N° 2

Dit 's een Javaan.
Hij plant geduldig 't koffijboontjen,
En *Moeder Holland* wordt er meê te goed gedaan;

Maar — éénsnomt boontjen om zijn loontjen.

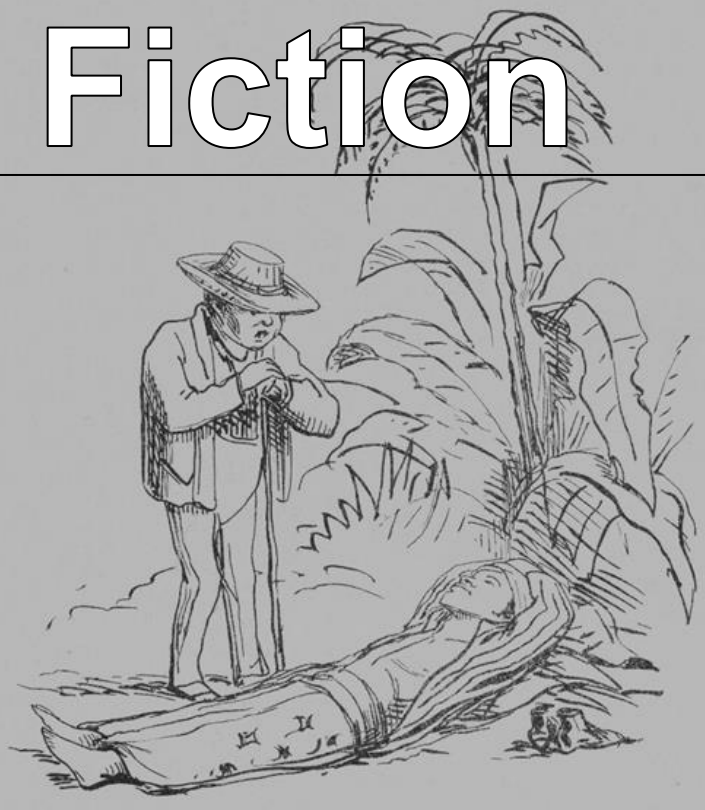
NAVOLGING.

De wijze Schepper schiep en gaf het suikerriet
Den mensch *om niet.*
Dus geeft een wijs bestuur (dat heet regeringskunst)
't Kontrakt *uit gunst.*

A Fatal Fiction

KONTRAKT.

'k Geef ieder wat hem toekomt, zoo ge ziet,
Den een de suiker, d'ander 't riet.



NA HET BESLUIT OP DEN VRIJEN ARBEID.

Philantroop.

Javaan, gij arbeidt *vrij!* Dank zij 't fameus besluit!
Gij wint zooveel gij wilt, en 't loon der arbeidsdagen
Zal zesvoud winst van deugd en welvaart voor u dragen.

Javaan.

O Heer, ik ben er uit!
'k Win in één dag het loon van zesmaal zooveel dagen
En slaap nu de andere vijf. — Ook ga ik schoenen dragen.

Floris de Krijger

Uitgave van D.A.Thieme en Martinus Nijhoff.

Gedr. bij H.L.Smits

Program: History (research) – Colonial and Global History (rMA), Leiden University
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Cover illustration: Johan Michaël Smidt Crans, political cartoon on the introduction of free labor in the Dutch East Indies, appeared in *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, January 12 1861, paper, 27, 5 x 21,3 cm. Collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

A Fatal Fiction

Projecting Pre-Capitalist Physicality Onto the Javanese Body in Two Regimes of Racial Capitalism

Floris de Krijger

"...to arrive at the realization of its strength the proletariat must trample under foot the prejudices of Christian ethics, economic ethics and free-thought ethics. It must return to its natural instincts, it must proclaim the Rights of Laziness"

Paul Lafargue, *The Right To Be Lazy,* p 19

Abstract

How did racialized ideas about work and rest change in the Dutch East-Indies towards the end of the nineteenth century? In the Dutch colony, the idea that Javanese worker showed a natural tendency for laziness and lacked the urge to improve their material condition was highly influential and repeatedly invoked to justify coercive labor practices. Whereas the Dutch used to consider Javanese's alleged laziness as a stable and in-built feature of their inferior "race", this study shows that they increasingly started to treat it as a by-product of their deplorable socio-economic circumstances by the turn of the century. Given that the Cultivation System (1830-1870) robbed the Javanese off the fruits of their own labor, the Dutch asserted that the natives had failed to develop the "natural" materialist urges they associated with industrial capitalism. In attempts to cure Javanese agricultural workers of their supposed indolence, the agents of capital therefore endeavored to inculcate work ethic from above via the so-called Ethical Policy of 1901. This study not only documents this discursive change, but also aims to understand and explain it. To this end, it places the historical transformation of the stereotype against the background of the racial capitalist regime change it emerged from: the shift from a system in which natives were excluded from the White economy to one in which they were demanded to assimilate. My findings fill up the empirical lacuna on the circulation of this racial-economic trope in the late nineteenth century and advances the historiography on the topic by thoroughly embedding it within Black Marxist theorizing.

Acknowledgements

Large parts of the thesis were written while the Covid-19 virus rapidly spread across the planet, easily riding the waves of global racial capitalism. Instead of using this crisis to take a step back, to act lazy and reflect, agents of capital did whatever it took to not halt the production and circulation of value, thereby exposing particularly Black and colored frontline workers to a deadly virus. When I say "lazy" I do, of course, not refer to its colonial understanding. As will be described in this thesis, this understanding encloses a painful history of repressive racialized labor policies in and beyond the Dutch empire. Instead, I refer to the anti-capitalist conception of the term. In this view, acting lazy is read as resistance; as the potentially transformative time to imagine and work towards a post-capitalist, anti-racist and queer feminist political future. As a scholar committed to such future, I devote this thesis to all those brave lazy rascals across the globe who dare(d) to challenge capitalist work ethics in the past and today.

I am grateful to say that this research projects owes its existence to more than a few people. A first word of thank goes to my supervisors at the IISH and Leiden University: Pepijn Brandon and Karwan Fatah-black. Pepijn, thank you for all the stimulating Marxist (small) talk, your sharp and very helpful feedback and your endless patience. Karwan, thank you for our insightful conversations on the Subaltern Studies Group's (SSG) engagement with Historical Materialism. In additional, I would like to thank Aster, Astrid, Maria, Stefan, Jonas, Patrizia, Robin, my fellow Judo's (esp. Liam and Jamie), the support staff of UvA and all the students of my course "Queering capital" – I feel blessed to have been surrounded by so many kind, smart and funny comrades while writing and discussing this thesis. A big thanks to *De Schrijfclub* for encouraging me to finishing this challenging project, proofreading and making my time at Leiden University ten times more bearable. Nuno, thank you for your unconditional love and support and, of course, for brightening these dark pandemic days with the necessary buffoonery ("FF"!). Above all else, Frans and San, thank you for always having my back no matter what. I owe everything to you.

Table of Content

1. Introduction

In the Dutch East-Indies, ideas about racial difference and labor productivity have always informed and reinforced each other.[1] In the Dutch colony, Indo-Chinese were, for instance, hailed for their entrepreneurship, work discipline and strength, but also considered untrustworthy and corrupt.[2] In like manner, Batak people were thought of as clever and eager to learn but also feared for their pyromaniac tendencies.[3] Following the colonial gaze, different racial groups held relatively stable occupational identities: Bandanese were recognized as skilled woodcutters; Moluccans were thought of as brave soldiers and Indo-Europeans typecast as compliant office clerks. In other words, grouped under the flexible signifier "race", resided not only expectations about body shape, intelligence and moral attitude but also ideas about skill sets, work ethic and professional aptitude.[4]

The idea that the Javanese "race" showed a tendency for laziness was, without a doubt, the most influential racial-economic trope that held sway in the Dutch colony, particularly in the nineteenth century.[5] In the eyes of the agents of capital, Javanese agricultural workers were lazy, indolent and infantile beings that had not yet developed the desire to improve their material conditions or maximize their wealth. According to some, Javanese males even placed the love for somnolence above their paternal duty to care for their wives and children.[6] The Dutch asserted that because Javanese saw no need in producing beyond their subsistence level, they never exerted more work effort than was absolutely necessary for their survival. Consequently, Javanese would not respond to financial incentives associated with free labor, but only be willing to work at the Dutch plantation sites when forced. Although in dissimilar

[1] In this thesis, the terms Dutch East-Indies, Netherlands East-Indies and colonial Indonesia will be used interchangeably.
[2] For early examples, see: Nicolaus de Graaf, *Oost-Indise Spiegel (*Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2010, org. publ.1703); 69; "Iets Over Bataviafsche Nijverheid (vervolg)", *Bataviasche Courant,* September 2, 1820.
[3] C.J. Dixon, *De Assistant in Deli – Practische Opmerkingen Met Betrekking Tot Den Omgang Met Koelies* (Amsterdam: J.H. De Bussy, 1913) 69
[4] Scattered references to the skill set, work discipline and professional aptitude of the different racial groups of colonial Indonesia can be found in various colonial records. They are, however, especially prevalent in travel reports, ethnographic studies, colonial policy documents and written communication focused on explaining, refining and defending labor control policies. For two examples in which almost every racial-economic stereotype is being discussed extensivly, see: C.J. Dixon, *De Assistant in Deli – Practische Opmerkingen Met Betrekking Tot Den Omgang Met Kolies* (Amsterdam: J.H. De Bussy, 1913); G.E. Haarsma, *De Tabakscultuur in Deli -Met Platen en Plattegronden* (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, 1889). Throughout this thesis the notion of "race" or "races" are placed in between quotation marks in attempts to prevent naturalizing something that, in its essence, represents a social fiction.
[5] Wendy Cheng, "Strategic Orientalism: Racial Capitalism and the Problem of 'Asianness'," *African Identities* 11, no. 2 (2013): 148.
[6] "Maandelijksch overzigt der Indische letterkunde", *Tijdschrift voor Neerland's Indië* 19, no. 9 (1857): 129-192, 176

manifestations, this colonial phantasm survived several centuries of colonization and circulated in all corners of the archipelago, representing what Ann Stoler calls "racialized common sense"– i.e. everyday ideas and sensibilities about racial difference that require no explanation or proof but deeply informed many colonial encounters, especially in the absence of more reliable information.[7]

The sociologist Syed Alatas was the first to critically scrutinize the pejorative racial-economic trope in his groundbreaking book *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977).[8] In this study, he shows how in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British, Spanish and Dutch rulers actively disseminated this influential fiction in the Southeast Asian regions of their respective empires – i.e. Malaysia, The Philippines and Java. Instead of being misled by this influential stereotype, Alatas considers the image part of "colonial ideology", as it helped to justify "compulsion and unjust practices in the mobilization of labor in the colonies." [9] As Dutch planters, sugar mill owners and colonial officials weighed the value of the native laborers in terms of their utility in the production process, they were quickly to denote any lack of work discipline as a proof of indolence and thereby a legitimate reason to realize work effort via force.

Alatas' central argument is that these natives were not indolent, nor non-entrepreneurial but that they simply refused to subject themselves to a highly exploitative colonial capitalist plantation regime "owned by others."[10] The fact that Europeans usually left the cultivation of rice in the hands of the indigenous populations and focused their attention on more profitable cash crops (e.g. rubber, sugar, coffee), created the conditions for this "silent protest" to surface.[11] After all, this practice slowed down the local process of proletarianization and enabled natives to provide the means for their own reproduction without always having to turn to waged labor.

With his book, Alatas was ahead of his time and anticipated some of the most eminent theoretical and methodological innovations in the discipline of colonial history. For instance, before Edward Said published *Orientalism* (1978) Alatas already showed that the Europeans did not *only* establish their hegemony through military or economic means, but *also* by

[7] Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain – Epistemic Anxiety and the Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009) 24
[8] Syed. H. Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977).
[9] Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, 1-2.
[10] Ibidem, 78
[11] Ibidem, 126

producing knowledge, ideas and stereotypes about the imagined "Other".[12] Portraying the Javanese as "sluggish" and "indolent" meant, at the same time, constructing the Dutch as "hardworking" and "entrepreneurial" – bourgeois virtues so central to the nation's self-image.[13] Moreover, before the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) formulated their methodological interventions in the discipline of colonial history, Alatas already displayed how the agency of subaltern groups tends to disappear in colonial record keeping, thereby exhibiting a healthy distrust in the colonial archive as a source of historical knowledge production.[14] He interpreted the widespread reluctance to conduct wage labor at European plantations, after all, as a mode of resistance available to a people exposed to entangled and mutually reinforcing dynamics of capitalism and colonialism. [15]

1.1 Problem Statement and Research Question

Although Alatas provides a rich historical account of the functions of the racial-economic trope in relation to coercive labor regime(s) that the Dutch established in the archipelago, he does not historicize the second component that gave rise to this colonial phantasm: ideas about racial hierarchy.[16] In other words, the racial ideas that underlie the trope are taken for granted and not treated as phenomena sensitive to historical change themselves.

The signifier "race" is, of course, not a fixed phenomenon but an instable and elastic social marker with "adaptive possibilities."[17] As Goldberg reminds us: "racial ideas have always been diverse, shifting over time, even throughout slavery."[18] In the course of history, (pseudo) scientific, cultural and economic ideas about racial difference, continuously alternated and

[12] Edward, E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Phanteon Books, 1978).
[13] Dorothee Sturkenboom, 'Merchants on the defensive. National self-images in the Dutch Republic of the late eighteenth century', in Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Secretan eds, *The self-perception of early modern capitalists* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2008), 99; Clé Lesger, "Merchants in Charge – The Self-Perception of Amsterdam Merchants, ca. 1550-1700, " in Margaret C. Jacob and Catherine Secretan eds, *The self-perception of early modern capitalists* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2008) 75; On the broader topic of the distorted national self-image of the Dutch as being a "small but ethically just nation", owing its prosperity to "neutral" trade agreements instead of colonial self-enrichment and slave trade, see: Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of colonialism and race*. (Duke University Press, 2016) 5, 173.
[14] For the foundational text of the Subaltern Studies Group, see: Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* 1, no. 1 (1982), 37-42.
[15] On the topic of the everyday modes of resistance available to subaltern classes in the colonial context see: Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); James, C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak – Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1985); James, C. Scott, *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
[16] Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native,* 61-65
[17] Alana Lentin, "Race," in: William Outhwaite and Stephen P. Turner eds., *Sage Handbook of Political Sociology* (London: Sage Publications, 2018), 861.
[18] David T. Goldberg, *Are We All Postracial Yet?* (London: Polity, 2015) 9

informed each other, manifesting themselves in different "racializing assemblages" up until today.[19] While being treated as an in-built character trait of the tropical "races" as well a sign of economic and cultural inferiority, the myth of the lazy native was clearly informed by different racial ideologies. However, this is not to say that the economic conditions did not change the nature of the discourse at all. On the contrary, *how* the laziness trope was used and *whether* it was considered convincing among contemporaries was always informed by the specific capitalists conditions and entrepreneurial opportunities on the island.

