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Meditations on a Portrait from Seventeenth-Century Batavia

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A seventeenth-century painting, 'Pieter Cnoll and His Family' by J. J. Coeman, reveals a number of entry points from which Indonesian histories can be explored. Through a discussion of the painting and its subjects, a variety of issues ranging from VOC (United East India Company) policies and mestizo relationships to gender, labour and legal rights in VOC-controlled ports are discussed.

There is a painting in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam by J. J. Coeman entitled 'Pieter Cnoll and His Family'. It draws together many histories into one moment in time and suggests complex interactions between Asians and Europeans in Asia in the seventeenth century. I first saw this painting in 1974. At that time I was studying the relationships of Asians and Europeans in the Dutch-administered city of Batavia (Jakarta), and was at once attracted to this portrait in which Dutch, Japanese and Indonesians are intermingled in one family circle in Batavia. Over the past 30 years I have revisited this painting many times, and on each occasion it seemed to reveal different histories. To focus on the married couple contributed to the idea of a *mestizo* culture and the nature of European rule in Asian cities; to focus on dress led to considerations of gender and presentation, as well as the history of textiles, textile workers, field and factory labourers. The painted vase to the viewer's left directed thoughts to the history of trade connections between China, the Indonesian Archipelago and Europe, in addition to the influence of Chinese ceramic painting; the cut flowers suggested histories of gardening, botanical studies, the movement of plants across the globe, as well as class stratification as displayed through luxuries. When the viewer's gaze shifts to the right, the subject of slavery in its many Southeast Asian forms intrudes, as well as histories of domestic relations. The Coeman portrait prompts the viewer to study relationships between owner and owned, between man and woman. It leads the viewer into meditations on the writing of histories. The chief story could be the Dutch East Indies Company if the viewer focuses on the central man, senior merchant Pieter Cnoll, or it might be a history of the making of modern Indonesia if the viewer chooses to concentrate on the Dutch man's servants. Legend, old and new, links Indonesian manservant to European daughter, and links the manservant to histories of nationalism and resistance.

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Over the years I have also looked at this painting in between the covers of books on topics such as the colonial government's art collection and the social life of the Dutch in Asia.[1] When I first stood before this painting it was hung in the Rijksmuseum's Colonial Chamber; later I found it displayed in a new context, for museum curators change their ways of seeing and presenting. Coeman's painting had made an intellectual journey from The Colonial Chamber to the gallery of The Dutch Overseas, and before that a physical journey from Java to Holland. The canvas also made its journey of change over 350 years, for cleaning revealed details not easily discerned on earlier visits. For example, the Indonesians in the painting were hard to see before work was done on the canvas. Their emerging from the shadows could be thought of as paralleling the changes in the way histories of Asia and Europe may be written.

'Pieter Cnoll and His Family' (1665) by Jacob Coeman. Photograph courtesy of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

1 For example, the painting is reproduced in black and white in J. de Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia*, vol. II, Paintings (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1941), painting no. 30; and in Leonard Blussé, *Strange company: Chinese settlers, mestizo women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht: Foris, 1986), p.180. A section of the painting in colour is on the jacket cover of Leonard Blussé, *Bitters bruid: Een koloniaal huwelijksdrama in de gouden eeuw* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1997). A full colour reproduction is in Wim Willems *et al.*, *Uit Indie geboren: Vier eeuwen familiegeschiedenis* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997), p. 20; and in Kees Zandvliet, *The Dutch encounter with Asia, 1600–1950* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum; Zwolle: Waanders, 2002), pp. 200–1.

There is no framework presented here of colonial gaze and Oriental Otherness. I have not employed the discourse analysis of post-colonialism. To me, that angle of vision oddly parallels imperial historiography, for both place the activities of Europeans in the foreground and relegate indigenous peoples to a shadowy background as the undifferentiated 'colonised', the passive victims. Rather, my approach here is to connect people and objects to contexts and to several historical sequences. What follows, then, are meditations on a painting formed over a long period of learning about Indonesia's histories.

VOC artists

Coeman's most celebrated work was the product of his studio in Batavia. He had, at an earlier point in his career, been hired by the Dutch East Indies Company as a cleric's assistant. The Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, VOC) was the largest corporate employer in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. It employed carpenters, rope-makers, sail-makers, producers of barrels and bottles and iron nails, inspectors and examiners of sea captains, writers to produce manuals for navigation, specialists in textiles, ceramics and precious metals, medical doctors and artists. The latter were commissioned to create a pictorial record of Asian places, products, peoples, landscapes and harbours, and of the Company in its daily activities.[2] Company artists painted the ships of the many peoples anchored in Asia's ports, as well as Dutch settlements and forts from land and sea. They also painted markets, street scenes and important dignitaries. They recorded Company officials going in procession with flags, trumpeters and honour guards to wait on Asian princes with gifts. They recorded the reception of Dutch officials and made portraits of the governors-general with their insignia of office. Company artists supplemented their official incomes by painting the portraits of men serving the VOC as senior officials in their private homes and country villas, surrounded by wife, children and domestic staff. Other men, hired by the Company as traders, also made drawings to capture and record their impressions of cities, places and people they encountered in the course of their official duties.[3]

In these pictures street scenes, marketplaces, harbours and domestic interiors tell of a cosmopolitan life, where Javanese, Malay, Balinese, Chinese, Indians, Japanese and Dutch lived closely together, shopping, chatting, eating in public spaces and sharing the intimacy of the home. The setting is the Archipelago's ports, where Asians and Europeans squeezed into the narrow spaces of waterfront bazaars outside the walls of Muslim cities, or crowded together within the walled port of Batavia. Paintings and

2 VOC-era paintings exist in a number of collections. Those consulted for this paper belong to the collections of the West Hoorn Museum, the Rijksmuseum and the Amsterdam Maritime Museum. The photographic archive of the Documentation Centre, KITLV, has also been consulted. Paintings, engravings and sketches reproduced in books are cited in the footnotes.

