orphans or abandoned children, whereas others were children in ward.⁶⁸ Beekman was in charge of enrolling and dismissing children from the orphanage. The Sisters assumed that he found most of their pupils on the street and that most of them were indeed abandoned or destitute. Yet they were aware that Beekman also brought children who had a family, albeit one that could not take care of (all of) its children. In some cases, economic hardship had unsettled them, as the recession made itself felt in the Chinese community after the First World War through unemployment and loss of income.⁶⁹

The available sources do not allow for further assessment of whose standards were applied in judgements about the extent and quality of childcare. In retrospect, two Sisters referred to poverty and tragic family circumstances as common reasons why parents or guardians would relinquish their children.⁷⁰ They vehemently objected to the suggestion that the Chinese readily surrendered their children, implying force majeure, and the orphanage as an appropriate solution. Their objections do not preclude the fact that they took in children who had nowhere else to turn to. Even if the Catholic missionaries did perhaps not particularly welcome this, the majority of their pupils were at their mercy. The Sisters emphasised that the care arrangements provided by the Catholic mission were of a temporary nature, outlining that these neither meant nor required a definite surrender.⁷¹ Indeed relatives sometimes came to collect older 'mission children' (*missiekinderen*), who ultimately came to represent an asset instead of a burden.⁷² Beekman was in charge of examining such claims before pupils of the orphanage were

66 Claire McLisky, Daniel Midena and Karen Vallgård (eds.), *Emotions and Christian Missions: Historical Perspectives*. Palgrave Studies in the History of Emotions (London 2015); Morrison and Martin, 'Introduction'.

67 CDC, KMM 491 (interview with Sr. Christini Slangen); compare Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, Chapter IX.

68 Children of parents from whom parental rights had been taken away, either temporarily or indefinitely. CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laet).

69 ENK, AR-Z140, 8169, photo album with captions that document the history of Kebon Dalem.

70 CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laet); CDC, KMM 491 (interview with Sr. Christini Slangen).

71 CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laet).

72 *Ibidem*; for this notion: CDC, KMM 369, interview with Sr. Hildegardis van Mil, who explains that in Borneo between 1937 and 1957 Chinese children were offered to and taken in by the Catholic Sisters. Compare Conroy-Krutz, *Christian Mission*, for the more general use of this term.

turned over to these relatives.⁷³ Precisely these claims and the missionary response indicate that the Chinese community considered the orphanage of Kebon Dalem as part of its support network to and from which needy children could ‘circulate’.⁷⁴

‘Poor sods of Kebon Dalem’

For information about Kebon Dalem in the 1930s and early 1940s from the pupils’ perspective, I have to rely on sources from the 1980s. During this decade, religious institutes fostered historical awareness about the Catholic mission in Indonesia, among Indonesian Catholics as well as Indonesian members of international, originally Dutch religious institutes. The Dutch members of these institutes came to consider their missionary work as development aid *avant la lettre*, and as such a repository of knowledge and source of inspiration for young members of religious institutes, as well as for foreign aid workers. Links between past and present were hardly contemplated in these loosely defined commemorative projects, but they also resulted in sources written retrospectively by recipients of the charitable care of the Jesuits and the Sisters of the Divine Providence in Semarang during the 1930s and 1940s.⁷⁵

Two extant sources elucidate the experiences of Chinese ‘mission children’ who converted to Catholicism while living in the orphanage of Kebon Dalem. They indirectly also testify to the socio-economic pressures and structures of the Chinese community that considered wealth the main indicator of social status.⁷⁶ By implication, poverty entailed embarrassment and humiliation. In her autobiography, Tan Wien Bie describes how her family, newly arrived from Singapore, suffered severe personal and financial losses.⁷⁷ After the death of her mother and paternal grandmother, the family

73 CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laet), letter from Sr. Jeanette de Laet to her sister, Josephine, in the Netherlands, 8 December 1945.

74 CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laet), letter from Sr. Jeanette de Laet to her sister, Josephine, in the Netherlands 16 June 1946; for the concept of ‘child circulation’ as care arrangement: Jessica Leinaweaver, *The Circulation of Children: Kinship, Adoption, and Morality in Andean Peru* (Durham 2008); Semple, ‘Making missions’, applies this concept in mission history. Christina Firpo describes a similar phenomenon concerning ‘fatherless’ *métis* children in French Indochina in

The Uprooted: Race, Children, and Imperialism in French Indochina, 1890-1980 (Honolulu 2016).