Theories on racial capitalism attempt to connect the topic of "race" and racialization to the dynamics of capitalism and are therefore highly relevant for studying the discursive figure of the lazy Javanese worker.[20] A central claim of racial capitalism theory is the idea that capitalism produces social inequalities between social groups and weaponizes racial fictions about, for instance, work ethics to naturalize these differences. From this then follows that capitalism and race are intrinsically linked: capitalism contributes to the reproduction of racial ideas, while "race" functions as fuel in the engine of capital accumulation. By applying this theory to the Southeast Asian context, my thesis responds to Wendy Cheng's recent call to develop a more detailed analysis of how "racial-economic figurings of 'Asianness' " function in racial capitalism to "justify and reinforce durable hierarchies of power". [21] Hence, my central research question is twofold and reads: *how did the myth of the lazy Javanese change between 1800 and 1901 and what role did it play in legitimizing economic colonial policy?*

While tracking the circulation of the discursive figure of the lazy Javanese in the Dutch East-Indies, I discovered that the trope came in two forms that drew on different type of racial argumentation: racial naturalism and racial historicism.[22] The first variant held sway at the start of the nineteenth century and portrayed the Javanese's alleged laziness as a stable, if not in-born character trait. It considered lazy behavior a characteristic for all racial groups living close to the Equator and connected it to environmental conditions like the tropic climate or fertile soil. The latter version started to become more dominant from the 1860s onwards and conceptualized laziness as driven by socio-historical circumstances. In this view, the Javanese was portrayed as backwards in time and still in the process of becoming a good White capitalist

[19] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas viscus: Racializing assemblages, biopolitics, and black feminist theories of the human* (CITY: Duke University Press, 2014).
[20] Throughout this thesis the notion of "race" is places in between quotation marks in attempts to prevent naturalizing something that, in its essence, represents a social fiction.
[21] Wendy Cheng, "Strategic Orientalism,"155
[22] David T. Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), chapter 2.

subject. Their alleged laziness was thus not everlasting. In fact, it was exactly because the Javanese had been exposed to forced labor for so many decades, that they never cultivated a desire for material improvement and wealth maximization. In this second version of the trope, differences in work ethic were thus not naturalized, but instead historicized. This study will not only describe this discursive transformation, but also attempts to understand and explain it. To this end, it places the stereotype's alteration against the background of the racial-capitalist regime shift it emerged from: the shift from a system in which natives were excluded from the White economy to one in which they were demanded to assimilate.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided in eight chapters. *Chapter Two* introduces the theoretical premises *of* and lays bare the contradictory assumptions *within* theories of racial capitalism. It argues that racial capitalism should not by understood as a monolithic entity, frozen across time and space, but be treated as a flexible economic arrangement that protects the interest of capital in different and historically contingent ways. Anticipating the empirical results, this chapter closes by describing the racial capitalist regime shift that materialized in the Dutch East-Indies at the end of the nineteenth century and against which the changing conceptions of laziness should be placed. Subsequently, *Chapter Three* reports on the ways in which the empirical source material was collected, processed and analyzed, thereby as well laying down the methodological challenges that were encountered and the strategies that were used to resolve them. Moreover, this chapter also explains why I did not select my study sites *a priori*, but instead decided to "trace" and "follow" the circulation of the trope across different historical locations in the colony as well as the metropole. In order to position the empirical and theoretical contribution of this study, *Chapter Four* provides a short overview on the existing historiography on the topic of laziness, thereby focusing specifically on the Dutch colonial context. *Chapter Five* and *Chapter Six* and *Chapter seven* present my empirical analysis and show how the idea of the lazy Javanese changed in nature and informed policy making related to poverty relief, agricultural labor and social welfare in the period between 1800-1901. Last of all, *Chapter Eight* synthesizes the main findings and spells out the empirical and theoretical contributions of this thesis.

2. Race, Capitalism and Lazy Natives

Historian Cedric Robinson coined the term racial capitalism in his seminal book *Black Marxism,* as a response to the failure of European critics to incorporate "race" in their analysis of the rise and internal functioning of capitalism.[23] In his study, he traces the origins of the notion of "race" back to intra-continental relations in feudal Europe, thereby showing that racism was already legitimizing the dispossession and enslavement of human beings (e.g. Irish, Roma, Jews, Slavs, etc.) before the transatlantic slave trade and the capitalist mode of production took off. Robinson argues that because feudal racism was elemental to, or indeed constitutive of, the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, capitalism has always been *racial* capitalism.[24] In the literature that emerged in the wake of his groundbreaking book, two competing claims are put forward about how racial capitalism secures accumulation, namely: via techniques of differentiation or via policies of imposed assimilation.

2.1 Racial Capitalism as Engine of Social Differentiation

A first group of scholars states that because the "natural" inequalities racial ideology propagated propelled accumulation, capitalism did not "rationalize" and "homogenize" social relations, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels predicted, but only reinforced social divisions.[25] Jodi Melamed, for instance, writes: "Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequalities among human groups."[26] Historically, "race" justified and enshrined these inequalities by redirecting them to colonial fictions of embodied otherness. While creating populations of "lesser" beings, "race" was not only vital to the profitable economic institution of the transatlantic slave trade but also functioned as an index for the uneven exposure to extreme exploitation and violent state-led plunder and dispossession. Put differently, ever since capitalist economic arrangement became punctuated by racial logics, the flexible signifier "race" turned into a "material force" propelling capital accumulation up until today. [27]

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[23] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).
[24] Robinson, *Black Marxism,* 24-28
[25] Robinson, *Black Marxism,* 2, 26.
[26] Jodi Melamed, "Racial capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 77
[27] Robinson, *Black Marxism,* 2; Silvia Federici goes as far as to state that capitalism's commitment to racism (as well as sexism), should not be understood as a disastrous yet contingent historical coincidence – as Robinson and Melamed seem to do– but instead be perceived as *the* necessary conditions for its rise and reproduction.

Black Marxists like Chris Chen and Gargi Bhattacharyya add that studies on racial capitalism should not only focus on the ways in which "race" accelerated accumulation but also conceive of capitalism as an "agent of racialization" itself.[28] In other words, they should also account for the ways in which capitalism systematically produced and reproduced "race" via its core infrastructure. Throughout history, the access *to* and relative position *within* labor markets have, for instance, always been firmly organized alongside racial lines:

> Whether as slaves during one epoch; as colonized workers, sharecroppers, workers within segregated/segmented labor markets throughout the twentieth century; or, as disposable workers in this neoliberal era—those marked by race within the United States and elsewhere have been denied a basic feature of capitalism—access to labor markets or, if granted access, the ability to sell their labor on an equal basis.[29]

As the buyers of labor power reduced the meaning of the worker to their "pricing", the consequence of the racialized division of labor was that less "value" was allocated to the excluded and thereby racially inferior groups. These mechanisms turned colonial labor markets into race-making self-fulfilling prophecies: Black and colored populations were excluded from "White" occupations because they did not possess the skills considered necessary for these professions while, by the same token, these populations did not acquire these skills exactly *because* they were excluded from these jobs. This process, in turn, helped to construct free wage labor as White and forced labor as Black or colored.

In the colonial context, the boundaries of racialized labor markets did, of course, not emerge spontaneously. On the contrary, they were often established with violence and fixed in colonial laws, yet also fanatically policed via cultural formations, such as racist fictions of differing human levels of intelligence, skills and work discipline.[30] The alleged laziness of Black and

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She writes: "Indeed, the political lesson that we can learn from Caliban an the Witch is that capitalism, as a social-economic system, is necessarily committed to racism and sexism. Capitalism must justify and mystify the contradictions built into its social relations – the promise of freedom vs. the reality of widespread coercion, and the promise of prosperity vs. the reality of widespread penury – by denigrating the "nature" of those it exploits: woman, colonial subjects, the descendants of African slaves, immigrants displaces by globalization.", Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the With – Woman, The Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004) 17.

[28] Chris Chen, "The Limit Point of Capitalist Equality – Notes Towards and Abolitionist Antiracism, " *Endnotes* 3, (2013): 204; Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 23. Throughout this thesis the term "racialization" means "the attribution of racial meanings or values to social conditions or arrangements, or the distinctions between social groups in racial terms". Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 12

[29] Michael, C. Dawson, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Note on Legitimation Crises and the Racial Order," *Critical Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 150

[30] David R. Roediger & Elizabeth D. Esch, The Production of Difference – Race and the Management of Labor in the U.S. History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

colored populations was one of the most influential racial-economic tropes colonial officials and western politicians invoked to deny these populations access to the more privileged sites of free waged labor. These "subhuman" beings were, after all, considered too lazy to show work discipline in the absence of direct force. Colonial labor historians have shown that the trope was not only weaponized to defend slavery, but also invoked to justify other types of forced labor – i.e. compulsory labor, indentured labor and convict labor.[31] In particular, the idea helped to legitimize these ugly realities to a wider public far removed from colonial-capitalist "microcosms" of the plantation site.[32]

Next to justifying racialized labor regimes, racialized ideas about laziness also proved functional for legitimizing differing wealth formations between capital/labor; White/Black; East/West more broadly speaking.[33] Accordingly, structural poverty among indigenous populations and economic underdevelopment of the colonial regions was not considered to be the consequence of centuries of colonial exploitation, expropriation and robbery but, instead, caused by a lack of work discipline of the Black and colored "races" themselves.

Karl Marx already alluded to this ideological function of ideas about laziness at the start of his chapter on "So-Called Primitive Accumulation" in his book *Capital* (1867). In this section, he criticizes the "nursery tale" that bourgeois political economists invoked to explain economic divergence. In this self-serving narrative, economic inequality wondrously appeared when two sorts of people made their arrival in a time long past: one, "the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal élite", which accumulated wealth after having pinched every penny, and the other the "lazy rascals" who ended up with nothing but their labor power due to their riotous lifestyle.[34] In reality, however, it was not the superior work ethic that enabled upper class Europeans to acquire enough wealth to kick-start capital accumulation; nor the ostensible laziness of working class Whites and non-Whites that enshrined their economic faith, but the willingness of the former party to acquire wealth via "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder

[31] Jeffer, N. Daykin, " 'They Themselves Contribute to Their Misery by Their Sloth': the Justification of Slavery in Eighteenth-century French Travel Narratives, " *European Legacy* 11(2006): 623–32; Stanford M. Lyman, "Slavery and sloth: A study in race and morality," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 5, no. 1 (1991): 49-79; Opolot Okia, *Communal Labor in Colonial Kenya: The Legitimization of Coercion, 1912–1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 37-62; Jan Breman, *Koelies, Planters en Koloniale Politiek* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1987)

[32] A. Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra;s Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven/Londen: Yale University Press, 1985), 2; Daykin, " 'They Themselves Contribute, " 623–32

[33] Karl Marx, *Capital – A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2013; org. publ. 1867), 501-502

[34] Marx, *Capital*, 501

– briefly force" and, subsequently, turn this into capital.[35] In summary, this first group of scholars thus emphasizes that racial capitalism gravitates towards division and differentiation and mobilizes racial fictions about, for instance, work ethics to defend and naturalize these social stratifications.

2.2. Racial Capitalism as Engine for Assimilation

Yet, a second group of scholars argues that, when discussing the racializing dimensions of capitalism in the context of colonialism, an exclusive focus on processes of differentiation disregards capital's second tendency: imposing assimilation.[36] To understand this second face of racial capitalism, Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913) provides guidance. Luxemburg conceives of capitalism as a poisonous oil slick that originated in the west but quickly spread to the non-capitalist outside in Africa, Asia and the Americas in pursuit of new consumer markets, cheap land and exploitable labor. She considers capitalism's worldwide spread unavoidable, as it derives from an in-built logic of capital accumulation.[37] Capitalism's global annexations not only meant that the wealth of the regions belonging to the global "core" became depending on the exploitation of the regions belonging to the "semiperiphery" and "periphery", to use Wallerstein's terminology, but also that the internal make-up of these latter regions were forced to move into a capitalist direction.[38] Put differently, whenever capitalism arrived at the peripheries, it started to erase indigenous economic practices and institutions and

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[35] Ibidem, 502

[36] I am, of course, not the only one who has pointing at the dual face of racial capitalism. For similar observations, see: Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (South Pasadena: semiotext(e), 2018), 101; Pasternak, Shiri, "Assimilation and Partition: How Settler Colonialism and Racial Capitalism Co-produce the Borders of Indigenous Economies," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2020): 301.

[37] Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* can be read as a theoretical response *to* and improvement *of* Marx's chapter on "primitive accumulation" of Capital. In a large part of her book, she attempts to formulate a solution for what she considers a logical flaw in Marx's theory of "enlarged reproduction" − i.e. a production process in which a part of the surplus value is reinvested into capital. Marx explains the enlarged reproduction of capital, by looking at the interactions between two actors: capital and labor. In simple terms, he argues that because capitalist will always make sure that labor adds more value to raw materials than they receive in return in the form of wage, capitalism itself will, as automatically, expand and grow. After all, the so-called "surplus-value" laborers produce will be reinvested into capital and thereby increase productivity levels. Luxemburg disagrees with this position and arguers that without the third party of non-capitalist buyers it is impossible for capitalists to sell off (i.e. realize) those goods that correspond to the part of the surplus value that is being reinvested into capital. She writes: "The existence and development of capitalism requires an environment of non-capitalist forms of production". In other words, for her capital has a in-built tendency to enter new, non-capitalist, markets in order to realize the surplus value it produced in the west. Next to the confiscation of new consumer markets, however, also the pursuit for cheap land and labor incited capitalist countries to move beyond European borders and participate in the process of colonialism. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (Londen: Routledge, 2003) 348.

[38] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System – Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), 63

install ones that were more "legible" in terms of capital. This entailed transforming agricultural economies that were characterized by self-sufficient farming, communal land usage and feudal social relations into commodity economies based on free wage labor, cash crop farming and privatized land use – a process that proceeded rather erratically and that colonial states usually accelerated with force.[39]

Insofar as colonial populations were not yet fully depending on western products for their subsistence and held farm land in common, European capitalists would still not be able to sell off their surplus production and maximize their profits, Luxemburg explains. Viewed from this perspective, it seems only logical that, at some point, colonial regimes were less reluctant to give indigenous populations access to free labor markets, granted them entrepreneurial liberties and the governing authority over their own lands. In the long run, a workforce of free wage laborers could accelerate productivity levels, decrease the reliance on communal farmlands and boost natives' buying power – in other words, move a colony in the direction of industrial capitalism.

Reviewing these two viewpoints, racial capitalism seems to move in contradictory directions: on the one hand, it intensifies social differentiation by excluding Black or colored natives from participating in the White economy while, on the other hand, it erases differences by demanding these populations to act like liberal capitalist subjects in the making. Echoing Shiri Pasternak's position, I resolve this analytical paradox by not treating racial capitalism as a monolithic entity, frozen across time and space, but by conceiving of it as a more flexible and historical economic regime that organizes the relation between "race" and capitalism in differing ways.[40] Conceptualized as such, the logics of differentiation and assimilation can simply replace and alternate one another, depending on "the regime of racial capitalism at play".[41] The interests of capital then determine why one logic overtakes another, thus still functioning as the underlining driving force in history. [42] This theoretical move not only allows me to ground the theory of racial capitalist more explicitly in the methodology of historical materialism, but also enables

[39] e.g., see: J. Schacherreiter, "Propertization as A Civilizing and Modernizing Mission: Land and Human Rights in the Colonial and Postcolonial World," in N. Dhawan eds. *Decolonizing Enlightenment: Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World (*Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2014)
[40] Pasternak, "Assimilation and Partition," 301-324
[41] Pasternak, "Assimilation and Partition," 301
[42] When I write "the interests of capital" I do, of course, refer to the interests of specific capitalist classes – whether more closely connected to the state or to the private sector – in a specific historical time period.

me to place the altering ideas about lazy natives against the changing material structures they emanated from.