3 Many paintings from VOC artists are reproduced, for example, in: C. R. Boxer, *Jan Compagnie in war and peace 1602–1799* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979); F. de Haan, *Oud Batavia gedenkboek: Platenalbum* (Batavia: Kolff, 1923); the following illustrated texts by J. de Loos-Haaxman, *Johannes Rach en zijn werk* (Batavia: Kolff, 1928); *De landsverzameling schilderijen, Verlaat rapport Indie: Drie eeuwen westerse schilders, tekenaars, grafici, zilversmeden en kunstnijverijen in Nederlands-Indie* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1968); *Dagwerk in Indie: Hommage aan een verstild verleden* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1972); Johan Nieuhof, *Voyages and travels to the East Indies 1653–1670* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Zandvliet, *Dutch encounter with Asia.*

sketches by Company artists show the commercial presence of Islam. There are Muslim merchants, dressed in turbans and loose-fitting robes covering men from shoulder to ankle, their feet in sandals; they are surrounded by slave assistants such as porters and peddlers whose non-Muslim status is shown by their scanty clothing, usually a loincloth for men, breast wrapper and short skirt for women, bare heads and bare feet for both. A Dutch drawing, with descriptive captions, of the Banten market shows that in 1596 goods were sold in fixed structures and in the open air.[4] Women traders operated from baskets in the open or under trees, selling melons, beans, cucumbers and textiles. Men traders from open stands sold sugar, honey, bamboo, weapons (daggers, sabres and spears), meats, fish, vegetables, rice, spices and pepper. Gujeratis and Bengalis sold iron and tools, and Chinese merchants operated from covered stalls. Dutch men strolled through crowded markets with Asian female companions, shaded by parasols held over them by men slaves.[5] At home indoors, or standing before country houses amid pleasure gardens, the principal Dutch and Asian family members are often shown wearing European costume, surrounded by signs of their opulence – jewelled ornaments on the women, elaborate betel boxes, plush carpets from India and Persia, furniture carved by local artisans, pet dogs, Chinese porcelain vases filled with cut flowers, trays of fruits and domestic personnel.

Paintings made by Company artists had several destinations. Many canvases were packed and shipped to the Netherlands with the annual return fleet that set off for Europe between November and April each year. Some ships were lost at sea by shipwreck, in storms or due to attacks from Portuguese or English vessels. The many paintings that survived the journey were displayed in Company offices or hung in Dutch palaces, and eventually became the property of the state museums which grew out of the private collections of royalty and the very rich in the early nineteenth century.[6] Others were kept for display in the Asian offices of the East Indies Company. Some of these were lost when ports and Dutch trading posts were attacked or abandoned; or they disintegrated in the tropical heat and humidity, the canvas cracking and paint lifting off; or else they were nibbled by insects. Those in the Batavia offices were periodically restored, and examples may be seen in museums in Jakarta and Amsterdam.

Painters worked with assistants who helped to stretch canvas and prepare paints. Assistants carried the master's easel and equipment to the offices and homes of the important, and they sometimes worked on the background of the paintings. It is probable that the assistants in Batavia and other ports in the Archipelago were Asians, who thereby obtained a knowledge of European painting techniques. Paintings by artists

4 J. Kathirithamby-Wells, 'Banten: A west Indonesian port and polity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in *The Southeast Asian port and polity*, ed. J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), p. 129.

5 See, for example, the mid-seventeenth-century painting of a street scene on the south side of Batavia Castle by Andries Beeckman in the Rijksmuseum and reproduced in colour by W. Willems, *Uit Indie geboren*, p. 24; Zandvliet, *Dutch encounter with Asia*, p. 35.

6 The objects photographed in Rita Wassing-Visser, *Royal gifts from Indonesia: Historical bonds with the house of Orange-Nassau (1600–1938)* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1995) are from private collections made available to the viewing public through donation to museums, through the transformation of private 'curiosity cabinets' into public museums, or through published illustrated catalogues.

from the Archipelago in European style from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have not survived in Indonesian collections. However, illustrated manuscripts from the late eighteenth century that have been preserved and nineteenth-century art on canvas and on textiles show that Indonesian artists and craft workers incorporated Europeans and their personal possessions as subjects into their compositions.[7]

Some of the Indonesian artists who adopted European techniques in terms of oil- and water-based paints, representation of the body and subject matter in the nineteenth century were also trained in Europe and worked there. The artistic gifts of the Javanese painter Raden Saleh, for instance, were directed into European training at an early age by patrons in Java, followed by study in European studios. Raden Saleh spent over 20 years in Europe, living on a combination of Dutch government funds, his commissions as a painter, and the hospitality of the European elite who appreciated the invented self that the artist created of the 'eastern prince'. Portraits, photographs and recollections tell us that he often presented himself in elaborately brocaded, tightly fitting black jackets, with a rich waist cloth and Javanese headdress.[8] Following his return to Java in 1851, Raden Saleh put his European training to the work of restoring the colonial government's collection of portraits of VOC-era governors-general in Batavia, and to making portraits of those Javanese royals and nobles willing to ignore Islamic proscriptions against representational art.

Glimpses of colonial society

Turning to the subject of the Coeman portrait, we find several members of the Cnoll family assembled. Central are husband and wife. The husband, Pieter Cnoll, reached Batavia in 1647, beginning his service to the Company as a clerk in the lower level of the qualified ranks. His duties expanded to accounting, and he soon held successive appointments that allowed him to demonstrate his capabilities and to earn large sums by private trading ventures, probably with Asian partners. Cnoll was appointed senior merchant of Batavia Castle in 1663. Coeman arrived in Batavia that year and shortly afterward received the valuable commission to immortalise Cnoll's successful career. For his portrait Cnoll chose a black knee-length jacket, worn over a white shirt with lace at the neck, white pantaloons and stockings, and shoes with the raised heels typical for the wealthy of Europe in the seventeenth century. He wears a brimmed hat over a wig, and carries a walking stick. This sombre costume is enlivened by gold buttons, a gold tie to the crown of the hat, gold fringes and a shoulder sash of embroidered gold cloth. The same cloth forms the underskirt of his wife's elegant costume, revealed beneath the looped black overskirt. The black is set off by a broad collar of lace embroidery at the shoulders and lace cuffs. These rich materials are complemented by a brooch, pearl bracelet, necklace, hair ornament and fan.

7 See examples in *Illuminations: The writing traditions of Indonesia*, ed. Ann Kumar and John H. McGlynn, (Jakarta: Lontar, 1996); Annabel Teh Gallop, *Early views of Indonesia: Drawings from the British Library* (London: British Library, 1995); and Zandvliet, *Dutch encounter with Asia*.

8 Soekondo Bustaman, *Raden Saleh, pangeran di antara para peluk romantik* (Bandung: Abardin, 1990); Adolf Heuken SJ, *Historical sites of Jakarta* (Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka, 1982); Baharudin Marasutan, *Raden Saleh* (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian, 1973); Inger McCabe Elliot, *Batik: Fabled cloth of Java* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1984).

Seventeenth-century artists of the Netherlands painted costume in particular detail. The painter's attention to costume in the Coeman portrait brings to mind the workers of the clothing industries of Asia and Europe who produced the fabrics: the women silk workers of southern China, the men of the cotton weaving castes of India, the women lace-makers of the Netherlands. The painting also reminds us of the Dutch men who were leather workers and wig makers, and those who worked in metal and bone to produce the buckles, buttons and sewing needles that were items among the stocks the Company purchased in Europe to supply to its personnel in Asia.[9] The Company also recruited wives of employees being sent to Asia to supervise the Batavia poorhouse. They taught the young girls confined there the arts of sewing and lace making.