75 Compare with Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge 2012). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139057554>. Anderson urges us to consider the question why these sources are extant, whereas others – unknown to us – are not and thus cannot be included in historical analysis.

76 Willmott, *The Chinese of Semarang*, 116-124.

77 ENK, AR-Z140, 452; compare CDC, KMM 602 (interview with Sr. Margaretha Marie Tanuwidjaja Winarto, as the original Chinese surname read in Indonesian).

Tan Wien became 'so poor that we did not have any food. We used to bind a tight chord around our bellies, in order not to feel the hunger'. Without parental supervision, four children started to roam the streets and ran into a Jesuit, who took them to the vicarage and gave them small presents. His religious teachings struck a nerve: the personal losses of the family and their dire circumstance required them to make a sacrifice and made them 'choose the path from Buddhism to the true God'.⁷⁸

Whether conversion was a prerequisite to be placed in the orphanage of Kebon Dalem remains unclear. Tan Wien Bie remembered that the relocation at the end of the 1930s 'was not easy for us', although the Sisters did their best to make them feel welcome. Significant changes – such as having to share their space with about 120 other children, being forced to live by the bell that regulated their daily life, and the stringently restricted amount of time they could spend with relatives – account for their initial personal and emotional discomfort in the orphanage.⁷⁹ Tan Wien Bie did appreciate the opportunity to go to school and study. She, like her elder sister, decided to join the Sisters of the Divine Providence, adopting the name Margaretha Marie.⁸⁰ Presumably their chances of finding a suitable husband had dwindled with the family fortune. The missionary milieu in which they were socialised and enculturated offered an alternative that would raise their social status: becoming a Sister. Sr. Margaritha Marie affectionately mentions the Dutch Sisters as inspiring examples to whom she was indebted for what she defined as a happy and secure childhood. The correspondence and (fragments of) diaries of the Sisters disclose that their collective and personal happiness was closely entwined with that of the children under their wing. Directly and indirectly, these children learned what to feel and which emotions to express.⁸¹

Although proud of new vocations, as in the case of Tan Wien Bie, the Sisters were in general highly ambivalent about the local candidates.⁸² First, they acknowledged that these candidates usually came from their orphanage and were indeed orphans, indicating that other girls had other opportunities as well as family pressures. Second, racial prejudice seems to have been a greater impediment, as the Sisters feared that the vocations of Chinese

78 ENK, AR-Z140, 452.

79 ENK, AR-Z140, 452.

80 ENK, AR-Z140, 1687, (retrospective) reports with respect to Indonesia [1938-1975], text written by Sr. Christini Slangen (1989).

81 McLisky, Midená and Vallgård, *Emotions and Christian Missions*; Morrison and Martin, 'Introduction'; Vallgård, Alexander and Olsen, 'Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood';

Kathleen Vongsathorn, 'Teaching, Learning and Adapting Emotions in Uganda's Child Leprosy Settlement, c. 1930-1962', in: Stephanie Olsen (ed.), *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History* (Basingstoke 2015) 56-73. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137484840_4.

82 CDC, KMM 491 (interview Sr. Christini Slangen); CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laat).



This picture of the Sisters with their first pupils of Kebon Dalem probably dates from the late 1930s. The sisters Tan Wien were part of this group: the eldest, Kie (Sr. Virgini) standing, second of the left, and Bie (Sr. Margaretha Marie), the girl in the white dress standing behind the boy kneeling in the front row.⁸³ In contrast to the other illustrations in this article, many pupils are smiling to the photographer, and appear to be more relaxed.

83 Photo of sisters and pupils at Kebon Dalem. © Heritage Centre of Dutch Religious Institutes,

Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Providence, ENK, AR-Z140, 8167.

candidates would be too shallow and would not last under resistance from their community. This disqualification was rooted in racialised perceptions of the Chinese community as well as in the Sisters' deeply engrained opinions about the requirements for religious life. The demand to be humble and obedient in particular did not go well together with the cleverness, professional ambition, class-consciousness and desire to better oneself they thought to recognise in the pupils of Kebon Dalem.⁸⁴