This leads to the following questions: How were different regimes of racial capitalism driving different ideas around work and rest? Did the agents of capital continue to project a pre-capitalist physicality onto colored bodies when the assimilation instead of the exclusion of these populations became the central aim? What function did the laziness trope attain when racialized boundaries between forced and free labor were less strictly policed? To provide answers to these questions, this study traces the transformations of the colonial laziness discourses across two regimes of racial capitalism in the Dutch East-Indies. The Dutch East-Indies can function as a stimulating case for answering these questions, not only because the racial discourse on laziness informed Dutch colonial policy making heavily, but also since this colony experienced a radical racial capitalist regime shift in the second half of the nineteenth century. These two regimes of racial capitalism will be shortly introduced in the next section.

2.3 Two Regimes of Racial Capitalism in the Dutch East-Indies

Before the dissolution of the Cultivation System in 1870, capital protected its interest in the archipelago by excluding the indigenous laborers from almost any liberal economic right – i.e. the governing authority over one's own land and labor. For instance, the bulk of the rural population was not free to sell their labor power to the highest bidder but obligated to deliver compulsory labor services (*herendiensten*) several months a year. Moreover, indigenous peasants were coerced to cultivate at least twenty percent of their lands with cash crops and, subsequently, sell their harvest to the Dutch Trading Society (*Nederlandse Handel-Maatschappij*) below its market value. In this period, colonial Indonesia primarily functioned as a cash cow for the motherland and was not treated as having economic interests of its own. Accordingly, native workers were assigned cattle-like status: unfree, unskilled and unwilling to work in the absence of force.[43]

Catalyzed by the increasing global competition, the successful lobby of the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the triumphs of Dutch liberal parties and their ideology, the economic positioning of the Dutch East-Indies and associated ideas about native labor started to change

[43] For instance, see: Johannes van den Bosch, "Rapport van Den Gouverneur-Generaal Van Den Bosch aan Den Minister van Kolonien, 10 Oktober 1830 (Kabinet letter 628/26)" Reprinted in J. P. Cornets de Groot van Kraaijenburg, *Over het Beheer Onzer Koloniën (*Gravenhage: Gebroeders Belinfante, 1862 org. publ. 1830), 356

towards the nineteenth century.[44] Instead of imagining native workers as subhuman beings that only listened to force, the idea that Indonesians deserved softer nurturing and guidance from superior "races" and could, eventually, be assimilated in the bourgeois culture revolving around free labor, modern work discipline and entrepreneurship gained traction.[45]

The *Sugar Law* (1870) and The *Agrarian Law* (1870) inscribed these new ideas into colonial legislation, as they did not only open up the colony to foreign capital but also granted indigenous populations more economic rights. The *Sugar Law*, for instance, organized the slow phasing out of compulsory labor services (herendiensten) in the Sugar Industry.[46] The *Agrarian Law* granted Javanese peasants more formal authority over their own land: they were now allowed to lease their land to foreign entrepreneurs without direct interference of the colonial state.[47] The ordinance of 1875 even guaranteed that Javanese land could not be sold to non-Javanese, thereby formalizing a long existing practice under *adat* law.[48] G.R. Knight argued that this economic and legislative context gave rise to an expanded indigenous class of free wage laborers working in the sugar industry which, at least in their relation to the means of production, did not differ much from the classic proletariat in the west.[49]

Although contemporary historiography shows that 1870 should not be understood as a "watershed" moment after which all extra-economic forms of coercion swiftly disappeared, it is also impossible to deny that, after this date, the economic arrangements related to land and labor were reconfigured fundamentally in the archipelago.[50] In this new racial capitalist regime, the Javanese saw their economic rights expanded and were treated by the Dutch as *homines economici* in the making.

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[44] Cees Fasseur, "Purse or principle: Dutch colonial policy in the 1860s and the decline of the Cultivation System," *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 1 (1991): 34,

[45] Commissie Steinmetz, *Onderzoek Naar de Minder Welvaart der Inlandsche Bevolking op Java En Madoera – XII Oorzaken der Minder Welvaart* (Batavia: Drukkerij G. KOLF & Co, 1914), 2

[46] Alec Gordon, "The agrarian question in colonial Java: Coercion and colonial capitalist sugar plantations, 1870–1941," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 27, no1. (1999): 8-9

[47] Alec Gordon, "The agrarian question," 11-13

[48] Gordon, "The Agrarian Question," 9; Fasseur, "Purse or principle," 40

[49] G.R. Knight, "Peasant Labour and Capitalist Production in Late Colonial Indonesia: The "Campaign" at a North Java Sugar Factory, 1840-70," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1988): 252-253.

[50] For instance, Matthias van Rossum recently detailed how the breaking-up of the cultivation system heralded a stark rise in convict labor across the archipelago. Ann Stoler and Jan Breman, similarly, showed how the introduction of the "coolie ordinance" of 1880 at North Sumatra's Plantation belt, instituted a violent regime of indentured labor among Javanese migrant *coolies*. Fasseur, "Purse or principle," 42; Matthias van Rossum, "The Carceral Colony: Colonial Exploitation, Coerdion, and Control in the Dutch East Indies, 1810s-1940s," *International Review of Social History* 63, no. 26 (2018): 75, 82; Breman, *Koelies, Planters en Koloniale Politiek*, chapter 1. Ann Stoler, Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979 (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1985).

The native's assimilation was not only pushed by the logic of capital itself − as the yet existing economic practices became increasingly difficult to hold on to − but also imposed from above via the Ethical Policies of 1901. This program attempted to improve material development of the colony via investments in infrastructure, healthcare and education as well as the introduction of liberal institutions like the rule of law and credit cooperations.[51] It was committed to the moral uplifting of the locals by disseminating liberal bourgeois values like industriousness and entrepreneurship and attempted to replace existing family bonds with gendered divisions of labor.[52] While couched in a language of "civilization", in its essence this policy represents the systematic effort of private agents of capital to integrate the Javanese into their "superior" industrialized version of capitalism. In other words, to assimilate the native into the new racial capitalist regime of the Dutch East-Indies.

Appling my theoretical puzzle to this racial capitalist shift leads to the following empirical questions: How did ideas about indolence and laziness change when Javanese workers were no longer assigned a cattle-like status but, instead, treated as liberal capitalist subjects in the making? Was their ostensible laziness still considered a by-product of their racial "inferiority" or now interpreted as the effect of their deplorable socio-economic circumstances? To find this out, it is necessary to briefly explain how I studied these questions empirically.

[51] Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Woman, Work and Colonialism in the Netherlands and Java – Comparisons, contrasts and Connections* (Cham: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2019), 67.
[52] Van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Woman, Work and Colonialism*, 230.

3. How to "Follow" a Racial-Economic Trope?

This study traces the historical transformations of the colonial laziness trope across two regimes of racial capitalism by benefitting from "multi-sited" methodology. Scholars like George Marcus, David Harvey and Arjun Appaduarai, developed multi-sited methods in response to the problem of studying phenomena that could not "be accounted for by focusing on a single site".[53] This method asks the researcher to simply "follow" the movement of groups, things or discursive constructions across different locations that otherwise may have been understood as "worlds apart".[54] In the discipline of colonial history, the method of "thing-following" − for lack of a better term −is particularly popular among historians studying the production and worldwide circulation of colonial commodities.[55] Sidney Mintz, for instance, traced the global movement of sugar in the nineteenth century in his famous book *Sweetness and Power* (1986). His study showed how the professionalization of slave-based sugar production in the Caribbean transformed this luxury product into an everyday commodity widely available to the English proletariat. This not only added flavor to workers' diets, but also positively affected their "energy, output and productivity" levels, thereby further securing Britain's economic advantage.[56] In a more recent contribution, Sven Beckert, similarly, tracks how the trade *in* and production *of* the colonial commodity of cotton fashioned a "complex commercial web" between Asia, the Americas, Africa and Europe that, in his view, provided the breeding ground for the rise of global capitalism.[57]

My study complements these excellent contributions by reminding us that capitalism not only accelerated the spread of colonial commodities but also contributed to the circulation of racist ideas, believes and stereotypes − perhaps particularly in the seaborne empire of The Netherlands. David Goldberg insightfully recalls: "As Dutch commerce and culture circulated well beyond both national and European boundaries, they carried Dutch racisms back and forth

[53]George, E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Ethnography* 24, no. 1 (1995): 95-117; David, Harvey, "Between Space and Time: Reflections on The Geographical Imagination," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80, no. 3 (1990): 418-434; Arjun Appaduarai eds., *The Social Life of Things – Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Mark-Anthony Falzon, ed., *Introduction to Multi-sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research* (London: Routledge, 2009), 1.
[54] Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System", 102
[55] Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power – The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (London: Penguin Books, 1986); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton – A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014)
[56] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 148.
[57] Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 36

with them."[58] To account for the transitory nature of racist ideas, I did not select my study sites *a priori*, but "followed" and "traced" the discursive construction of laziness across different historical and analytical locations.[59] This approach not only enabled me to more easily track how the trope transformed from location to location, but also to arrive at more flexible and object-driven "time-space"configurations that cross-cut dichotomies between the metropole/colony and the economic/cultural sphere.[60] Consequently, my historical analysis reads somewhat eclectic and starts by swiftly exploring what kind of ideas about work and rest proliferated in Dutch poor relief initiatives, work houses and the benevolent colonies to, subsequently, more thoroughly trace their circulation in the colonial state, the liberal public sphere and the Dutch national parliament.

My historical analysis is further demarcated in three ways. First, I solely focus on instances in which *secular* ideas about laziness played an *active role* in legitimizing colonial policies and decision-making. In other words, my analysis centers around the political and social "doings" of the trope and leaves aside its extensive circulation in travel reports, ethnographic studies, eugenic discourse or missionary texts. Second, I only trace how the trope circulated between the Dutch East-Indies and the Netherlands, thereby bypassing the South American and Caribbean regions of the Dutch Empire and with that, its function in justifying regimes of enslaved labor and post-slavery indentured labor. Lastly, I am primarily interested in how the trope was used to reaffirm Dutch material and moral superiority, since depicting the Javanese as idle, lazy and easily satisfied meant, at the same time, constructing the Dutch as hard working, industrious and entrepreneurial.[61]

The bulk of the archival documents cited in this thesis comes from online databases and academic and non-academic libraries in The Netherlands. [62] For published primary sources, I turned to the *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, and Volkenkunde* (KITLV), Leiden University Library and the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek.* Unpublished source material was

[58] David. T. Golbberg, "Racism in Orange: Afterword, " in Philomena Essed & Isabel Hoving eds., *Dutch Racism – Thamyris/Intersection: Place, Sex and Race* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014) 408.
[59] Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System", 108.
[60] Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System", 96; Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler eds., *Tensions of Empire – Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[61] Coleen MacQuarrie, "Othering", in Albert, J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, & Elden Wieber eds., *Encyclopedia of Case Study Reserarch* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2010).
[62] Initially, my ambition was to conduct archival research in at Dutch National Archives (*het Nationaal Archief*), in the Hague. More specifically, I planned to make use of the repositories of the Ministry of Colonies (*Ministerie van Koloniën*, MK, 2.10.01) and the Dutch Trading-Company (*Nederlandse Handels-Maatschappij*, NHM, 2.20.01). Unfortunately, the Covid-19 Pandemic made impossible, as the Dutch National Archives closed for almost a year.

identified through *Google Books* and an digital database on official VOC correspondence of the Dutch Huygens institute. [63] To crosscheck the historical transformations of the laziness trope over time and in relation to both the domestic poor and Javanese workers, I also scrutinized all the volumes of the magazines *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* (1838-1894), *Magazijn voor het Armen-Wezen in het Koningrijk der Nederlanden (1817- n.d)* and *De Star (1819-1826)* as well as a set of colonial local newspapers and Government Gazettes via *Delpher* using search terms like "lui" (*lazy*), "luiheid" (*laziness*) "laks" (*lax*), "traagheid" (*sluggishness*) "indolentie" (*indolent*), "vadsig" (*flabby*) "productiviteit" (*productivity*) and "arbeidzaamheid" (*industriousness*).[64] Last of all, I searched all *Reports of the Proceedings of the Upper House of the General Assembly* in the period under study using the above mentioned search terms, sometimes in combination with the name of the Minister of Colonies in office.

As might by clear by now, my reading of these colonial records is less focused in retrieving a "real" work ethic of the Javanese population or on recasting work refusal as acts of subaltern resistance. Instead, I focus on exploring the historical transformations of the laziness trope itself and the racial capitalist regimes that these changes stemmed from. To this end, I take up Ann Stoler's invitation to start reading colonial records *along* the archival grain, before reading *against* them. This means paying close and careful attention to "official" colonial discourse, and to the process of archiving itself, instead of simply degrading these records as "skewed" and "biased".[65]

Revaluating these documents, however, carries the risk of reproducing the colonial "master narrative" in which enlightened Europeans bring civilization instead of despair.[66] Echoing Stoler, I therefore do not treat the archive as compressing a coherent colonial reason and insist on thinking about it as an uncertain and unstable discursive arena "no more monolithic than

[63] "Generale Missiven van de Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie," Huygens Institute, accessed July 4, 2021. http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vocgeneralemissiven
[64] The following local newspapers and Government Gazettes were reviewed: *Bataviasche Courant; De Locomotief : Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad; Java-bode : Nieuws, Handels- en Advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie;* Bataviase Nouvelles; Bataviasche Koloniale Courant; Java Government Gazette; Bataviasche Courant; Javasche Courant.
[65] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 20
[66] Kwame Nimako, Amy Abdou, Glenn Willemsen, "Chattel Slavery and Racism: A Reflection on the Dutch Experience," in Philomena Essed & Isabel Hoving eds, *Dutch Racism – Thamyris/Intersection: Place, Sex and Race* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014) 33

the governing practices that it enabled and on which it was based."[67] Reading *along* the archival grain means being attentive to the fragile and ever changing nature of racial categorizations, reconstructing the shifting affective undercurrents of empire, and allowing dissenting voices to be present regardless of their colonial authorship. However, before it becomes possible to show how the trope transformed across two regimes of racial capitalism, it is necessary to further detail how my study will contribute to the existing historiography on the topic.

[67] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 51

4. Historiographic Context and Debates

Intellectual historians and medievalists of the 1960s were the first to treat laziness as a topic for historical investigation and traced the idea back to its religious-moralistic roots in the Middle Ages.[68] Alongside greed, pride, lust, gluttony, envy and wrath, "sloth" was one of the seven cardinal sins the Egyptian desert fathers formulated in the fourth century AD and has figured prominently in Christian teaching ever since.[69] Dutch medievalists have primarily studied "laziness" in the context of Christian beliefs on poverty and poor-relief. Adriana Boele, for instance, showed how Christian thinkers in the sixteenth century distinguished between two types of paupers: the devotional pauper (*pauperes Christi*) who chose to live in poverty to be in closer proximity to Jesus and the sinful pauper who brought his poverty upon himself by living a lazy and reckless lifestyle.[70]

My usage of the concept "laziness", however, does not start in Dutch intellectual history of the medieval period but, instead, in Marxist discussions on the origins and function of labor discipline: the other side of laziness. In his seminal article "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism" from 1967, Edward Thompson analyzed the changing social perceptions of "time" among the English working class in conjunction with more structural reconfigurations of capitalism in the eighteenth century.[71] He showed that in this period, "time" turned from something ordinary and internal to the life of laborers themselves into a precious currency that could be owned, sold and – most importantly – wasted when not utilized effectively. Thompson maintained that this transition should not be understood as the by-product of a more technologically advanced production process, demanding synchronized labor and precise work routines. Instead, he claimed that time-discipline was enforced upon the worker from above and strongly connected to the transition from *task-oriented* (i.e. labor rhythms attuned to completion of particular "tasks" – i.e. milking a cow, harvesting crops etc.) to *time-oriented* labor (i.e. labor rhythms revolving around regimented and predetermined work shifts) that followed the rise of industrial capitalism.