The materials used by Asian and European artisans prompt us to think of the rural classes of Asia and Europe who grew cotton, mined iron ore, raised silkworms, slaughtered cattle and tanned hides. Company ships brought fabrics from Europe and from India to the Archipelago, whilst Company agents purchased silk from Chinese merchants in Batavia. The Asian household staff washed and pressed the clothing. Men from eastern Archipelago communities dived for mother-of-pearl; others collected tree lacquer. These costly materials were shipped to China, where they were applied as inlay and varnish on furniture and luxury receptacles made by Chinese craftsmen for re-export to VOC markets in Asia. Company ships purchased supplies of betel nut from female sellers at markets around the Archipelago and sold it to European and Asian customers. Javanese woodcarvers made betel boxes; Javanese silver- and goldsmiths ornamented sets for the rich. The ships sent annually from Batavia to Japan returned with copper, and also with items for personal use in the well-to-do Batavia household that mother and daughter display in the Coeman painting: the painted fans, tea cups, lacquer ware and painted screens. Sundanese tile makers manufactured flooring and roofing material from local clays; builders, carpenters, roofers, furniture makers and gardeners tended the houses and grounds. Coeman's portrait obliges us to recall history's voiceless, the skilled and the unskilled labouring classes of Europe and of Asia, and the great interlocking of life and fortune that global trade produced.

The painting may also prompt us to consider the autocratic rule under which workers struggled to survive in the Asian kingdoms and fortified cities administered by the VOC. Homeless men of states and cities across western Europe were recruited as soldiers and sailors; they formed the crews which shipped Dutch merchants and administrators to Asia. In Asia the merchants, equipped for lucrative careers by an early education in writing and arithmetic, were protected by the unlettered of the VOC's militias. Five thousand ships left Holland for Asia in the years 1602 to 1795 carrying a total of one million men. Only one-third of the latter returned to Europe and, of these repatriates, the highest proportion was made up of the literate; those most likely to die in Asia were the soldiers.[10]

9 Buttons were not available from Asian suppliers in the seventeenth century because clothes such as trousers were fastened with drawstrings. The VOC shipped buttons made of bone, pewter, brass and mother-of-pearl for European-tailored clothing, the different qualities of button indicating the wearer's status.

10 *Ships, sailors and spices*, ed. F. S. Gaastra and J. R. Bruijn (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993), p. 199.

In Asia VOC sailors lived on board their ships, the soldiers on land in the barracks attached to Dutch warehouses and offices. They paid for domestic services of food, laundry and sex, supplied by the women of Asian ports. Female slaves were imported into Asian commercial centres to be prostitutes and temporary wives for the itinerant male population of Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Malays and Europeans who travelled the trade networks linking Asia, Islamic lands and Europe. These working female poor were recruited externally for the transient, polyglot male population during its three to four months in port.

Coeman's portrait compels us to write women into history, for the figures surrounding Cnoll are his wife and two of their daughters, while one of the two domestic staff in the portrait is also female. Consider first the Asian features of Cnoll's wife and daughters. They remind us that the VOC ended the practice of recruiting European female migrants for its Asian settlements in 1632 and restricted female emigration from Holland on Company ships after 1652.[11] From 1619, successive regulations dictated that Company employees' relationships with Asian women be conducted within marriage. The history of Dutch men in Asia is a history of adaptation to the domestic habits of the Asian rich. Asian royals, aristocrats and great merchants were polygamous; they collected women from many levels of society. Such men had a chief wife or wives, women of equal status whose rights to property were recorded in a written marriage contract. Other women had the status of secondary wives because their male relatives were men of lower status, whilst yet another category of women in the households of the wealthy were temporary partners, chosen from the ranks of commoners. The Dutch were – by religion, law and custom – monogamists. In their Asian settlements, however, wealthy Dutch men became, in practice, polygamists. These Dutch men had one wife whose relationship was described in the written marriage contract. Their connection was announced in church for four weeks preceding marriage, and negotiations concerning dowry, personal property and rights to maintenance as a widow settled before a notary. In the eyes of the Dutch Reformed Church, the bride of the marriage contract was the sole wife. The VOC, however, recognised that its wealthy employees in Asian cities also collected women from the commoner class for temporary partnerships that preceded their legal marriage and often continued alongside the latter.

In royal Javanese households and in Dutch Asian households some children from temporary relationships were recognised by the father, whilst others were not. Javanese court writers chronicled stories of unacknowledged sons forcing themselves on the notice of their royal father, emerging from villages where the king had interrupted his official tour of the realm for private entertainment.[12] VOC records contain similar stories. The Company periodically sent agents to scour the Asian suburbs of Batavia for light-skinned youngsters who could reasonably be supposed to be the unacknowledged children of some careless or brief encounter. The boys so discovered were to be trained for the Company's army and ships, the girls to be servant-companions to the high VOC ladies or brides for Company soldiers. Some men sent their children off to Holland for a European upbringing. The marriage records from Batavia show a clear pattern: Dutch

11 Decrees regulating migration, marriage, Asian wives and repatriation are summarised in Jean Gelman Taylor, *The social world of Batavia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. 29.

12 See, for example, Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the past, inscribing the future* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 107–9.

men had temporary relationships with slave women acquired through purchase on the slave market of Batavia, and they had marriages with Eurasian women who were the daughters of liaisons between other Dutch men and Asian slave women.

The Dutch in Asia did not directly enslave people, use slavery as a judicial punishment, or loan money in return for the slave labour of the debtor's relatives. In these aspects they were different from their Asian slave-owning counterparts. But the Dutch did use slaves as their chief workforce, purchasing them from slavers in the Archipelago as the most convenient solution to recruiting workers. Most of the slaves who ended up building Batavia's houses, warehouses and official residences, as well as its canals and roads; working in its manufactories; and staffing private households as domestics, nursemaids, coachmen, grooms and gardeners were purchased from professional traders who included slaves as items they had for sale. The majority of the population within Batavia's walls in merchant Cnoll's time were slaves.[13]

The semi-nomadic sea peoples who sailed the Archipelago's waterways from bases in the Melaka Straits, the Sulu Archipelago, and islands off southern Sulawesi obtained their trade items by attacking shipping, enslaving the crew and passengers and taking the cargo and the ship itself for resale in markets. Professional slavers, most of whom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were Muslim, raided non-Muslim areas of the eastern Archipelago and the Philippines. Islamic law forbade believers from enslaving a person living under Islamic government, but it did not extend the ban to persons living in lands without Muslim governments or to slaves who converted.[14] The principal non-Muslim suppliers of slaves were Balinese, who sold slaves to the Dutch for guns.

Slaving produced two major consequences: first, slave raids from the sea encouraged mobility among coastal villagers who fled before raiders; and second, slavers moved people around the Archipelago. Slavers and slave purchasers thereby created multi-ethnic population centres with labouring classes of agricultural and urban workers originating in many parts of island Southeast Asia. Slavers diffused and concentrated skills and sexual services. For instance, on average, Makassar slavers shipped to Batavia 3,000 slaves a year in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[15] When the Dutch abolished slavery in Batavia in 1819, most of the city's multi-ethnic population consisted of freed slaves or the descendants of slaves.