The text of Sr. Margaretha Marie/Tan Wien Bie supports the missionary discourse about children in need of rescue, neatly explaining the necessity for intervention. This necessity remains somewhat obscure in the second source, an uninvited letter of gratitude written by a former Chinese pupil of the orphanage, Huub, and his wife, Lucy. How they ended up in the orphanage is unclear. In the letter, addressed to one of the Sisters, they introduce themselves as they were known in the Chinese quarter during their youth: 'poor sods of Kebon Dalem'. In the letter they use this epithet with pride and irony.⁸⁵ Huub defines care in terms of learning how to lead a simple and sober life. This was a tough lesson, as they were young: 'We learned to go without, to make little sacrifices, for God, who should be the centre of our lives'. The frugality of the orphans' daily lives corresponded with the austerity reported by the Sisters, who, however, had taken the vow of poverty when they opted for the religious life. Huub's letter indicates that they integrated their religious ideals into the moral training of the pupils, whose impoverished background required them to get used to having little. Sacrificing what one had, or desperately wanted, proved to be an asset for later life, as indeed Huub and Lucy, in their own words, came to realise as adults. Huub's apparently rough start in life was compensated for by intellectual and professional opportunities for gifted boys in the Catholic milieu. Although his calling to become a priest did not last, he was able to study and become a teacher. Huub describes this as a definite step up the social ladder that guaranteed their family income.

Although thankfulness is writ large in Huub's letter, the references to frugality and austerity reflect the ambivalence of the Sisters' civilising and disciplining care. It was only in hindsight that Huub and Lucy came to realise that the Catholic mission offered chances that probably would have been rare for uncared-for children in the Chinese community: primary and secondary education, academic training and a professional career as a teacher. Taking advantage of such opportunities required religious conversion to and accommodation of the way of life of their religious surrogate parents.

84 CDC, KMM 491 (interview Sr. Christini Slangen); CDC, KMM 324 (interview with Sr. Jeanette de Laatz); compare ENK, AR-Z140, 370, correspondence between G. De Quay SJ (Semarang) and the Superior of the Sisters in the Netherlands, 1945-

1946; ENK, AR-Z140, 372, letters of Mother Leonie Barkey.

85 ENK, AR-Z140, 1657, letter to Sr. Madeleine van der Loo, 27 November 1989.

Conclusion

The orphanage of Kebon Dalem operated on the basis of a partnership between Catholic missionaries and members of the Chinese elite of Semarang. The Dutch missionary sources do not clearly identify the Chinese allies, but they do clarify shared interests – albeit motivated differently – in the care for Chinese children perceived as needy. The missionaries recognised the Chinese minority as potentially suitable allies for anchoring Catholicism more solidly in colonial society. For the Chinese elite, it was paramount to fortify their entitlement to self-rule with concrete proof of their capacity to solve the problems of their neighbourhood. Moreover, caring for the poor and needy fitted their charitable traditions and proved to be common ground for an alliance with the Jesuit Beekman. Yet apparently the Chinese themselves could not establish an orphanage of the size and scale that Beekman was able to realise with the financial support of wealthy Chinese and the day-to-day support of the Sisters of the Divine Providence.

Whereas these Sisters emphasised that Chinese children were not being surrendered to the Catholic mission, their pupils had nowhere else to go. As poverty reduced their socio-economic options within the Chinese community, the Catholic mission offered education and life options that could enhance their social status. Former pupils of Kebon Dalem mention these opportunities with gratitude; at the same time, they retrospectively describe the required adjustments to a fixed time schedule and unflinching austerity as invasive. As much as care for the children's physical and mental well-being determined the Sisters' self-understanding as religious women and missionaries, this care was also rooted in moral superiority based on race and faith – being white, Christians and core members of the Catholic Church.

As a missionary project, Kebon Dalem testifies to colonial complications between the Catholic mission and the local Chinese community, exposing practices of child separation as strategies to serve communal interests of the Chinese elite. The sources indicate that the orphanage was part of the support network of the local Chinese community, where neglected, abandoned and orphaned children were raised in an orderly, or assumingly European, fashion. Some of them were reclaimed by relatives, which indicates circulation rather than definite separation as a possible outcome of the care arrangement. The ban on proselytising seems to reveal a similar precaution for safeguarding the ties between the pupils and the Chinese community. The willingness of members of the Chinese elite to serve on the governing board, as well as financial and material donations indicate that these wealthy Chinese identified uncared-for Chinese children as their administrative responsibility, which not only required but also authorised missionary interventions in family life and kinship structures. For the Chinese elite, the care and solid European upbringing for the pupils of Kebon Dalem represented a return on investment that reflected their capacity to solve an urgent problem in the

Chinese quarter. For the Dutch Jesuits, the orphanage offered a point of entry into the Chinese community that, in their view, could be a new seedbed of potential Catholics who could constructively support the Jesuits' ambitions to transform Semarang into the heart of the Catholic mission in Java.

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