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[68] Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); Evelyn Waugh, "Sloth," in Ian Fleming eds, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1962); but also see: Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, "Sloth: Some Historical Reflections on Laziness, Effort and Resistance to the Demand of Love, " in Kevin Timpe & Graig A. Boyd eds, *Virtues and Their Vices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[69] Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 3-4
[70] Adriana Hendrika Boele, *Leden van één lichaam – Denkbeelden over armen, armenzorg en liefdadigheid in de Noordelijke Nederlanden 1300-1650* (Hilversum: Uitgevrij Verloren, 2013), 253
[71] Edward, P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present* 38 (1967): 56-97.

In light of this historiography, the concept of "laziness" should not be treated as an individual emotion, behavioral practice or moral defect but, instead, be seen as an ideological construct deeply informed *by* and tied *to* capitalism's rise and rationale. It was only after the popularization of time-discipline, that it became possible to construct idling laborers as "guilty" of wasting the boss' time. After all, when time started to function as a currency, laziness turned into a direct enemy of capital's core principle: accumulation.

In the 1980s, Dutch historians and sociologists specialized in labor discipline started to study the topic of "laziness" in the context of the Netherlands for the first time, thereby taking a socio-economic instead of a religious perspective.[72] Although usually inspired by Norbert Elias' *The Civilization Process* or Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* rather than Edward Thompson's work, these scholars revealed that the Dutch urban upper class (*gegoede burgerij*) of late eighteenth and nineteenth century often accused the lower classes for being "lazy" and "indolent" in order to signal their own superiority.[73] Under the rubric of what they termed *Burgerlijk beschavingsoffensief* (*civilizing campaign*), these scholars detailed how urban elites attempted to "uplift" the paupers via social policies and enlightened interventions.[74] In this upper class worldview, the widespread poverty was not the result of the deplorable state of the Dutch economy but the result of the uncivilized and anti-social culture of the poor.

These early studies also signaled the somewhat distinctive historical trajectory of the idea of "laziness" in the Netherlands, at least when viewed in light of Thompson's theory.[75] As

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[72] Ali de Regt, "Arbeidersgezinnen en industrialisatie: ontwikkelingen in Nederland 1880-1918," *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 4, no. 1(1977): 3-27; Ali de Regt, "Armenzorg en disciplinering," *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 8, no4 (1982): 636-659; Ali de Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid. Ontwikkelingen in Nederland 1870–1940 – Een Historisch-sociologische studie* (Meppel: Boom, 1984); R. Berends, A.H. Hussens Jr., R. Mens, R. de Windt, eds, *Arbeid ter disciplinering en bestraffing: Veenhuizen als onvrije kolonie van de Maatschappij van Weldadigheid 1823–1859* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1984); Piet de Rooy, *Werklozenzorg en werkloosheidsbestrijding 1917-1940* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, Amsterdam, 1979); Bernard Kruithof, "De deugdzame natie. Het burgerlijk beschavingsoffensief van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen tussen 1784 en 1860," in Bernard Kruithof, Jan Noordman en Piet de Rooy eds., *Geschiedenis van opvoeding en onderwijs* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1983).

[73] Norbert Elias, *The Civilization Process –The History of Manners* (New York: Urzen Books, 1978; org. publ. 1939); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977; org. publ. 1975); On the curious absence of Marxist inspired socio-economic history-writing in the Netherlands, see: Ayhan Aksu, Dirk Alkemade, Helmer Stoel, "Voor het Voetlicht – Marxisme in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving", *Skript* 35, no. 4 (2014): 212-222; In the context of the Dutch East-Indies Marxist historiography gained, curiously enough, more solid ground. See, for instance, the extensive oeuvres of Jan Breman and Alec Gordon.

[74] De Rooy, *Werklozenzorg en werkloosheidsbestrijding, 9*

[75] Ali de Regt, "Armenzorg en disciplinering," 653; Kruithof, "De Deugdzame natie", 382-383

industrialization arrived late in the low countries, these authors argue that it was not the bourgeoisie but the civil society, the semi-public sector and the early modern state who took the lead in fighting laziness and instilling work ethic in the poor. By dovetailing the virtuous language of good citizenship with a commitment to commerce and economic prosperity, these actors did not act upon their direct class interest but dismissed laziness on secular-liberal grounds.[76]

In the decades thereafter, historians with an international purview shifted their focus to the colonial context and started to realize that the risk of being called "lazy" was (and is) not only informed by class but also by "race". Inspired by critical race theory and postcolonial thinking, they showed how the discourse legitimized colonial-capitalist regimes of forced, indentured and slave labor and was less often combined with progressive efforts to "uplift" the native.[77] Continuing where Alatas' analysis stopped, this rich historiography covered topics like the gendered dimensions of the discourse, indigenous and colonial attempts to challenge the stereotype and the trope's contemporary reconfigurations.[78] Considering the geographical diversity of these wealth of studies – spanning from the Spanish, Portuguese, British and French empires to the settler colonial context of North America – indicates that the laziness trope must have circulated in all the corners of the colonial word.[79]

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[76] Siep Stuurman, "The Discourse of Productive Virtue: Early Liberalism in Europe and the Netherlands," in Simon Groeneveld and Michael Wintle eds, *Under the Sign of Liberalism: Varieties of Liberalism in Past and Present* (Zutphen: Waalburg Pers, 1997), 42; Also see Albert Schrauwers, "The "benevolent" colonies of Johannes van den Bosch: Continuities in the Administration of Poverty in the Netherlands and Indonesia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 2 (2001): 298-328; Albert Schrauwers, "Genealogy of Corporate Governmentality in the Realm of the 'Merchant-king': The Netherlands Trading Company and The Management of Dutch paupers, " *Economy and Society* 4, no. 3 (2001): 298-328.

[77] e.g., see: Daykin, " 'They themselves contribute," 37-62.

[78] Klas Rönnböck, " 'The Men Seldom Suffer a Woman to Sit Down': The Historical Development of the Stereotype of the 'Lazy African' ," *African Studies* 73, no. 2 (2014): 211-227; Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, "African Women and the "Lazy African" Myth in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," in Peter-Paul Bänziger & Mischa Suter eds., Histories of Productivity – Genealogical Perspectives on the Body and Modern Economy (New York: Routledge, 2016); Zawawi Ibrahim, "Return of the lazy native: Explaining Malay/immigrant labour transition in Trengganu plantation society," in Riaz Hassan ed., *Local and Global: Social Transformation in Southeast Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Ann Whitehead, " 'Lazy men', time-use, and rural development in Zambia, " *Gender & Development* 7, no. 3 (1999): 49-61; Noor N. Mohd. "Swettenham's Work Malay Sketches and the Myth of Lazy Malays Issues: Re-Evaluation in Welcoming Industrial Revolution 4.0." *KnE Social Sciences* (2019): 525-533

[79] For the British Empire, see: S.M.K. Aljunied, "British discourses and Malay identity in colonial Singapore, " *Indonesia and the Malay World* 37, no.107 (2009): 1-21; Noor N. Mohd. "Swettenham's Work," 525-533; Whitehead, "Continuities and discontinuities," 23-52; For the North American context, see: Lyman, "Slavery and sloth," 49-79; John Ettling, *The Germ of Laziness. Rockefeller Philanthropy and Public Health in the New South. Cambridge* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1981); For the Spanish Empire see: Alatas, *The myth of the lazy native*, chapter 6; For the France Empire, see: Daykin, " 'They themselves contribute," 623–32; For the Portuguese Empire see: Rönnböck, " 'The Men Seldom Suffer," 213.

Even though the Dutch East-Indies was one of the three core colonies that Alatas studied in his famous book, scant scholarly attention was paid to the context of the Dutch Empire after his publication.[80] More generally speaking, critical histories on "race" and "racialization" never figured prominently in Dutch historiography on the Dutch East-Indies. Instead of explicitly recognizing "race" as an invented category that requires continuous ratification to be of social significance, Dutch colonial historians usually treated "race" a silent and somewhat fixed background condition without a history of its own.[81] For a long time, the topic of "race" was even ignored altogether in the context of colonial Indonesia, as area specialists usually preferred the more friendly terminology of "ethnicity" than the vile language of "race" to talk about invented differences in the Archipelago. Arguably, racism rarely reached the Dutch historical discourse, because it simply did not fit into the nationalist "master narrative" of being a progressive and tolerant country that grew rich because of its trade in spices, instead of the shipping, commodification and exploitation of human beings.[82] Consequently, Dutch racism was never integrated in the nation's birth story, but merely treated as a dark and deviating episode of an otherwise glorious past. [83]

This thesis will contribute to these Dutch and international historiographies in the following two ways. First of all, my study will deepen Dutch socio-economic historiography on idle paupers by not studying this discursive figure in isolation form its colonial antonym but, instead, exploring both stereotypes in "a single analytical field."[84] This strategy will not only allows me to study how ideas about laziness helped to create difference between the lower and upper classes in the Netherlands, or between the White Dutch and non-White Javanese in the colonies – as had been done in the past – but also explore how this stereotype operated at a more intersectional subject position: class-stigmatized but racially-privileged. In other words, explore how Whiteness was defined and constructed in relation to the idle Dutch poor. Doing

[80] This is not to say that the image of the "lazy" native has not received *any* attention in the historiography on colonial Indonesia, as this racial-economic trope was mentioned in passing in multiple studies. Jan. Breman, *Mobilizing labour for the global coffee market: profits from an unfree work regime in colonial Java*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015) 66, 93, 185-186, 274; Schrauwers, "The "Benevolent" Colonies of Johannes van den Bosch, " 310, 320-323. However, to the best of my knowledge, a more thorough and systematic treatise of the trope in the context of colonial Java still remains absent.

[81] There are, of course, some notable exceptions to this general trend. See, for instance the extensive oeuvres of Ann Stoler or Francis Gouda.

[82] Nimako, Abdou, Willemsen, "Chattel Slavery and Racism," 33.

[83] Wekker, *White Innocence*, 5, 173.

[84] Cooper and Soler, *Tensions of Empire*, 4; Schrauwers, "The "benevolent" colonies of Johannes van den Bosch, 298-328

this, allows me to connect my findings to the emerging historiography on what David Roediger calls "propertyless" Whiteness.[85] Secondly, my findings will contribute to the international critical race historiography on lazy Javanese by filling up the empirical lacuna that exists on the circulation of this trope in the period between 1800-1901. More specially, my study will attempt to nuance this international historiography by exploring the different kind of racial argumentation this stereotype drew on.

[85] David R. Roediger "Critical studies of whiteness, USA: Origins and arguments." *Theoria* 48, no. 98 (2001): 83

5. The Making of the Idle White Poor

This chapter describes how the discursive figure of the idle pauper transformed into White subject position in the course of the nineteenth century. The first section (§5.1), briefly explores the Calvinist roots the social stereotype and explains how and why idle paupers were criminalized and made responsibly for their own poverty in the medieval period. The second (§5.2) and third (§5.3) section, in turn, pay attention to the discursive crossroad in which colonial and domestic discourses on laziness started to move in dissimilar directions. In contrast the Javanese's alleged laziness, at the start of the nineteenth century the domestic poor's laziness was increasingly connected to macro-economic forces outside their own control and constructed as a social problem that required paternalistic state intervention. These sections argue that in this context, to be pitied for one's laziness, considered in need and deserving of social investment defined "propertyless" Whiteness. The fourth (§5.4) and fifth (§5.5) section explore the motivation for and the nature of domestic policies that attempted to cure the idle White poor from their laziness, thereby paying special attention to the ideas of colonel J. van den Bosch – the architect of both domestic and colonial policies.

5.1. Criminalizing the Idle Pauper in the Dutch Republic

It was not until the end of the sixteenth century that the idea of laziness attained a political meaning in the Dutch Republic and started to permeate policy-making. Whereas the moral denouncing of lazy behavior has a long lineage in Christian thinking and doctrine, only until it became associated with the earthly phenomenon of poverty it turned into more than just a moral "sin". Because, at the time, an increasing number of the urban population was pushed into unemployment, poverty became a more pressing social issue and hard to look away from while wandering the streets of cities like Amsterdam, Leiden, or Dordrecht. This socio-economic context gave rise to the pejorative figure of the idle pauper.

In the eyes of contemporaries, the idle pauper was a source of social unrest and public nuisance. Paupers were a class of usually unemployed, homeless and illiterate people that lived on the fringes of urban centers. They were depicted as rude, dirty and disrespectful, and considered a social "disease" for every pious Christian community.[86] Paupers lived of charity or alms, but resorted to begging if this did not ensure their subsistence. Prefiguring the "nursery tale" of bourgeois political economists (see §2.1), the pauper's poverty was not caused by the more structural development in the Dutch economy revolving around merchant capital, but the

[86] Boele, *Leden van één lichaam*, 256.

consequence of his or her individual misconduct. After all, paupers had brought their poverty upon themselves by taking on an idle and reckless lifestyle. As most Dutch medieval cities issued ordinances that restricted the possibility of begging or vagabondism, idle paupers were, de facto, punished for their alleged laziness. How this was organized differed significantly from city to city.[87] For instance, Leiden's anti-begging ordinance of 1459 was exceptionally strict, as it prohibited begging for any male between the age of eighteen and fifty (resident or foreign) and heavily restricted begging for women too (especially for foreign ones).[88]

In the context of poverty relief policy, the stereotype of the idle pauper figured most prominently. At the end of the sixteenth century, Dutch poor relief authorities started to distinguish between two types of recipients: the "deserving poor", usually consisting of children, women, the sick and the elderly, and the "undeserving poor": able bodied adult males.[89] Whereas the first group merited assistance, granting alms to the latter group was considered morally inappropriate, as they were able to win their bread themselves. Including them in poor relief schemes would, after all, only stimulate their idleness and soak up the budgets from those more in need. It would, moreover, reduce the willingness of the local community to give money to charity.[90] This new practice was inspired by a much longer theological distinction between the devotional pauper (*pauperes Christi*) and the sinful pauper. While the sinful pauper had brought his poverty upon himself, the devotional pauper chooses to live in poverty to be in closer proximity to Jesus – the compassionate prophet of the poor. To sum up, in the late medieval period, idleness was treated as a sin that required punishment. The idle pauper was considered responsible for his poverty, not deserving of poor relief and criminalized via anti-begging and vagabondism legislation. [91]

5.2 The Macro-economic Causes of Laziness and the Production of Whiteness

The start of the nineteenth century gave rise to a discursive crossroad in which colonial and domestic discourses on laziness started to move in dissimilar directions. After decades of economic prosperity, the Dutch trade-based economy stagnated and was, at least in the eyes of

[87] Anti-begging ordinances usually indicated which groups were allowed to beg (only city residents or also non-residents), the locations in which begging was permitted (usually not in front of houses, inside churches or around taverns) and whether beggars needed to obtain official authorization from a poor relief organization. Charles Parker, *The Reformation of Community – Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572-1620* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1998) 58.
[88] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 58
[89] Boele, *Leden van één lichaam,* 253
[90] Parker, *The Reformation of Community*, 14, 140; Gorski, "The Protestant ethic revisited", 281, Boele, *Leden van één lichaam*, 20
[91] Boele, *Leden van één lichaam,* 227

contemporaries, no longer able to compete with its more industrializing neighbors.[92] As the number of alms recipients rose in tandem, domestic poverty turned into a more pressing social issue that, possibly, even demanded active interventions from the national state. Illustrative for this intensified attention is that from 1815 onwards the Dutch Minister of Home Affairs started to inform King William I about the poverty relief in northern and southern parts of his new kingdom via an annual Report on the Administration of Poverty and the Education of Poor Children (*Verslag omtrent het Armbestuur en de opvoeding der arme-kinderen*). In this socio-economic and political context, domestic discourses on the causes *of* and solutions *for* lazy behavior moved in progressive direction. Although laziness was still stringently denounced and looked down upon by upper and middle class intellectuals and policy-makers, unemployed poor people were no longer the sole actor to blame for this behavioral practice −a discursive novelty that started to circulate in colonial discourse (albeit in diluted form) only a century later (see chapter 7).