The relatives of the Batavian Dutch man's wife, then, were often the rural poor of the eastern Indies. Rural poverty also lay behind the slaves who were painted into family groupings. A male and a female retainer can be seen in the shadows to the viewer's right in the Coeman painting, and will be discussed later. Senior merchant Cnoll's in-laws, on the other hand, were to be found not amongst inhabitants of the eastern Archipelago, but in southern Japan. The painting obliges us to recall the commerce conducted by the VOC in Japan's southern ports and the interlocking histories of the Dutch and the Japanese.

The Japanese connection

From the sixteenth century Portuguese traders joined the foreign merchant community of Chinese, Koreans and Cham in Japan's ports, while Portuguese priests

13 Susan Abeyesekere, *Jakarta: A history* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 19–20.
14 Bernard Lewis, *Race and slavery in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 6, 9.
15 Heather Sutherland, 'Slavery and the slave trade in South Sulawesi, 1660s–1800s', in *Slavery, bondage and dependency in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid (New York: St. Martins Press, 1983), p. 270.

added a new element to the learned circles of Japanese cities. Portuguese intellectuals had a dynamic impact on leading *daimyo* families of southern Japan. Many fiefholders converted to Christianity, bringing into the Roman Catholic Church their armed followers, and their agricultural and artisan classes. Priests were able to interest the Japanese in their philosophy, mechanical timepieces, muskets and general knowledge.

By the early years of the seventeenth century, the Dutch and English were trading in Japan too. At first, all European traders and clergy were admitted to southern ports, principally Hirado. But in the 1630s the Japanese government banned the practice of Christianity and expelled all Portuguese and those Japanese who did not renounce their new religion. In 1641 Shogun Iemitsu determined that only the Dutch could trade in Japan. Among the restrictions placed on Dutch trade was a prohibition of ministers of religion or European women amongst the staff. The duration of an individual's employment in Japan also was limited to one year. In order to restrict still further contact between Dutch and Japanese, the shogun ordered his labourers to construct an artificial island, known as Deshima, in Nagasaki Bay. A Japanese watercolour on silk of Deshima in the Rijksmuseum collection shows a fan-shaped island separated from Nagasaki by a narrow channel of water. A bridge connects Deshima to the densely populated city. It dominates a hinterland of cultivated fields that extend to the shores of the bay. On Deshima the VOC built residences for employees, and warehouses and facilities for receiving the ships that arrived annually from Batavia. The ships were disarmed as they entered Japanese waters, and had their weapons returned as they made the exit journey. Once a year, the senior Dutch representative and a small staff were conducted to the shogunal palace in Edo for an audience that included the exchange of gifts and also sometimes of opinion.[16]

The efforts of the Japanese ruling house were directed at monopolising Dutch knowledge and sealing off their subjects from exposure to foreigners. But certain sectors of Japanese society always had regular contact with the outsiders. They included the guards who were stationed at the entrance to Deshima, the men assigned to accompany the Dutch on purchasing missions, as well as interpreters, suppliers, packers, transporters, servants and women. The women were of the poorest class of fishermen and town workers, and were assigned as prostitutes for the all-male society of Deshima. Japan's government directed poor women into prostitution at home and overseas, a policy that continued into the twentieth century.

Dutch men in the isolated society of Deshima paid for their pleasures, so that the families providing the girls were able to improve their incomes, and to engage in small-scale trading of items acquired from the foreign men. In this context, prostitutes should be understood as temporary wives, a class existing in all the ports of Southeast Asia from Ayudhya to Melaka and Banten. In Deshima, as elsewhere, temporary wives often became mothers, so that the Dutch settlement was a place of men, women and children, with the women maintaining regular contact with Nagasaki through shopping and visiting their parents.

We are familiar with the version of Japan's history that stresses its near-total isolation until the arrival of the fleet of Commodore Perry in 1853. Women and children slipped almost unseen through the regulations, as they do through many written histories. An example from this less visible history will establish the point. It relates to the

16 Grant K. Goodman, *The Dutch impact on Japan (1640–1853)* (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

Asian wife of Hendrik Indijck and the two children from their marriage.[17] Indijck's story shows how the itinerant man contributed to the changing demographic composition of cities connected by trade, and illustrates the human drama attending international commerce. His early life was spent in Alkmaar in the Netherlands where he qualified as a notary. At the age of 35, still a bachelor, he ventured on a career in Asia. In 1650, when the Dutch East Indies Company was about to celebrate 50 years in Asia, Indijck was sent with the rank of junior merchant to Ayudhya. There he acquired a Mon woman from the pool of ethnic minorities of mainland Southeast Asia who were rented out by the Siamese authorities to foreign workers. Indijck formed a household with her. A son and daughter knit them into a family. In 1658 Indijck was promoted to the rank of merchant and sent to Cambodia and then, his career improving, he was appointed to the second top position at Deshima.

Indijck's upward career path meant forced separation from his family, for, under Siamese law, children born to local women were the king's subjects and not permitted to leave the kingdom. The VOC was sympathetic to employees who had strong feelings toward their families. In 1640 it petitioned King Prasat Thong to allow children born in Siam to Dutch men to follow their fathers. In 1660 Indijck's partner and children were able to join him in Japan, despite shogunal edicts banning all but VOC staff from entering the country. The boy accompanied his father to the shogun's court in Edo in 1661. When Indijck received a posting to Batavia, the family followed him there, too. The children were soon orphaned in the VOC's Asian capital: their mother died in 1662, their father in 1664. Having no relatives in the city, the children were brought under the control of the trustees of Batavia's orphanage.[18] These trustees did not consider searching for maternal relatives in Ayudhya; instead they sent the children to Alkmaar, the city of their father's birth. There they married and spent the rest of their lives in Holland.

Two Eurasian families

The Siamese–Dutch Indijck children who journeyed between Siam, Japan, Java and Holland in the mid-seventeenth century were contemporaries of Cornelia, the Japanese–Dutch wife of Pieter Cnoll to whom we now turn.[19] Cnoll's wife was one of two daughters born to the Dutch merchant Cornelis van Neyenrode.[20] He was from the earliest generation of VOC employees, for he had first arrived in Indonesian waters in 1607. He was a diamond specialist whose Asian career was spent in Ayudhya, the Malay Peninsula and,

17 M. E. van Opstall, 'From Alkmaar to Ayudhya and back', in *All of one company: The VOC in biographical perspective*, ed. R. Ross and G. Winius (Utrecht: HES, 1986), pp. 108–20.

18 The Batavia orphanage, founded in 1624, was a multi-racial institution caring for the fatherless of the Dutch, Eurasian and Asian Christian communities. It was not a workplace for paupers, who were instead placed in Batavia's poorhouse. Children raised in the orphanage were those provided for in their fathers' wills. Their inheritances were invested and managed by orphanage trustees. Appointment to the honorary position of trustee was sought by men ascending the VOC career ladder, since the post was considered an honour, and the interest earned on orphans' investments could recompense them handsomely for their labours.

19 For a detailed biographical study of Cornelia, see L. Blussé, *Bitter bonds: A colonial divorce drama of the seventeenth century* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 2002).

20 Rules of orthography for Dutch names were not rigid in the seventeenth century. Cornelia's father's name appears in VOC records as 'Van Neyenrode' and 'Van Nieuwenrode'. Cornelia's name appears in a government legal document of 1676 spelled as 'Van Nieuwenroode'.

from 1623, in Japan. Van Neyenrode's sojourn in Japan took place before most Europeans were expelled and the Dutch removed to Deshima. He was based at Hirado, and it was there that he became a father. Van Neyenrode's first daughter, born to the Japanese woman Tokeshio, was named Hester. Cornelia was Van Neyenrode's second child, and her mother was the Japanese woman Surishia. Van Neyenrode died in Japan in 1633 after a long illness and just prior to his planned departure for Batavia. He had intended to leave his *de facto* wives in Japan, and provided large sums for them in his will. Van Neyenrode, however, did not wish his daughters to disappear into the fringe society of Japanese ports. He instructed his executor to provide for them generously with funds and jewellery (after sending bequests to nieces and nephews in the Netherlands) and to settle the girls in Batavia where they should be raised as Christians. Under VOC law, official acknowledgement by a European father and Christian baptism conferred European status on illegitimate children whose mothers were Asians.[21] Van Neyenrode acknowledged the girls as his daughters through his Hirado will, but he could not arrange for the baptism because there were no Protestant ministers in Japan at that time.

The terms of the will make it clear that Van Neyenrode also did not want his descendants to establish themselves within a community of overseas Japanese, such as existed at the time in Ava, Ayudhya, Champa, Melaka and Batavia. These communities were composed of mercenaries, fortune seekers, traders and women.[22] Their numbers were augmented by Japanese Christians, following the expulsion decrees of 1632 and the 1636 ban on the repatriation of overseas Japanese. With few opportunities for replenishing their numbers, communities of overseas Japanese were destined to disappear, as members died and their descendants became absorbed within the polyglot populations of Southeast Asian ports. A grave has been preserved of one member of Batavia's small Japanese community. He was Michiel T'Sobe of 'Nangasaki', identified as a Christian Japanese on his tombstone bearing the date 19 April 1663.[23] The provisions of Van Neyenrode's will destined his girls for that segment of Batavian society formed by senior VOC families in which the husband and father was a Dutch immigrant, and the wife and mother were locally-born Christian Asian or Eurasian.

The history of the Caron family of Batavia suggests what Van Neyenrode hoped to secure for his children.[24] François Caron occupies a prominent place in VOC records and in the history of intellectual exchange between Europe and Asia. He was a colleague of Van Neyenrode in the VOC Hirado establishment. Like Van Neyenrode he belonged to the first era of Dutch-Japanese relations before the Japanese limited the time individuals could work in Japan. In all, Caron worked in that country for 22 years. His interests were engaged by all aspects of Japanese society, history and culture, and his *True description of the mighty kingdoms of Japan and Siam* was published in Dutch and later in English in

21 Taylor, *Social world of Batavia*, pp. 16–17, 29–30.

22 Japanese men living overseas formed households with local women. Daughters from such unions joined the bride pool for foreigners in Asian ports. The Greek Constantin Phaulkon (1647–88), who was chief minister for the Siamese King Narai, married a daughter of a Japanese trader stationed in Ayudhya; Jurrien van Goor, 'Merchant in royal service', in *Emporia, commodities and entrepreneurs in Asian maritime trade*, ed. Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), pp. 445–65.

23 F. de Haan, *Platenalbum*, E15.

24 Taylor, *Social world of Batavia*, pp. 43–5.

1663.[25] Caron also lived in Japan in the years when Christianity was tolerated by the government. The Japanese woman who shared his household and was mother to six of his children was a convert to Roman Catholicism. Caron took her with him when he moved his household of five surviving children to Batavia in 1641. They arrived just four years after the Van Neyenrode girls who, contrary to their dying father's wishes, had remained with their Japanese mothers in Hirado for four years while VOC officials argued over their case and embezzled their fortune. (Hester and Cornelia were only released to the VOC by their Japanese mothers when the monies promised them by Van Neyenrode had been paid in full.)

Caron settled his part-Japanese children and their mother in Batavia before making a visit home to Europe. On his return in 1643, he found the mother dead. He applied to Batavia's government and to the VOC directors in Holland for certificates of legitimacy for his three boys and two girls. He then sent his eldest son to the theology faculty at Leiden University. The other son who lived to adulthood joined the same faculty in 1654. Both men subsequently returned to Asia to lead the Christian communities that had formed around VOC settlements in Taiwan and in Ambon. The son posted to Ambon stayed 14 years, and then settled permanently in the Netherlands with his Ambonese wife and children to continue his church career in the village of Leksmond. This half-Japanese man contributed to the development of a Dutch variant of Malay, composing and publishing many religious tracts in that language. His last Malay-language publications were printed in the Netherlands in 1693. There is no evidence that the patriarch Caron provided for a Dutch education for his daughters, but the girls found Dutch husbands from the merchant ranks of the VOC. They spent their lives in the mixed-race societies of VOC communities in Tonkin (northern Vietnam) and in Batavia.

In 1650 the VOC's directors recalled Caron to Holland on charges of smuggling, which was how the company perceived the business ventures its employees conducted with Asian entrepreneurs. Caron's half-Japanese children were scattered across VOC Asia, but there was another set of children in Batavia and they accompanied him back to Europe. In 1642, during his home leave, Caron had formed a relationship with Constantia Boudaen. Following his return to Batavia, Caron had married her by proxy. In 1645 he brought her out from Holland with her unmarried sister. The sister soon married a prominent official of the Company and headed the female component of the VOC's Taiwan settlement. The legitimate, Dutch children of Caron briefly shared Batavia with their half-Japanese stepsisters and stepbrothers.