First of all, for these intellectuals, domestic poverty was no longer exclusively traced to the laziness of poor individuals themselves but also considered the logical consequence of an economic condition in which there were simply not enough jobs available. When cut off from the workforce for a significant period of time laborers' "urge to work" would, after all, slowly fade out and eventually give rise to inactivity and laziness, the member of parliament D.F. Van Alphen proclaimed.[93] In other words, in the eyes of these contemporaries, structural unemployment gave rise to what may be called "work amnesia": to forget what disciplined labor means, how it feels like and in what ways it can improve one's material and intellectual well-being. Although reactivating work discipline was not considered impossible, the rate of success was low and costly. Hence, poor people who were willing to work but who relapsed into laziness as a result of their structural unemployment, were scolded less intensively in comparison to those who had chosen this lifestyle "voluntarily". When discussing beggary policies in the city Zutphen, a contemporary, for instance, proclaimed:

[92] The idea that the Dutch economy contracted in the eighteenth century has been nuanced or rejected altogether in much economic histography. Johan de Vries, for instance, claims in his *De Economische Achteruitgang der Republiek in de achttiende Eeuw* (1959) that the Dutch economy did not shrink in absolute sense in the period between 1700 and 1780 but only failed keep up with the economic growth levels of England and France. Johan de Vries, *De Economische Achteruitgang der Republiek in de achttiende Eeuw* (Leiden, 1968). For a literature review on this topic see: Jan-Luiten van Zanden, "De economie van Holland in de periode 1650-1805. Groei of achteruitgang. Een overzicht van bronnen, problemen en resultaten," *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 102, no. 4 (1987): 562-609.

[93] D.F. van Alphen, "Iets Over de Armoede en het Gebrek aan Arbeid, In Betrekking tot Staathuishoudkunde en Staatkunde, *Magazijn voor het Armen-Wezen in het Koningrijk der Nederlanden* 4 (1820): 11-12.

> Admittedly beggary often derives from a lazy state of mind. However, it is also impossible to deny that that root of this same laziness is simply an effect of the lack of employment opportunity. Many unemployed resort to begging out of utmost necessity and are, particularly at the beginning, partaking in it rather reluctantly.[94]

This macroeconomic perspective on poverty and laziness in the Netherlands, was particularly popular among the first generation of "enlightened" Dutch intellectuals practicing economics.[95] This new academic discipline which was designed around 1800 and was usually referred to as state household management (*staats-huishoudkunde).*[96] Harnessed with "modern" statistical techniques and abstract scientific theories, economists such as H.J. Tydeman no longer considered the phenomenon of poverty the exclusive "reflection of God's grand design" but, instead, conceived of it as the "tangible consequences of human agency" influenced by the availability of work, technological development, food stocks and even the distribution of capital.[97] Although the moral deprivation of the poor was still considered an important source of the underclass' deplorable economic destiny (especially for those devoted to *Laisser-faire* ideologies), the tendency of the economists to bring the larger forces of society into view opened up discursive space in which narratives about personal "blame" were figuring less prominently – an intellectual innovation that did not appear in the colonial discourse on laziness (see chapter 6).[98]

Francis Gouda insightfully shows how the reluctance to attribute *all* blame to the domestic poor themselves (and their sinful culture of laziness) carved itself in the Dutch language on poverty relief of the time as well. Instead of referring to the poor with the stigmatizing term "pauper", as was more common in France and England as well as the middle ages, policy documents usually described this group as "the needy" (*behoeftigen*). The term "needy" simply indicated to be in need of assistance and did not feature chronicles of individual failure, or lousy morality.

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[94] Translated from original Dutch: "hoezeer de bedelarij dikwerf uit luiheid ontfpruit, zoo is het echter niet te ontkennen, dat in onze dagen, die zelfde luiheid, die vadzigheid, haar eerften oorfsprong dikwerft aan een volkomen gebrek aan werk versfschuldigd is, en dat er onder de bedelaars meenig een gevonden wordt, welke in den aanvang fchoorvoetende, en door waren nood gedwongen, het eerst daartoe overgaan.","Verslag Omtrent de Armen-Inrigting der Stad Zutphen," *Magazijn voor het Armen-Wezen in het Koningrijk der Nederlanden 2*, (1818): 58.

[95] See e.g. H.M. Tydeman, J. Hebmskerk & J.W. Tydeman, *Denkbeelden Omtrent eene Wettelijke Regeling van Het Armenwezen in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Gebroeders Willems, 1850)102.

[96] T.J. Boschloo, "De Productiemaatschappij – Liberalisme, Economische Wetenschap en het Vraagstuk der Armoede in Nederland 1800-1875," (PhD diss. University of Amsterdam, 1989) 11.

[97] Francis Gouda, *Poverty and Political Culture – The Rhetoric of Social Welfare in the Netherlands and France, 1815-1854* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995) 117.

[98] For the views of the first generation Dutch laisse faire economists, like W.C. Mees and J.de Bosch Kemper, see Boschloo, *De Productiemaatschappij*, 85-103.

Moreover, the concept connoted a dependency relationship, or "common bond", between the lower classes (those in need) and the higher classes (the beneficiaries), as the former group was dependent on the latter for its substance. Whereas the idle paupers and lazy Javanese were discursively excluded from the "imagined community" of the nation and resided *at* or *beyond* its borders, those "in need" were included in the body politic and even assigned a specific role. The needy were, after all, part of the "poverty sector" (*armenwezen*), a term that carries a similar progressive undertone and circulated widely too. As Gouda explains, describing poverty relief with the term "sector" placed it on equal footing with the other corners of the economic world that stood in higher moral standing, such as the commercial sector (*handelswezen*) and the financial sector (*bankwezen*).[99]

As already alluded to, at the time this macro-economic perspective on the causes of laziness was exclusively used in relation to Dutch White poor. Only for this racial group, Dutch officials constructed indolence as the logical consequence of an capitalist economic system to which structural unemployment was endemic. Contrarily, Javanese's alleged laziness was usually associated with environmental conditions such as the tropical climate or the fertile soil − sometimes even by the same Dutch intellectuals (see Chapter 6). In a sense, this new tendency to trace the sources of laziness to internal dynamics of capitalist economy constructed the domestic poor as White. In contrast to lazy colored natives, the idle White poor were not born lazy but reluctantly drawn to it, as work was simply unavailable to them. Their laziness was the effect an man-made economic system that produced surplus populations, and not the product of extra-economic conditions like the environmental. Consequently, laziness did not pollute the work ethic of all domestic Dutch classes equally −as was allegedly the case in the tropics −but was exclusive to the lower and non-working factions of society.

5.3 Whiteness as in Deserving of Moral Uplifting

Next to this macro-economic approach to the causes of laziness, the increasingly popular idea that "the needy" could be "cured" from this behavior practice also defined the Whiteness of this class. To solve the problem of domestic poverty, the idle poor needed to be "incited" with "industriousness" (*aanzetten tot arbeidzaamheid*).[100] This phrasing constructed laziness as a

[99] Gouda, *Poverty and Political Culture,* 38

[100] References to alleged lack of "industriousness" of the poor and the necessity to "incite" this group with work ethic are numerous and can, for instance, be found in policy documents, parliamentary debates and scholarly work. Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1834-1835, 22, 34, 134, 135; Tydeman, Hebmskerk & Tydeman, *Denkbeelden Omtrent,* 148; J.C.W. le Jeune *Geschiedkundige Nasproringen Omtrent Den Toestand der Armen en de Bedelarij* (Den Bosch: A.J. van Weelden, 1816) 185.

harmful yet not unalterable cultural habit that functioned as an obstacle to the poor's flourishing. By invoking the term "incite" this discourse placed the responsibility for this "moral uplifting" (*zedelijk verbeteren*) external to the poor themselves and implicated paternalistic interference of some sort.[101] The poor did, after all, fail to apprehend the harmful effects their own laziness and required active guidance and nurturing from the authorities to overcome this ill. This shift from *punitive* to more *paternalist* domestic discourses on laziness did, of course, not occur overnight and was, for instance, already lurking in the background of mediaeval discussions on the function of the work house. However, officials' discursive and material commitment to the improvement of the poor's material and moral well-being was unprecedented.

How the domestic poor were to be incited with industriousness was an issue of intense intellectual dispute. In particular, this discussions revolved around the question whether the government should play an active role in this process or not. Did the government have moral obligation to take care of and nurture the poor? Would state-sponsored labor in work-houses, poor factories or agricultural colonies negatively interfere with the self-regulating dynamics of the free market? Tydeman and his followers positioned themselves on the one end of this discursive spectrum and argued that the government had the obligation to contribute to the moral, intellectual and material well-being of those in need.[102] The government had, in other words, the obligation to "cure" the poor from their laziness - at least those who expressed a willingness to be cured. In a respectable and well-organized "bourgeois society" (*burger-maatschappij*), the state has the paternal "duty" to prepare the poor for free-market employment via state-sponsored work schemes and make sure that no single individual dies of hunger, Tydeman and his co-authors wrote.[103] On the other side of the spectrum, we found the more pessimistic *Laisser-faire* economists like W.C. Mees and J. de Bosch Kemper. In their view, state intervention only functioned counterproductively, as financial assistance would reward the domestic poor for their lazy and immoral lifestyle and disrupts self-regulatory market

[101] "Enige Bedenkingen over de Engelsche Armen-Tax, "*Magazijn voor het Armen-Wezen in het Koningrijk der Nederlanden 3*, (1819): 24; R. Scherenberg, "Algemene Bedenkingen Omtrent Bedelaars-Gestichten en Dwang-Werkhuizen voor Armen," *Magazijn voor het Armen-Wezen in het Koningrijk der Nederlanden 5*, (1822): 102, 112.
[102] R. Scherenberg & H.W. Tydeman, *Verhandeling ter Beantwoording der Vrage: Kan de Armoede, waaronder eenige Staten van Europa thans gedrukt worden […]?*(Haarlem: Hollandfche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen, 1820) 172
[103] Tydeman, Hebmskerk & Tydeman, *Denkbeelden Omtrent*, xii

logics.[104] Kemper even considered the rather ruthless measures of lowering the working class' already insufficient wage levels even further and increasing their tax burden a promising direction for policy. This would, after all, render carefree behavior simply unaffordable.[105]

5.4 Treating Laziness with State-Sponsored Work

At the time, the idea of an active state was, however, much more influential and found its way into much domestic poor relief policies of the first half of the nineteenth century. The fact that Dutch officials held relatively high trust in the "disciplining" as well as the "productive" function of work - whether state-sponsored or not - helps to explain why this position gained more traction.

First of all, in the writing of enlightened economists and policy makers, work was often portrayed as a sign of "order", "good morals" and "civilization." Having a job was considered a duty for every self-respecting member of society and constructed as a site of personal pride and political virtue.[106] As Siep Stuurman explains, this discourse depicted the "industrious classes" as the "real bearers of civilization", thereby going against the idea that the land owning aristocracy were the moral figureheads of the body politic.[107] As such, the practice of laziness was not denounced out of direct class interests. An coherent industrial bourgeoise did, after all, not yet emerge in the Netherlands.[108] Instead, it was considered morally "degrading", especially for those who were "able to work".[109] In the officials' mind, a large class of idling poor was viewed as a threat to the civilized standing of the slowly emerging, and increasingly secular, "imagined community" of the Dutch nation.[110]

In light of this discourse, it was of utmost importance that poor relief did not "feed" or "encourage" laziness, as contemporaries phrased this, but incited the poor with "industriousness" instead.[111] To this end, improving and expanding the already existing public

[104] J. de Boch Kemper, *De armoede in ons vaderland, haare oorzaken, de middelen, die tot hare vermindering zouden kunnen worden aangewend* (Haarlem: De Erven Loodjes, 1851) 269, 273; W.C. Mees, *De Werk-inrichting voor armen uit een staashuishoudkundig oogpunt beschowd* (Rotterdam, J. van Baalen en Zonen, 1844), 189-193
[105] Kemper, *De armoede in ons vaderland*, 223, 173
[106] On how the languages of good citizenship, civic humanism and political virtue was dovetailed to commerce, industriousness and industry at the start of the nineteenth century, see: Siep Stuurman, "The Discourse of Productive Virtue," 33-45.
[107] Stuurman, "The Discourse of Productive Virtue," 35
[108] Kruithof, "De deugdzame natie, " 382-382
[109] Tydeman, Hebmskerk & Tydeman, *Denkbeelden Omtrent,* 5
[110] For instance, see Johannes van den Bosch "Iets over het Nationaal Karakter, in Betrekking tot de Nationale Welvaart en de Onderneming der Maatschappij van Weldadigheid," *De Star* 2, no.2 (1820): 874.
[111] Scherenberg & Tydeman, *Verhandeling ter Beantwoording der Vrage*, 178

institutes of voluntary or forced labor (e.g. work houses, beggars houses, poor factories etc.) were considered promising directions for policy-making, particularly in comparison to the "outdated" mediaeval practice of unconditional alms giving. In the officials' mind, the act of working had a disciplinary effects on the behavior and sense of morality of the poor, which legitimized state sponsoring. The mental and physical hardship that go into earning your own living via waged labor would, after all, not only boost the poor's self-esteem, but also incite them with a sense of duty, thrift and desire for material wealth.[112] When discussing state-funded work regimes Tydeman and Scherenberg, for instance, wrote:

> Even if this work is not profitable, it does produce a big and priceless advantage: improving the morality of the poor. When he [a poor person] is earning his own living, he will uphold a sense of self-esteem, develop thrift and will be less likely to waste his hard-earned money.[113]

In other words, in this way poor relief would not be just an unconditional gifts, but instead be "paid for" with industriousness.