The few European women who journeyed to the VOC's Asian outposts before the restrictions of 1652 had represented a variety of social classes. Some were the female equivalent of the homeless men drafted as soldiers for the Asian settlements. Destitute girls were recruited to be wives of soldiers in the period when VOC policy makers still hoped to found a settlement colony and to separate their employees from casual relationships with Asian women by providing them with wives from Holland. These female recruits, the 'Company daughters', were provided with clothes and a dowry, but the experiment in placing Holland's female poor in Asian settlements soon ended. Working women with skills, such as midwives and seamstresses, continued to be hired by the VOC to staff the orphanage, poorhouse and women's prison. In Batavia they formed a small

25 François Caron and Joost Schouten, *A true description of the mighty kingdoms of Japan and Siam* (London: Argonaut Press, 1935).

group of women working in occupations customary for Dutch women in Holland's cities, which included tavern keepers and renters of mourning clothes.[26] In addition to the homeless and the tradeswomen, there were women married to men in the higher ranks of the Company's service. A few accompanied men designated as governors-general. The 1652 ban on female emigration from Holland exempted wives of merchants and clergy, and there were always a few who did try life in Dutch Asia, as well as the handful of women who, disguised as men, enlisted as soldiers. The Europe-born wives of senior men posed challenges to the Eurasian daughters of Dutch officials in Asia in terms of status and maintenance of rights to property. Van Neyenrode's daughters mixed socially in Batavia with women of Japanese as well as of European origin, and with Eurasian women like themselves.

The family histories of the Caron and Van Neyenrode girls, then, ran along parallel lines. In worldly terms, Cornelia rose higher than Caron's children, for her husband was able to enrich the family through private trade with his Asian partners without being denounced by enemies in the Company. She married Cnoll in 1652. Nine children were born from this marriage before Cnoll's death in 1672. Two of the four daughters are in the family portrait Coeman was commissioned to paint. Cornelis, born at the end of 1657, was the only child to live into adulthood, and he died before his mother on the journey they undertook by sailing ship to Holland in 1688.

The deaths remind us that in the VOC-era tropical Asia was a deadly place. The skills in anatomy that distinguished surgeons trained in Holland did little to protect or prolong life on board ship or in the tropics. Europeans and Eurasians were not the only ones likely to fall ill. Illness is written into explanations for conversion of rulers and states to Islam in histories from the Archipelago. Russell Jones recounts conversion stories that begin with an ailing king who is offered a cure by a mysterious visitor.[27] On recovering, the king declares himself to be a Muslim and marries his daughter to the stranger in order to retain his services and to create an honoured place within the kingdom for the bringer of Islam.

Such stories introduce the problem of health and disease in Archipelago societies. Because Europe and Asia form one continuous land mass, the populations shared a common pool of diseases, such as influenza and smallpox. This is the reason why European germs did not kill off Asian populations upon initial contact, as was the case with the encounter between Europeans and indigenous populations in the Americas and Australia. But Europeans had no natural immunity to malaria, and thus, before the mass production of quinine in the late nineteenth century, European settlements in tropical Asia remained small and mortality rates high.[28]

26 Black capes were worn at funerals. In Batavia holding the appointment to rent mourning clothes ensured a busy and lucrative occupation, for death rates of Europeans were very high well into the nineteenth century.

27 Russell Jones, 'Ten conversion myths from Indonesia', in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), pp. 129–58.

28 On health conditions, see Peter Boomgaard, 'Smallpox, vaccination, and the Pax Neerlandica in Indonesia, 1600–1950', Panel on Imperial Medicine: Smallpox and Vaccination in China, Indonesia and Japan, International Convention of Asia Scholars, 25–28 June, 1998, Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands; *Death and disease in Southeast Asia*, ed. Norman G. Owen (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Peter H. van der Brug, 'Unhealthy Batavia and the decline of the VOC in the eighteenth century', in *Jakarta-Batavia: Socio-cultural essays*, ed. Kees Grijns and Peter J. M. Nas (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000), pp. 43–74.

In Indonesian societies, local healers drew on a variety of plants for manufacturing medicines to cure stomach disorders, colds, aches and fevers; speed delivery of babies; and to restore a new mother's health. The theoretical knowledge underpinning indigenous medicine derived from a long history of intellectual exchange with the civilisations of India, China and Islam. Many medicines were judged efficacious only if taken when a specialist had made an offering or recited prayers. So it is not surprising that new medicines and practitioners were added to the local variety along with adoption of new religions, and that cures from powders and bottles were part of the travelling peddler's wares. Peculiar importance was attributed, in the medical thinking of many Indonesian societies, to the state of mind and its relationship to physical health. Specialists in communicating with spirits were consulted. Springs, caves and rivers were often thought to produce cures for the seeker of mental and physical health. Sometimes the power of the holy word was thought to aid in cures. Paper bearing words written in Arabic might be crushed and consumed as ashes in water by a sufferer. Ordinary folk had at hand local healers and visiting specialists in the form of travelling salesmen and holy men. Members of the court could draw on the same services and a greater variety of specialists. Men wishing to advance might offer a cure to an ailing ruler, or announce peculiar abilities in return for patronage.

Doctors were on the payroll of the Dutch East Indies Company. Most of them were surgeons whose training was practical, stressed a knowledge of anatomy, and focused on the treatment of wounds and fractures. Their services were sought by Asian rulers from Arakan, Vietnam, India, Siam and Japan to Indonesian states. From the years of earliest contact Dutch medical men studied plants used by Asians in medical preparations, and sent back to Europe seedlings and dried specimens for apothecaries. Botanical gardens were established in Amsterdam and Leiden by 1587 and 1590. Translation (into Latin) and publication in 1567 of Garcia da Orta's major work on Asian botany by the Dutch scholar Carolus Clusius ensured that a knowledge of Asian plants and their pharmaceutical properties was incorporated into lectures on botany at the newly established University of Leiden in the last years of the sixteenth century.[29] Books on Asian medicinal plants were published, with VOC subsidies, in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. In this way a Dutch trading company was the means of diffusing in Europe the results of systematic observations and investigations conducted by Asians.

Neither Asian nor European medical specialists could preserve the lives of Cornelia's nine children. Four years after Cnoll's death Cornelia remarried, and again the husband was a Dutch man, this time a widower with five children. Leonard Blussé has examined very thoroughly the marital conflicts with Johan Bitters, the struggle of Cornelia to preserve the fortune Cnoll had left her, and the journey she made to the Netherlands in 1687 in order to advance her claims against the predatory Bitters in Dutch courts.[30] Cornelia died there sometime in 1691. Her daughter-in-law and two grandchildren disappeared into Holland. In her lifetime Cornelia made two major sea journeys, from Japan to Java and from Java to Holland. She knew considerable wealth in funds and family, and suffered the loss of both.

29 Richard H. Grove, *Green imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 77; *Flora in Leiden: De verborgen tuinen van de stad*, ed. Gary Schwartz ('s-Gravenhage: SDU Maarssen, 1990), pp. 16–17.
30 Blussé, *Bitter bonds*.

All this lay ahead for Cornelia when Coeman painted the Cnoll family. At the time she was prosperous, honoured in her family circle and in Batavia society, which was made up of men like her husband and the women of mixed race married to them. She was to play the role of acting first lady for Governor-General Cornelis Speelman when his wife, Petronella Wonderaer, separated and removed permanently to her country villa. From Batavia Cornelia conducted a correspondence with her family in Japan, sending and receiving gifts from Japanese relatives (including the husband her mother found after Van Neyenrode's death). It is not established whether Cornelia could read or write in Japanese. The two surviving letters sent in her name to her mother were possibly dictated to a Japanese male resident of Batavia who specialised in written communications.