This is not to say that financial concerns did not play a role at all. On the contrary, enlightened Dutch intellectuals and policy-makers were convinced that state-sponsored work regimes would be cheaper than laziness-inducing alms giving and could even become profitable if focused on the production of market goods. They argued that it would be a "waste" of labor power if the poor did not contribute to the productive economy and challenged the idea that the state-sponsored workers crowd out commercial low-skilled jobs at the expense of the working class.[114] To prevent this from happening, state-backed work institutions should only produce those products the commercial sector did not show much interest in (e.g. supply for the army, navy, prisons, municipalities) or that were currently imported from abroad (e.g. cotton).[115]

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[112] Scherenberg & Tydeman, *Verhandeling ter Beantwoording der Vrage*, 177

[113] Translated from original Dutch: Dus ook wanneer deze arbeid volftrekt geen penunciëel voordeel oplevert, zij echter dat groot en onwaardeerbaar voordeel bevat, dat zij den armen zedelijk beter maakt, en dat hij, gevoelende door arbeid zijn onderheid te verdienen, een hooger gevoel van zijne eigenwaarde blijft behouden, fpaarzamer wordt, en minder genegen zal zijn, om, hetgeen hij door zuren arbeid verdient heeft, te verkwisten. Scherenberg & Tydeman, *Verhandeling ter Beantwoording der Vrage*,177

[114] Arguments about the "crowed out" effects of state-sponsored work can be traced back to the ideas of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) and were often repeated by Dutch laisse faire economists like W.C. Mees and J. de Bosch Kemper; Boschloo, *De productiemaatschappij*, 87 For discussion on why labor power would be "wasted" if poor people were not participating in the productive economy see, for instance, Scherenberg & Tydeman, *Verhandeling ter Beantwoording der Vrage*,177-176

[115] Tydeman, Hebmskerk & Tydeman, *Denkbeelden Omtrent*, 155; Johannes van den Bosch. *Verhandeling over het mogelijkheid, de beste wijze van invoering en de belangrijke voordeelen eener Algemeene Armeninrigting in het Rijkder Nederlanden, door het vestigen eener Landbouwende kolonie in deszelfs Noordelijk gedeelte* (Amsterdam: Johannes van der Hey, 1818) 8-9

These intellectuals, moreover, emphasized that these jobs were temporary in nature and should function a school of hard knocks for employment in the commercial sector:

> …access to a work house should not be easy, the stay should not be pleasant and the pay should not be generous. There should be something that makes those in need reluctant to enter the workhouse. Their sense of pride should be evoked and make them want to work through other means than through organized Poor relief. [116]

To sum up, ideas about how to "the cure" White poor from their laziness clearly contrasted with how this topic was discussed in the colonial sources of the same period. It is, for instance, rather illustrative that in Dutch context this discourse emerged in the context of poverty relief policy and not (colonial) labor policy. Ultimately, curing the White domestic poor from their laziness was imagined as a social instead of economic concern. Although financial motivations may have played a role in how this goal was reached, elevating the poor was, in the end, supposed to contribute to elimination of poverty and boost the moral standing of the Dutch nation and not expected to boost state revenues. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the language of moral uplifting did not yet hold much political clout in the context of colonial Java (see Chapter 6). We may thus argue that also discourses that constructed the idling domestic poor as worthy of state-led intervention endowed this class with Whiteness.

5.5 Van den Bosch and the "Domestic Colonies" of the Benevolent Society

To understand how these ideas about laziness materialized in practice, it is useful to turn to the writing and implemented policy initiatives of Johannes van den Bosch – the colonial colonel who had served the Indies army from 1797 onwards and owned several wet-rice terraces himself.[117] Disillusioned by the governmental reform agenda of the former patriot Willem Daendels (1762-1818), Van den Bosch left the Indies in 1810 to join the Prince of Orange in his battle against the French authorities.[118] In this period, he fought several battles but also wrote several books and articles on the domestic poverty and administrative reform in the

[116] Translated from original Dutch: "de toegang tot de werkhuizen moet niet gemakkelijk, het verblijf niet aangenaam, en het loon niet ruim gesteld worden. Er moet iets zijn, hetwelk de behoeftigen terughoudt van de opneming in het werkhuis te vragen; hun eergevoel moet opgewekt worden, om liever langs andere middelen, dan door de Armenbesturen aan het werk te worden geholpen.". Tydeman, Hebmskerk & Tydeman, *Denkbeelden Omtrent,* 161.
[117] Schrauwers, "The "Benevolent" Colonies of Johannes van den Bosch," 301
[118] Ibidem, 302.

colonies.[119] In light of my analytical approach, his ideas merit special attention for two, interrelated, reasons.

First, Van den Bosch wrote extensively on the causes *of* and solutions *for* the alleged laziness of both the domestic poor as well as Javanese agricultural workers. As such, evaluating his work allows me to more reliably track how the stereotype transformed across two policy contexts and show that it was not only invoked to signal class hierarchy but also racial superiority. Second, Van den Bosch was a highly influential political figure who has put his stamp on Dutch colonial history by being the architect of both the "domestic colonies" of the *Benevolent Society (Maatschappij van Weldadigheid)* in Drenthe and the Cultivation System (*Cultuurstelsel*) in colonial Java and Sumatra. As his writings were foundational to these policy initiatives, discussing them can help to bring the political "doings" of laziness into sharper view.

In *Discourse on the possibility […] of a Public Institution for the Poor […](1818)* Van den Bosch discussed the causes of poverty, thereby touching upon a wide set of topics such as land ownership, the distribution of wealth, the national food stock and laziness. He asserts that, deep down, *all* human beings inhabit "lethargic tendencies".[120] For him, laziness has an "innate" character and is particularly prevalent among those classes who still live their lives in "natural or animal-like" state, such as the urban poor.[121] Echoing economists like Tydeman, he considered working the best remedy against this social evil, as without work people will become "lazy, indolent, sickly", in short, "bad member[s] of society".[122] Nature itself provided the best medicine against laziness, as it connected material pleasures to work and physical pains to inactivity. He wrote:

> Wisely, nature has incited us with a natural urge to work. This by connecting a high degree of pleasure to the reaping fruits of one's labor, and connecting a pain to the hardship unemployment tends to brings about.[123]

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[119] Van den Bosch, *Verhandeling over het mogelijkheid,* 31; Bosch, J. van den. *Nederlandsche bezittingen in Azia, Amerika en Afrika. In derzelver toestand en aangelegenheid voor dit Rijk, wijsgeerig, staatshuishoudkundig en geographisch beschouwd, 2 vols.* The Hague: Van Cleef, 1818; Johannes van den Bosch, "De algemeene, en in het bijzonder Nederlandse nationale Nijverheid, benevens de middelen om die te bevorderen, Staatshuishoudkundig onderzocht" *De Star* 1, no. 2 (1919): 475-503. Johannes van den Bosch "Iets over het Nationaal Karakter, in Betrekking tot de Nationale Welvaart en de Onderneming der Maatschappij van Weldadigheid" *De Star* 2, (1820): 872-903.

[120] Van den Bosch, *Verhandeling over het mogelijkheid,* 100

[121] Ibidem, 100

[122] Ibidem, 100.

[123] Translated from original Dutch: Wijsselijk heeft de natuur ons daartoe de aanprikkeling gegeven, door eene groote mate van genot te verbinden aan de vruchten, welke daartoe verkregen worden, en omgekeerd, een zeer pijnlijk gevoel aan die ontberingen, welke de werkloosheid gewoonlijk voortbrengt, Ibidem, 100

These “natural incentives” were, however, not always preventing immoral behavior from happening. Not only was the physical hardship associated with unemployment alleviated due to the generous alms of the Dutch Reformed Church, macro-economic developments also restrained the poor’s possibilities to reap the benefits of their own labor, as work was simply not available for everyone.[124] In other words, Van den Bosch joined those intellectuals who refused to assigned all blame to the poor themselves and was more attentive to the structural factors causing poverty, and by that, laziness.

Instead, he conceptualized the existence of poverty as the inevitable result of private property. Put in simple terms, he stated that because land tends to accumulate in the hands of the propertied classes, workers’ subsistence becomes increasingly dependent on their access to lands they do not own themselves. This, inevitably, results in poverty as it increases the power of employers and enables them to pay poverty wages in attempts to outdo the competition. Instead of offering the prevalent Malthusian solution and letting the poor simply die out, or motivating them to seize the means of production − as Karl Marx would propose some decades later − Van den Bosch wanted to solve the problem by teaching the poor to become small, industrious cash crop farmers themselves in so-called “domestic colonies” – i.e. strictly bounded parcels of waste land within the confines of a state on which groups of minority citizens are engaging in agricultural labor.[125] When placed outside their dreadful and demoralizing urban environments, it would not only be easier to acculturate the domestic idling poor (i.e. the disciplining function of work), but also improve their financial well-being in the long run. After all, turning large plots of empty “waste” land into fertile farmland would increase the national agricultural stock significantly and, by that, render high quality subsistence crops affordable for the lower classes (i.e. productive function of work). [126]

After Van den Bosch had acquired some of hectares of “empty” land in Drenthe and Overijssel, these “utopian” ideas materialized and started to disrupt the lives of thousands of domestic poor. In the period between 1818 and 1825, the Benevolent Society established seven colonies in total (five in the Netherland, two in Belgium), all with their own spinning house, warehouse, school, currency, rewards system and penal code.[127] In about three years, the combined effort of agricultural education, disciplined labor and strict supervision, was supposed to transform

[124] Ibidem, 100-101
[125] Barbera Arneil, *Domestic Colonies – The Turn Inward to Colony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 3
[126] Van den Bosch, *Verhandeling over het mogelijkheid, 29-32*
[127] Schrauwers, Albert. “Colonies of benevolence: A carceral archipelago of empire in the greater Netherlands.” *History and Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2020): 355

idling poor, via the in-between phase of "colonial-laborer" (*kolonist-arbeider*), into an "independent farmer" (*vrijboer*).[128] To mark their progression in achieving this end goal, the Society granted bronze, silver and golden medals that corresponded to differing degrees of financial independence.[129] As elevating the idle poor appeared easier said than done, shortly after the Society had founded the free colony of Frederiksoord (1818) targeting poor families, they opened several unfree penal colonies in Ommerschans (1819), Veenhuizen (1823) and Merkplas (1825). Colonists who repeatedly transgressed the rules by, for instance, continuing to shows lazy behavior, would be sent to these penal institutions and give up many of their freedoms. In these new colonies, they would also encounter the criminalized poor (sentenced vagabonds and beggars), as the Society had received the state "concession" (i.e. monopoly) to accommodate and discipline this underclass.[130] At face value, this might sound like a return to the more punitive approach to laziness, as was more prevalent during the middle ages. However, when showing good behavior these "intractable" and "impertinent" poor people could still climb the organizational hierarchy and enter the ranks of independent, cash crop farmer. In other words, the end goal was still to elevate and not to simply to expel and punish the idle White poor.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter explored the emergence of the discursive figure of the idle White poor at start of the nineteenth century in progressive economic theory and the national poverty relief policies. In contrast to the lazy Javanese, the idle White poor were not necessarily born lazy but reluctantly drawn to it due to the unavailability of work. The White poor confronted a paternalistic state which intended to "cure" this class from their alleged laziness and contribute to their moral uplifting – an ambition Van Den Bosch formalized in his domestic Colonies of Benevolence. All this, however, begs the questions if the discourses on lazy Javanese developed in a similar direction at the turn of the century? Did colonial officials present the causes of the Javanese's alleged laziness as fundamentally social – i.e. related to their lifestyle or the unavailability of work? Did their presumed indolence also legitimize the introduction of

[128] Jan Derk Dorgelo, *De Koloniën van de Maatschappij van Weldadigheid (1818-1859) – Een landbouwkundig en Sociaal-economisch Experiment* (PhD diss. University of Wageningen, 1964) 57-58

[129] A bronze medal was awarded when a colonist had paid back 50% of their admission debt, a silver medal was awarded when colonist had paid back their entire debt and a golden medal was awarded when a colonist had reached an annual turnover of at least 250 net guilder from their small agricultural business. A golden medal would also mean that a colonist had reached the rungs of "independent farmer". Dorgelo, *De Koloniën van de Maatschappij van Weldadigheid*, 57

[130] Schrauwers, "Colonies of benevolence, " 355

progressive policies focused on moral uplifting or merely justify policies focused on repression and exclusion? The next chapter will answer these question.

6. Naturalizing Laziness, Excluding the Native: 1800-1860

This chapter documents the discursive formation of the lazy Javanese in the first half of the nineteenth century in the context of colonial Java. The first section *(§6.1*) will, however, start by briefly exploring what kind of discourses on laziness were in circulation under VOC rule. It will be argued that during the VOC period, ideas about laziness were more strongly informed by Calvinist dogma than racial argumentation and did not yet play a large rule in justifying colonial policy making. The second section *(§6.2*) shows how constructing the Javanese as lazy in the post-VOC period enabled Dutch colonial officials like S. C. Nederburgh and F.J. Rothenbühler to defend the native's exclusion from economic privileges such as free labor and privatized land ownership. The third section *(§6.2*) continues by exploring what kind of racial argumentation this version of the stereotype drew on. By reviewing the writing of Governor-General J. Van den Bosch, it reveals that in this period Javanese's alleged laziness was usually portrayed as a stable if not innate character trait characteristic of racial groups living in a tropical climate. The fourth section (*§6.4*) explains how these ideas informed the introduction of the Cultivation System (1830-1870) and helped to justify the institutionalization of a racial capitalist regime that was emerging from 1800 onwards. In short: a regime characterized by a strong Dutch colonial state, monopolized cash crop production and a low-skilled native workforce working under conditions of forced labor.

6.1 Religious Renditions of the Laziness Trope under VOC Rule

The pejorative figure of the lazy Javanese dates back to the early days of Dutch colonial rule. In some early travel journals and reports of the seventeenth century, Dutch VOC officials such as Wouter Schouten already made mentioning of the lazy character of some Indonesian races.[131] Next to an elaboration of shipping routes, weather conditions and business opportunities, these sources usually included short descriptions of the character traits and physical appearance of the many local populations merchants encountered on their violent journeys. The term "laziness" (luiheid) was the most popular way to describe Javanese alleged disinclination to activity, but labels like sluggishness (*traagheid*), indolence (*indolentie*) or flabby (*vadsig*) were circulating as well.[132]

[131] Wouter Schouten, *Oost-Indische Voyagie vervattende veel voorname voorvallen en ongemeene vreemde geschiedenissen, bloedige zee- en landtgevechten tegen de Portugeesen en Makassaren* (Amsterdam, 1675), 49

[132] In the Dutch language, the spelling of the term "lazy" (*lui*) shows remarkable stability. While, in the travel reports of the seventeenth century, *lui* was still spelled with an "y" (*luy*), from the mid-eighteenth century onwards up until today the "i" (*lui*) was used instead.

Unsurprisingly, the idea of lazy natives, subsequently, appears in the official policy discourse of the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC). In the General Letters (*Generale Missiven*), the written correspondence between the Governor-general in the Indies and the board of directors in the Dutch Republic, officials frequently expressed to have very little faith in the industriousness of the natives. When the planting of new spice trees hampered, or the harvest of rice or coffee was lower than expected, Governors-General were quick to blame it on the natives' alleged laziness. When, for instance, in 1666 the regional rice harvest reached an absolute low, Governor-General Joan Maetsuyker asserted that this would have never happened if the Javanese peasants "had not been so sluggish and lazy."[133] Sporadically, the idea of lazy natives also informed the VOC's labor policies. For example, when Governor-General Joan van Hoorn (1653-1711) speculated about the financial prospects of extending the slave-based nutmeg plantations of the Banda islands (*perkeniersstelsel*) to the Ambon region (VOC governorate in the central Moluccas) in 1704, he invoked the laziness trope to legitimize why this risky investment outlet would require an enslaved workforce, instead of independent Ambonese farmers. The "natural character" (*naturellen*) of the local population was "too lazy, proud and unskilled" to function as reliable source of labor power, he insisted.[134]

Contrary to the nineteenth century, however, the idea of lazy natives never carried much political clout under VOC rule. VOC officials did not construct the alleged laziness as a major problem standing in the way of capital accumulation, nor used it consistently to justify the racialized boundaries between forced and free labor. As the VOC's economic strategy revolved around establishing and defending monopolies over the spice trade and controlling the connected production chains at whatever means possible, the maximization of labor productivity was only of secondary importance.[135] In other words, for the VOC there was no material rationale for systematically invoking and weaponizing the idea that natives showed a

[133] Letter XXXV from Joan Maetsuyker, Carel Hartsinck, Nicolaes Verburch, Laurens Pit, Pieter Anthonisz Overwater, Matheus van den Brouck, Joan Thijsz, Johan van Dam en Pieter van Hoorn, January 30 1666, Batavia, in *Generale Missiven – Van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII Der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel 3*, ed. W. PH. Coolhaas (Den Bosch: Martinus Nijhof, 1968) 519

[134] Letter II Joan van Hoorn, Abraham van Riebeeck, Laurens Pijl, Johannes Cops, Manuel Bornezee, Christoffel van Swoll, Herman de Wilde, Abraham Douglas, Adem van Rijn, Adriaan van der Stel, Hendrick Zwaardecroon en Mattheus de Haan, November 30 1704, Batavia. *Generale Missiven – Van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII Der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, Deel 6*, ed. Ed. W.PH. Coolhaas. *(*Den Bosch: Martinus Nijhof, 1968) 291

[135] Alexander Anievas & Kerem Nisanciogly, *How The West Came to Rule – The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015) 242-243.

natural tendency for laziness, nor a reason to blame these populations for a decline in profit levels.

Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben argue that "race" did not yet function as the central marker of social distinction under VOC rule in the East Indies more generally speaking. In the trade ports like Batavia, Makassar and Malacca, economic prosperity and social standing was more heavily influenced by one's access *to* and position *in* the Company's commercial infrastructure, as well as by family alliance, education and religion, then by "race".[136] Moreover, the fact that sexual contacts between Europeans and local women rapidly turned settler towns into creolized communities rendered racial distinctions somewhat porous in practice.[137] In relation to the management of ethnic-racial difference, Matthias van Rossum describes the VOC's policy as "pragmatic multiculturalism": although the Company did allocate different populations to neat racial-ethnic categories in their books (Europeans, mestizos, castizos, topazes and blacks) these categorizations did not yet form the basis for a rigid colonial apartheid regime.[138]

Arguably, religion functioned as a more important marker of difference in the early modern period. Especially in the early days, the VOC was committed to the establishment of pious Christian settler communities and developed several religious, legal and economic policies that served this end.[139] The main differentiation that the Company invoked was between members of the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*) and people adhering to the "wrong" faith: Muslims, "Pagans". As such, protestant Church membership was a strict job requirement for all VOC servants and determined to which regulatory regime one was exposed regardless of skin-color.[140] Moreover, church attendance, marriage and collective or individual prayer were actively stimulated, while adultery, whoredom, and concubinage severely punished.[141] Hence, the main objection to sexual intercourse between Dutch settlers and local

[136] Ulbe Bosma & Remco Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies – A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920, transl.* Wendie Shaffer (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 60
[137] Bosma & Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 22; Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 11
[138] Matthias van Rossum, *Werkers van de Wereld – Globalisering, Arbeid en Interculturele Ontmoetingen tussen Aziatische en Europese Zeelieden in Dienst van de VOC, 1600-1800* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2014) 377; Marcus Vink, *Encounters on the Opposite coast: The Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai in the Seventeenth century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) 113
[139] Bosma & Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 22; C. Fasseur, "Cornerstone or Stumbling Block – Racial classification and the late colonial state in Indonesia, " Robert Cribb eds., *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880-1942* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1989) 32
[140] Fasseur, "Cornerstone or Stumbling Block", 32
[141] Bosma & Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies,* 26-28; Marcus Vink, *Encounters on the Opposite coast,* 115

woman was not that it cluttered the purity of the White "race', or that it was often nonconsensual in nature, but that it regularly took place in an extramarital "twilight zones".[142]

Perhaps, the early modern circulation of the laziness discourse is therefore best understood against the background of the Western "Christo-centric" worldview of the VOC. This worldview endowed Christian Europe with ethical superiority and evaluated anything taking place outside this "center" against this moral-religious ideal. As Marcus Vink puts it: "Physical distance from the centre correlated with the moral distance from the "measure of humanity" or "civilization" as defined by the centre."[143] Voicing concerns about the "lousy" work ethic of individuals residing in the archipelago was interpreted as a logical manifestation of the spiritual "backwardness" of these regions in the world. In the Calvinist version of this "Christo-centric" worldview, work ethic was, after all, understood a sign of grace and considered to be a part of the superior work culture in the Republic. The further removed from this sacred space, the more difficult it would be live up these ethical-religious ideals. In other words, the idea of laziness was invoked to reaffirm the religious and only thereafter the racial superiority of the west.

Perhaps the best illustration of these pre-racial renditions of laziness can be found in the famous travel report of the VOC officials Nicolaas de Graaf (1619-1688). In his infamous *Oost-Indise Spiegel* (1701), Nicolaas de Graaf gives a meticulous description of the colonial culture of the inhabitants of Batavia. Informed by his Calvinist worldview, this former ship surgeon raised concerns about the lack of devotion of the White VOC officials and their entourages. In particular, he took issue with the rude, supercilious, licentious and lazy behavior of the White or racially mixed settler wives. He accused them of acting like lazy princesses and treating their enslaved Black servants in an inhumane, and thereby un-Christian, manner:

> 'All settler wives alike, whether Dutch or Kastise or Mistise, and especially those living in Batavia, are so arrogant, frisky and opulent that they barely realize how self-involved and superficial their behavior is. They demand to be treated as princesses, some of them having enslaved men and woman at their disposal. These servants look after them like watchdogs; day and night. They [settler wives] are so lazy that they would not move a muscle, no, not even pick up a single straw from the floor, instead summoning one of their male or female slaves to do so…'[144]

[142] Bosma & Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies,* 21
[143] Vink, *Encounters on the Opposite coast,* 99
[144] Translated from original Dutch: 'Dese vrouwtjes dan in 't generaal aangemerkt, soo Hollandse als ook Kastise en Mistise, insonderheid op Batavia, sijn 't meerstendeel so pragtig, so hovaardig, so dartel, en weelderig, dat sy van brootdronkenheyd nauwelijks weten hoedanig dat sy haar sullen aanstellen; sy laten haar dienen als princese en hebbe sommige veel slaven en slavinne tot haren dienst, welke nagt en dag als wagt honde moeten oppassen

For de Graaf, this alleged indolence and lack of good manners was particularly prevalent among those settler wives born and raised in the archipelago. Echoing the Christo-centric worldview, these wives were, after all, never exposed to the pious Christian culture of the metropole, nor received western education. [145] "It's almost as if their hands are sewed against their doll-bodies with a silk thread", he lamented.[146] Their indolence was so excessive, that these wives did not even bother to take care of their own children, instead outsourcing their child-rearing responsibilities to their black female servants. He wrote:

> Especially those born in Indie, are not capable, or should I say too lazy, to rear their own children. Almost right after giving birth they hand over their child to black servant, an enslaved prostitute or one of her other female slaves. As they breastfeed and nurture the child, settler wives only barely get involved with the upbringing of their own children. This is, of course, also the reason why these children rather spend time with their black servants or enslaved man and woman than with their own parents. [147]

Although these perspectives on laziness were thus not, so it seems, fundamentally shaped by racial ideologies, it did carry class related stigma (see Chapter 5). In the eyes of De Graaf, it were primarily working class women who dared to burn all the bridges at home and start over in the East Indies. They used to work as cleaners, street vendors, indebted craftswoman and shopkeepers, De Graaf explained, and were all looking for brighter future in the tropics. Moreover, the idea that settler wives were living in cloud-chuckoo-land spread like fire in the Dutch metropole. This attracted women seduced by "wealth and ostentation", instead of women with a diligent work ethic, De Graaf explained.[148]

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en als de wint gedurig na haar oogen sien, en sy sijn selfs so luy datse niet een hant naar eenig ding sullen uitsteken, ja niet een stro vande vloer sullen ligten, al lagt aan haar sy, or roepen terstont een van haar slave of slavinnen daar toe…' De Graaf, *Oost-Indise Spiegel*, ibidem.

[145] De Graaf, *Oost-Indise Spiegel*, 74, 79.

[146] Translated from original Dutch: 't is offer de handen met sije draatjes als wassepoppen aan 't lijf sijn genaayd' De Graaf, *Oost-Indise Spiegel*, 74

[147] Translated from original Dutch: 'Insonderheid die in Indie geboren sijn, ja sijn niet bequaam, of om beter te seggen, te luy om haar eygen kindere op te voeden, maar bevelen deselve so haast alsse ter werelt komen aan een zwarte min, een slaven hoer, of aan ymant van haar andere slavinne, diese sogen en op queeken, als dat sy haar met haar eugen kinderen weunig komen te bemoyen; t' welk ook de oorzaak is, dat die kindere liever by haar swarte min en by the slaven en slavinnen willen sijn als by haar eygen ouders…', De Graaf, *Oost-Indise Spiegel*, 74

[148] De Graaf, *Oost-Indise Spiegel*, 80-81

6.2 Justifying Forced Labor in the Tropics

After the suspension of the VOC in 1795, Dutch colonial officials were forced to rethink how the colonies would contribute to the prosperity of the motherland. Not only did the new Batavian Republic inherit 134 million guilders of debt, it was also left with a highly corrupt governing infrastructure that had too slowly realized that their mercantile trade strategies did not fit the new constellation of global capitalism.[149] Although liberals and conservatives agreed that the foreign possessions should, in the end, contribute to the prosperity of the motherland, how this would be achieved was a point of heated discussion. Would the Dutch state, for instance, continue the VOC's monopoly on trade or open the door to foreign capital? Should the land by owned by the colonial state or be privatized or even handed over to native peasants? Was holding on to the yet existing system of forced cultivation and corvee the only option or could natives work under conditions of free labor?

It was in these policy discussions that the discursive figure of the "lazy" native started to surface more regularly. Would a system of free labor be lucrative with a native workforce showing a "natural aversion" towards labor?[150] Was private ownership of land in the interest of the Dutch, if Javanese peasants would stop planting crops after their direct needs were met? Conservative Dutch colonial officials were unanimous in their answer: it was not. In their view, it was in the interest of the motherland to consolidate or even expand the system of forced cultivation the VOC had put in place. Using force was necessary, they argued, as the Javanese's laziness prevented them from exerting work effort voluntarily. In the period between 1800-1860, it was this version of the trope that held the most discursive power and functioned as an explicit justification for repressive labor policies, overshadowing the liberal interpretations for more than half a century. To illustrate how this discourse materialized in practice, zooming in on the decision-making preceding the following three colonial policies is illuminating: Charter of the East indies (1803) and Mackenzie report (1813) and the Cultivation System (1830).

First, racialized ideas about work and rest played a central role in the discussions around the development of the Charter for the East Indies of 1803: a policy advice developed by a commission of administrative elites a couple of years after the termination of the VOC which set the stage for the proceeding colonial labor policies on the island. The new state commission replacing the board of the VOC, The *Raad der Aziatische Bezittingen en Etablissementen* (council for Asian Possessions and Establishments), had asked the commission to develop a

[149] Breman, *Mobilizing Labour for the Global Coffee Market* , 100
[150] De Commissie tot de Oost-Indische Zaken, Charter voor Nederlands-Indië, augustus 31, 1803, Den haag, 8

new blueprint for the economic governance in the archipelago, thereby inviting, amongst others, the political rivals Sebastiaan Cornelis Nederburgh (1762-1811) and Dirk van Hogendorp (1761-1822).

Dirk van Hogendorp, a former navy officer and assistant- resident of Bengal (Java), was one of the few critics of the VOC's labor and trade regime and the associated ideas about work effort of the native population. In his polemic of 1799, which he wrote after escaping his prison sentence issued by Nederburgh himself, Van Hogendorp not only urged the colonial authorities to give up on their trade monopoly, abolish slavery, develop an independent court system but also expressed his reservations regarding the classic version of the laziness trope.[151] For him, Javanese ostensible laziness was not the result of the local "climate" or national "character" but, instead, caused by the repressive and exploitative economic governance the Dutch erected in the Archipelago.[152] As long as the Javanese could not own their lands, benefit from the fruits of their labor or exercise property rights, laziness would continue to be a problem. He wrote:

> Without private ownership of land and free labor, the development of industriousness, and industry becomes impossible. If you do not know if you are permitted to keep the land you are cultivating next year; if you do not know what proportion of the fruits of your own labor you can enjoy yourself; if your money, land and other belongings are not protected and can be taken away from you without legal repercussions, you will never attempt to increase your wealth, nor be willing to exert much work effort.[153]

The former Commissioner-General of the Cape and Batavia Nederburgh had, however, a completely different and more conservative policy direction in mind. From his earlier writings, we know that he was in favor of the already existing governing structure in which Javanese nobility (*regenten*) functioned as middlemen between local peasants and the Dutch colonial officials. In his policy memorandum of 1796 he, for instance, acknowledged that payment to

[151] Dirk van Hogendorp, *Berigt van den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen in OostIndiën en den handel op dezelve*, Delft 1799

[152] Dirk van Hogendorp, *Berigt van den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen,* 367

[153]Translated from original Dutch: "Waar geen eigendom, nog van land, noch van person, noch van iets hoegenaamd bekend is, daar kan ook noch werkzaamheid, nog industrie plaats vinden. Wie niet zeker is, of hij het veld dat hij bebouwt tot het aanstaande jaar zal behouden; − wie niet zeker weet hoeveel van de voortbrengzels van zijn arbeid men hem zal afeischen; − wie niet verzekerd is, dat, als hij een stukje geld, grond of enig andere kleinood heeft, het hem zal afgenomen worden, zonder ergens recht daartegen te kunnen krijgen; die kan zeker geen grooten prijs stellen op de vermeerdering en verbetering van hetgeen hij bezit, noch zeer werkzaam zijn tot verkrijgen van meerder." Hogendorp, *Berigt van den tegenwoordigen toestand der Bataafsche bezittingen*, 367

coffee growers was extremely low and, at points, did not even cover transportation costs, but still refused to consider raising the prices, as this would reduce the Company's profit levels.[154]

Eventually, it was Nederburgh's vision that dominated the charter: free trade was not introduced and the system of corvee and the forced cultivation of, for instance, coffee, pepper or indigo maintained, and if possible expanded. This outcome was to be expected, as Van Hogendorp left the discussion prematurely to serve as an ambassador in Russia, allowing Nederburgh to push his conservative agenda. The charter, however, did have some liberal components, as it formally recognized that privately owned farmland could have a place in Java's economic infrastructure, an issue Van Hogendorp had advocated. To still extract colonial surplus form these lands, article 57 introduced a land tax (*verponding*) for the private estates surrounding Batavia and stimulated their cultivation by only exempting non-cultivated plots from taxation the first ten years. [155]

To motivate this advice, the commission resorted to all sorts of arguments, of which a crucial one related to the work culture of the Javanese. As the commission agreed that Dutch East-Indies should contribute to the accumulation of capital in the motherland, simply handing over farmland to independent native peasants was considered irresponsible. [156] Not only would the local nobility feel bypassed and resist such measures, cash crop production would also drop significantly, as the Javanese showed a "natural aversion towards work".[157] According to the commission, Javanese did not yet develop conceptions about the private ownership of land or free labor, and would thus not even know how to appreciate or use the economic privileges associated with them. At least in the short run, further mobilizing and manipulating Javanese's, already existing obedience towards their local lords – a historical continuum enshrined in *adat* law – was considered the only way to be ensured of work effort from a population considered too lazy to work voluntarily. [158]

Around ten years later, ideas about laziness informed policy proposals again. This time of the liberal and reform-oriented Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826). This British Lieutenant-General ruled the island during the short but significant British occupation of Java in the period between 1811 and 1814. Unlike his Dutch predecessor Herman Willem Daendels (1762-1818), who had only "consolidated" and "intensified" the system of forced cultivation and corvee