The part-Asian Cornelia headed a domestic establishment of 40–50 Asian slaves. The numerous domestic personnel of the Batavia household represented the many contacts that the port had with other commercial centres in the Archipelago and beyond. The presence of domestic slaves reminds us that great numbers of people moved along the sea highways. There were shippers, shoppers, holy men, pilgrims and male and female labourers for hire and for sale. The sea highways freed some individuals from restrictive origins, whilst they delivered others into different forms of servitude. Mobile bands at sea also contained men who were professional wanderers, available for hire on land. They could be employed by the VOC to defend a trading port, or by a Javanese prince wanting to topple a rival from the throne. Two slaves can be seen in the far right of the Coeman portrait. Unlike the camera of today which can produce many visual images of the one person or family in different costumes, activities and times, the portrait of earlier centuries was usually a single event and thus the only likeness of people whose lives incorporated a great diversity of experience. The Cnoll commission represents opulence: the wealth of the man of business shown in the furnishings he could afford, the beauty of clothing and jewellery, the glimpse of gardens and the sea. Behind Cornelia, in the painting's shadows, are a man and a woman. Here is the painter's hint that the leisured moment depended on the labour of others.

The household slaves, a woman and a man, can barely be distinguished in some photographic reproductions. In Coeman's construction, the central couple vividly fix the eye through their matching costumes of black and gold. The Cnoll girls are in silk frocks of blue and grey. On the other side of the canvas is the male slave dressed in muted tones of brown and beige. The Asian man's shirt and jacket are tailored in European style from plain fabric, his shoulder-length hair wavy and full. The female slave's costume is a plain white blouse and muted brown sarong. Her lowly status in the family is indicated by bare feet, contrasted with the slippers that the Cnoll daughters on the other side of the portrait are wearing. Her hairstyle is similar, but unadorned. The male slave's skin colour is close to the shade of his jacket, his eyes black. Coeman studied the features of his sitters, and his painter's palette was able to give a European tint to Cnoll and a pale ivory to the part-Japanese women. The European costume worn by the male slave reminds us of other portraits. For example, a painting by Aelbert Cuyp, whose studio was in Batavia in the decade 1640 to 1650, depicts a male slave holding a parasol above a Dutch couple; the slave wears European costume and he has the same hairstyle and features as the male slave painted by Coeman.[31]

31 Taylor, *Social world of Batavia*, p. 38; De Haan, *Platenalbum*, L4; Zandvliet, *Dutch encounter with Asia*, p. 182.

Costuming reminds us that commissioned portraits were painted as set pieces of circumstance. They were not records of everyday life, but representations of how the individual paying the artist wished to be seen. Sometimes, the portrait of important Batavians was painted in Holland by an artist who worked from a sketch sent from Asia, or the portrait was painted in Holland after the subject's return. This accounts for the oddities of representation. Eva Ment, for instance, was painted after her return from Batavia to Hoorn in 1630. The painter alluded to her Batavia connection by painting, at the feet of the widow of Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen, a servant or slave of such black skin that only the imagination could produce.[32]

Coeman worked from life when he painted the Japanese eyes of Cornelia. He gave the young slave a look of youth and sudden movement, which contrasts with the studied formality of the employers. Cnoll holds an ivory mounted cane, Cornelia a fan. One daughter holds a pet puppy and a fan, the other a handkerchief, a familiar symbol in Java of feminine refinement, which reflects the parents' gesture toward the riches they enjoy in children, place and things. The male slave's gaze is turned away from the family he serves. He takes an orange from the basket of fruit his fellow servant is in the act of offering to the family. Servants were often cast as thieves, or as unreliable, whether they were European or Asian. Here, Coeman portrays the family's servants in terms of stereotype: the female slave is in the role of servant enjoying the boldness of her fellow male slave as he steps outside the required role of deferential obedience.[33]

The household slaves

The artist's stereotype of the male slave encourages another interpretation: defiance, assertion of self, sense of rights, resistance. For legend has it that the man slave in Coeman's portrait is Untung Surapati. The name Surapati evokes a warrior of mythic stature in Indonesian historiography.[34] His life as military commander, rebel, vassal and prince is told in many forms, and was as tumultuous and full of change as the period in which he lived. For Surapati's era (*c.*1650–1706) was a period of warfare. Men endowed with a strong sense of self and a personality that could attract followers sought out wars for personal enrichment, to provide opportunities for plunder to engage, and to continually enlarge their following. They also built up militias in order to force others into acceptance of their pretensions to rule. In Surapati's lifetime, such opportunities presented themselves in the protracted wars Javanese princes fought amongst themselves for the throne of Mataram between 1670 and 1757, in Banten's attempts to expand eastward into territories claimed by Batavia and Mataram, and in the Balinese invasions of East Java. Important to keeping these wars going were the troops of the VOC and independent

32 The portrait of Eva Coen-Ment may be seen in the municipal museum of West Hoorn.

33 Another example of the furtive taking of fruit behind the back of the main figures is the young boy stealing a banana in a contemporary painting, attributed to Albert Eckhout, of buyers and sellers at a market stall (Zandvliet, *Dutch encounter with Asia*, p. 183).

34 Tamar Djaja, *Pusaka Indonesia: Riwajat hidup orang-orang besar tanah air* (Djakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1965), vol. I; Deddy Armand, *Seri pahlawan nasional, Untung Surapati* (Jakarta: Pustaka Kartini, 1987); Ann Kumar, *Surapati, man and legend: A study of three babad traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); Poesponegoro *et al.*, *Sejarah nasional Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1990), vol. IV; Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Pengantar sejarah Indonesia baru: 1500–1900* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1987), vol. I; and Abdoel Moeis, *Surapati* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1979).

bands of Bugis, Madurese and Balinese mercenaries who were available for hire to whomever set the best terms. All of these armed men operated in Java.[35]

Archipelago soldiers raided and fought on land and at sea with lances, pikes, spears, bows and arrows, blowpipes, daggers, muskets and cannon. They attempted to protect themselves in two ways. First, they covered their bodies with protective clothing. Armour and war jackets were made from local vegetable fibres or shell discs, and were reinforced with thick bark or cotton wadding. Archipelago metal workers were quick to borrow from European military techniques, and they produced metal jackets and helmets in their forges. The second way in which soldiers tried to survive battle was spiritual. They bought amulets made by holy men, and marched to the accompaniment of gongs from the sultan's palace beneath banners inscribed with verses from the *Qur'an*. They fought under the command of a leader who claimed possession of a weapon with magical powers of flight and accuracy, or who was known to meditate and to find, in periodic withdrawal from the comforts of domestic society, a spiritual strength that would translate into victory.

Surapati was such a leader to his followers. Javanese history is full of such men, but Surapati is unique because, if we believe the attribution in Coeman's painting, his features are known to us. Javanese artists did not paint naturalistic portraits of Surapati's contemporaries, the Mataram kings Amangkurat I (r. 1646–77), Amangkurat II (r. 1677–1703), Amangkurat III (r. 1703–08) or Pakubuwono I (r. 1704–19). The practice of naturalistic portraiture was not part of Islamic Java's arts, nor of its pre-Islamic sculpture and temple wall carvings. The likenesses of famous Indonesians from the past who have been entered into the heroes' pantheon by governments of the Republic of Indonesia are idealised inventions, as seen, for example in Tamar Djaja's *Pusaka Indonesia*. The Asians whose existence is made known through VOC paintings were mainly those who came into contact with the Dutch as their subordinates. They are figures painted into the backgrounds of portraits of Europeans.[36]

Legend gives no name to the woman servant in the Coeman painting. Nor do VOC archives contain records of the father's and mother's name for Asians resident under their jurisdiction unless the individual was Christian and so left a traceable family history through baptism, marriage and deposition of wills. For slaves imported and put up for sale at Batavia's public auction, name, sex, region of origin, approximate age, height and occupation were regularly recorded, also whether the slave was to be sold as an

35 VOC troops consisted of European and Asian men; 40 per cent of the Europeans were Dutch, the remainder from many areas of western Europe, especially the German states. VOC armies were also made up of men from many parts of the Archipelago, particularly Bugis, Balinese, Timorese, Ambonese, Indigenous Christians and Javanese. Indonesian troops fought under their own commanders, who were linked to a hierarchy of Dutch officers. Examples of troop composition will illustrate the fact that opposing armies were not distinguished from each other as brown versus white. In 1683 the VOC lent assistance to Raden Haji in his attempt to displace Sultan Ageng from the throne of Banten in the form of a company of 20 European soldiers and 300 Balinese (Kumar, *Surapati*, p. 23); in 1687 VOC troops marching against Trunajaya consisted of 600 Europeans, 200 *Mardijkers* (freed slaves, free men, usually of Indian or Indian–Portuguese ancestry), 100 Balinese, 100 Malays, 300 Batavia Javanese, 50 Bugis and 50 Makasarese; M. C. Ricklefs, *War, culture and economy in Java, 1677–1726* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), p. 276.

36 VOC-era painters did make portraits of some princes. The portrait of Sultan Saifudin of Tidore (r.1657–*c.*1700) has been preserved, and is reproduced in Zandvliet, *Dutch encounter with Asia*, p. 121.

individual or part of a family group.[37] The inclusion reminds us that female domestic servants lived in close intimacy with their employers, and that most servants in VOC households were Asian. But a few Dutch ladies took maids with them when they set out for Batavia. Eva Ment, for instance, took two maids with her as well as her unmarried sister, Lysbet, when she went to Batavia in 1627 to be first lady of the VOC. Hendrik Brouwer's wife brought a maid with her too, as did the wife of Jacques Specx. Most maids in Dutch households, however, were Asian. I have no information on the Cnoll slave woman, so I must draw from VOC records the story of another slave woman to illustrate the various and unique in Dutch–Indonesian relationships.[38]

Scattered references in VOC documents show that it was customary for great men to exchange women as a courtesy between equals, just as it was expected in Indonesian communities that a great man would reward loyal followers with women. Early in his administration, Governor-General Gustaaf Willem Baron van Imhoff (r. 1743–50) received a slave girl from a Bugis queen upon signing a treaty. Van Imhoff's wife, the India-born Catharina Huysman, died in 1743, leaving Van Imhoff without an heir. Three children, however, were born from his connection with the Sulawesi slave. Early in their infancy the governor-general sent the children to Holland. He requested of the States-General that they be declared legitimate, his heirs, and that the son, Jan Willem, be allowed to succeed him in his title and privileges of baron. (The slave's son subsequently entrenched his place in Holland's nobility through his marriage to Jonkvrouw Christine Emerence Lewe.) The two daughters died before reaching adulthood. The governor-general intended a European upbringing and life for his children in separating them from their mother and the land of their birth. He did not abandon the mother, however. He had her baptised and gave her a large property in Batavia; the nameless slave became the Asian Christian Helena Pieters, mistress to a reigning governor-general and subsequently wife to the Dutch immigrant J. A. Duurkoop.[39]

Concluding remarks

I began with one painting, one family, one place, one date. A final thought may be given to the painting itself, considered as an object. It began life as a blank canvas. On it was created the vision commissioned by Cnoll of his family, his staff, his possessions, his life within Asian and Dutch contexts. The finished portrait must have hung on a wall in the Cnoll residence, placed to be seen, firstly by the members of Cnoll's growing family and the household section of his slave personnel. This group – a Dutch man, Eurasians, Indonesians – had the opportunity to view themselves, to ponder their individual histories and journeys through time, to compare that private knowledge with the social norms and ideologies promoted by the ruling class of the VOC and the royal houses of Java and Bali. The group was also open to the scrutiny of visitors to the household.

37 Susan Abeyesekere, 'Slaves in Batavia: Insights from a slave register', in Reid ed., *Slavery, bondage and dependency in Southeast Asia*, p. 289.

38 Taylor, *Social world of Batavia*, pp. 91–2.

39 Duurkoop reached Asia as ship's mate and served in the VOC's army before retiring with the rank of lieutenant to manage his Batavia properties (including land brought to him in the dowry of Helena Pieters). He was a member of Batavia's Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1778, and contributed to its activities by financially supporting the researches of scholar-clergy and by contributing articles to the Academy's *Transactions*.

Four years after Cnoll's death his widow remarried. She then fought a long battle to prevent her second Dutch husband, Johan Bitters, from gaining full control and possession of all the property left her as universal inheritor by the terms of Cnoll's will. In 1691 Cornelia lost that battle and all possible appeals, and she died in the Netherlands shortly afterward, having lived about 60 years. Perhaps the painting passed into Bitters's possession when her affairs were wound up, or he had taken it, along with other of his wife's property, when they embarked for the Netherlands, on separate ships, in 1687. No children of the Cnoll marriage were alive in 1691, and the sole grandchildren, dispossessed of their share of Cornelia's inheritance, are lost from the historical record too.

Having been brought from Java to Holland, the painting made another journey. It acquired a market value and an historical significance as well, so that it ended up as an item in the permanent collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Now, as an object divorced from its context of family pride and memento, removed from a private Asian household and from a domestic conflict fought for control of the Cnoll fortune, now established in its present context of preservation and display in a major European museum, the painting may perhaps attract the passing glance of the international tourist or of the Dutch school child. Here, in an academic context, Coeman's portrait is a beacon for searching into multiple Indonesian pasts.