[154] Breman, *Mobilizing Labour for the Global Coffee Market,* 101
[155] De Commissie tot de Oost-Indische Zaken, Charter voor Nederlands-Indië, 84.
[156] Ibidem, 1
[157] Ibidem, 8
[158] Ibidem, 7-8

labor, Raffles was committed to move the economic governance on Java in an enlightened liberal direction.[159] After seeking advice from a commission of colonial officials headed by the British colonel Mackenzie, he sent his reform agenda to the East Indies council on June 14, 1813 which, in the eyes of the Dutch, were considered extremely radical. The plan had a dual goal: improving the wellbeing (*lotsverbetering*) of the Javanese while, simultaneously, boosting internal economic activity on the island and tax income levels.[160] The plan was proposed to create a more direct relation between the colonial state and Javanese peasants by removing the intermediate governance layer of local regents who were, until then, responsible for the implementation of forced cultivation. Instead of performing forced cultivation or corvee labor, Javanese peasants would now lease land from the colonial state and pay their dues via a land tax.[161] Although the implementation did not happen without setbacks, was not implemented across the entire island, and did not unleash the promised economic activity, Raffle's system did temporarily loosen the racialized boundaries between force and free labor on the island. [162]

It should therefore not come as a surprise that Raffles rejected the classic version of the laziness trope in the written motivation for his policy reforms of 1813.[163] Echoing Van Hogendorp's vision, he challenged the idea that force was the only reasonable response to the alleged laziness of the native. In fact, it was because of force, and more particularly, because peasants could not reap the fruits of their own labor, that Javanese showed little work effort.[164] In his later ethnographic writings on Java, Raffles summarized his position as follows:

> No man will exert himself, when acting for another, with so much zeal as when stimulated by his own immediate interest; and under a system of government, where every thing but the bare means of subsistence is liable to be seized, nothing but the means of subsistence will be sought to be attained. The Dutch accuse the Javans of indolent habits and fraudulent dispositions; but surely the oppressor has no right to be surprized, that the oppressed appear reluctant in his service, that they meet his exactions with evasion, and answer his call to labor with sluggish indifference. [165]

[159] Breman, *Mobilizing Labour for the Global Coffee Market*, 128
[160] T.S. Raffles, Memorie van den luitenant-gouverneur T.S. Raffles over het landelijk stelsel, gerigt aan den raad van Indie, June 14, 1813, Buitenzorg, 69
[161] Raffles, Memorie van den luitenant-gouverneur T.S. Raffles, 74
[162] Breman, for instance, pointed out that the new labor regime did not apply to the coffee production in the Priangan Regencies (West Java), as Raffles needed these revenues to finance the reform. Breman, *Mobilizing Labour for the Global Coffee Market*, 127;
[163] Raffles, Memorie van den luitenant-gouverneur T.S. Raffles 68; T.S. Raffles quoted in S. Van Deventer, Bijdragen tot de Kennis van Het Landelijk Stelsel op Java (Zalt-Bommel: Joh. Nomn and Zoon, 1865), 152
[164] T.S. Raffles quoted in S. Van Deventer, Bijdragen tot de Kennis van Het Landelijk Stelsel op Java, 152
[165] T.S. Raffles, *The History of Java* (London: Cox and Baylis, 1817), 151-152

In other words, Raffles conceptualized "ownership" − of the land and the products of this land − as *the* route towards emancipation, thereby combining liberal ideas on private property with an enlightened focus on uplifting the "uncivilized" native. As yet announced, however, this liberal counter discourse would only start to dominate the policy field after the second half on the nineteenth century. Telling is that, for instance, Dutch colonial officials like F.J. Rothenbühler (1758-1836) and P.A. Goldbach (xx-xx) continued to reproduce the classic version of the trope when far reaching liberal reforms were considered or their own direct interest were at stake.

In discussions preceding the publication of the final Mackenzie report Rothenbühler, for instance, invoked the trope repeatedly when discussing the desirability of granting land to locals. In a report written in July 1812, he argued that it would be unavoidable to issue life-time leases to plots of land to regents.[166] Under the new system they would, after all, be cut off from the colonial administration and lose their direct source of income. An added benefit would be that once in charge of a plot of land this class of "lazy people", would be forced to "watch over the good cultivation of lands allowed to them" and to start treat their now formally free workforce in a "friendly and just manner".[167] The remaining lands, he insisted, should be sold in full property to Europeans, thereby foreclosing the possibility of a local business elite to emerge. Javanese peasants simply did not possess the necessary capital for a purchase like this and were moreover unlikely to become successful cash crop producers due to their alleged laziness. He argued:

> I am convinced that if once the Javanese has land in his possession & is left to himself without any restriction, he will not work any more than is absolutely necessary for him & his family, whose wants are besides of very little consequence − a poor bamboo house covered with leaves, a handkerchief & some few cloths for him & his wife, & a small quantity of rice or Turkey-corn boiled in water, with some vegetables, & sometimes a small quantity of fish, this is all he wants. Lazy by nature, & effeminate by education, the Javanese seems only to exist to live in indolence, occupying himself by sleeping or sitting alongside a river, contemplating the current of the water, or if he is inclined, taking some fish for his dinner without ever feeling the desire to ameliorate his fate by work.[168]

[166] John Bastin, *Verhandelingen van het koninklijk instituut voor taal, land en volkenkunde, Deel XIV, Raffles' ideas on the land rend system in Javan and the Mackenzie land tenure commission* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhof, 1954), 64
[167] Rothenbühler quoted in Bastin, *Verhandelingen van het koninklijk instituut*, 64
[168] Ibidem, 65

The idea of selling off land to Europeans was not just a matter of fine words, but actually materialized under Raffles' administration. Confronted with the poor financial health of colonial administration on Java and an ambitious reform agenda, Raffles decided to dispose of large plots of land in the Bandung-Tjianjur area and Batavian and Preanger regencies at a special meeting of the Council held on November 4, 1812.[169] He asserted that these sales would not only withdraw large quantities of paper money from circulation and with that stop their ongoing depreciation, but also solve the direct liquidity problems caused by the dropping coffee prices.[170] Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority of the plots were sold to European "capitalist" – as Raffles called them – and members of the colonial governments, including Raffles himself.[171] Dutch commission members like Rothenbühler and Lawick van Pabs did, moreover, whatever they could to make sure that forced cultivation would continue to be possible on privatized lands – a demand Raffles never formally endorsed but also never forbid in practice.[172] In sum, confronted with financial hardship and direct self-interest, Raffles liberal ideas were severely compromised in practice.

Reviewing these two cases, it already becomes clear that the idea that the Javanese showed a natural tendency for laziness was an effective way to justify the native's exclusion from the White confines of the Dutch East-Indian economy. Granting the Javanese access to the economic privileges of free labor, good pay and the possessing of land would halt the accumulation of capital, so the conservative colonial officials like Nederburgh, Rothenbühler or Goldbach argued. In their minds, a racial group with an innate tendency for laziness would, after all, not show up at work voluntary, respond to monetary incentives or plant more crops than necessary for its own survival – in short, behave in a way the imagined White Europeans worker would. This resonates with the first strand of racial capitalism theory (*§2.1*). In short, the idea that capitalism mobilizes ideas about racial difference to justify and enshrine the inequalities it produces. In contrast to the VOC period, these colonial official used racialized notions of laziness to portray disparities related to labor, wage and wealth as natural and to justify the colonial policies reproducing these material inequalities.

[169] Bastin, *Verhandelingen van het koninklijk instituut*, 76
[170] Ibidem, 72-74
[171] Ibidem, 83-85
[172] For instance, on November 25, 1812, Rothenbühler and others wrote to Raffles:"[I]t will be impossible to cultivate the land to so much advantage as they might be capable of yielding, without admitting servitude on equitable terms. No Javanese will do more work than his own utmost necessity requires", Adams, Rothenbühler and Goldbach quoted in Bastin, *Verhandelingen van het koninklijk instituut*, 90

6.3 Van den Bosch's Racialized Ideas on the Causes of Laziness

All this, however, begs the question: on what kind of racial argumentation did these colonial draw? To answer these question, I turn to writings and colonial policies of the founder of the forced cultivation system: Johannes van den Bosch. This Governor-General did not only invoke a trope to justify the expansion and further institutionalization of the, already existing, labor regime of forced cultivation in the Indies, but also speculated extensively on why the Javanese had become lazy in the first place. Reviewing his conservative ideas on laziness, which were representative for the general discourse in the pre-1860 period, will thus help to understand the type of racial argumentation present in the stereotype.

The roots of Van den Bosch's views on the alleged laziness of the Javanese can clearly be decerned from his study *Nederlandsche bezittingen in Azie, Amerika, and Africa* (Dutch Possessions in Asia, America and Africa) that was ordered by King William I in 1818. [173] In this study, which may be treated as the intellectual foundation of his Cultivation System (1830-1870) Van den Bosch offered a comprehensive review of Dutch colonial possessions and analyzed why they failed to be profitable at the start of the 19th century. Echoing the views of the preceding colonial authorities, Van den Bosch considered the "limited industriousness" of the native population one of the four central "obstacles" that prevented the colonies from becoming more lucrative for the Dutch state.[174] He traced this behavior back to three main sources: the tropical climate, the nutritious Indonesian soil and the in-built character of their "race".

The tropical climate was, first of all, assumed to induce lazy behavior, as it simply rendered agricultural labor more exhausting – both physically and mentally. In Van den Bosch's wording, the hot temperature gave rise to "strong signs of lethargy" and the "rapid exhaustion of physical power" and generated a population penchant for "rest" and "amenity".[175] He continued by stating that this character trait was not just an idiosyncrasy of the Javanese but, in fact, a common denominator for all non-western populations living in warm or tropical climates, such as Egyptians, Turks and Persians.[176] Consequently, the Javanese's alleged laziness was, at least to a certain extent, unalterable, as it directly stemmed from the climate

[173] Johannes van den Bosch, *Nederlandsche bezittingen in Azia, Amerika en Afrika. In derzelver toestand en aangelegenheid voor dit Rijk, wijsgeerig, staatshuishoudkundig en geographisch beschouwd, 2 vols.* (The Hague: Van Cleef, 1818).
[174] Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 119
[175] Ibidem, 6, 220
[176] Ibidem, 6

under which they worked and lived. Even if natives would "develop pleasures that transgressed the narrow borders of their primal needs", Van den Bosch asserted that lazy character trait could "never be exorcised entirely".[177] In other words, regardless of persistent and well-intentioned western efforts to incite the Javanese with work ethic, the native would always attempt to bounce back to his natural state: laziness.

For Van Den Bosch, the tropical climate did not only affect the behavior of natives but also posed risks for the White Europeans residing in the Indies. As incoming Europeans were usually more used to hard labor, and often blinded by a material urge to maximize profits, they did not regress into inactivity but act in the exact opposite way. He wrote:

> As the European needs to satisfy his well-developed needs, they are more used to work. His work ethic is, moreover, spurred by his urge to quickly make a fortune in the colony and return to his European life in a more happy state of mind shortly after. Together, these factors stimulate the European to overcome the fatiguing effects of the climate and aim for his goal with double intensity. Not infrequently, however, he becomes a victim of this zeal and succumbs to the hot climate, to which dangerous diseases are omnipresent and *endemic*.[178]

In other words, eager Europeans settlers arriving in the Indies tended to ignore their new surroundings, go that extra mile and, soon after, succumb to the scorching heat. Thriving in the tropics entailed adjusting ones paces of life to a tropical climate, and developing moderate habits and routines. To this end, Van den Bosch recommended settlers to avoid "all sorts of excess" when living in the tropics.[179] These ranged from the overconsumption of food and alcohol, to the maximization of work effort. In this respect, Europeans had ironically much to learn from the natives, as they lived in closer harmony with its natural environment and therefore less often stricken with illness. It was partly because of this worry, that Van den Bosch was skeptical of labor policies that intervened too directly in the natives lifestyle. When thrown off balance the native would, after all, also swiftly collapse under "killing climate" and be no longer be of any use to the Dutch treasury.[180]

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[177] Ibidem, 6

[178] Translated from original Dutch: "De *Europeer*, bij uitgestrekter behoeften meer aan den arbeid gewoon, vaak ook aangespoord door de drift om zich hier binnen weinige jaren eene fortuin te verwerven, en tot zijne *Europesche* achtergelatene betrekkingen gelukkiger weder te keeren, vindt in dit alles een' prikkel, die hem menigwerf den belemmerenden invloed van het klimaat doet trotseren, en met verdubbelde pogingen naar zijn doel streven: dan, niet zelden ook wordt hij eene prooi van deze overspanning, en bezwijkt voor de uitwerkingen van eene luchtgesteldheid, aan welke heete en gevaarlijke ziekten *endemisch* eigen zijn." Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 6-7.

[179] Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 7

[180] Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 8; On the broader topic on the possibilities for successful "acclimatization" in the Dutch East-Indies, see Hans. Pols "Notes from Batavia, the Europeans' Graveyard: The

Secondly, because the nutritious Indonesian soil did not need much cultivation to yield large harvests, it did not incentivize Javanese peasants to maximize work effort. On the contrary, the nutritious ground generated a work condition in which "poor labor" was, in fact, rewarded with "rich harvest", to use Van den Bosch own words.[181] As the Javanese had no interest in continuing production after primal needs were met, they reduced work effort to the bare minimum. On some islands in the archipelago, agricultural labor had even lost its reproductive purpose whatsoever, Van den Bosch stated with astonishment. As even without the direct human interference, these lands produced enough edible material to ensure a subsistence minimum for the local population.[182] In sum, Van den Bosch portrayed the fertile Indonesian soil as an opportunity as well as an obstacle to colonial extraction: while it produced output rates European peasants could only dream of, it also gave rise to a spoiled agricultural workforce antipathetic to work.

Form Van Den Bosch's writings in *De Star* – the Dutch newspaper issued by his *Benevolent Society* (see *§5.3*) – we know that he also used this line of reasoning to reaffirm the superiority of the Dutch work culture. In his article titled: *Notes on the national character and its relation to the national wealth* […], he stated that because the wet and marshy peat soil of The Netherlands required much care and effort to yield a rich harvest, strong work ethic and industriousness had become integral to the national character. Reverberating a the still powerful nationalist narrative on the Dutch "battle against the water", he added that this effect of the soil was particularly strong in the Netherlands.[183] Given that large parts of the lowlands were located below sea level, the Dutch were forced to act industriously and install a complex system of dykes, dams, sluices and pumping stations to make their land cultivable in the first place. He wrote:

> Another component that informed the national character is the nature of our soil. The nature of our soil obliges us to not only exert work effort […] but also take care of dams, sluices, water pipes, ditches and so on and so forth – infrastructure

Nineteenth-Century Debate on Acclimatization in the Dutch East Indies, " J*ournal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences 67, no. 1(2012): 120-148.*

[181] Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 10

[182] Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 10

[183] For a contemporary reconfiguration of this old-age nationalist Dutch discourse see, for instance, the interval act performance "The Power of Water" by Davina Michelle on the Eurovision Song Contest in Rotterdam, 2021. Eurovision, "Davina Michelle – The Power Of Water – Interval Act – Eurovision 2021", YouTube Video, 0:00-4:17, May 18, 2021, https://libanswers.snhu.edu/faq/48007.

> that is not necessary, or at least less crucial in other regions. As such, our very existence is completely dependent on our exceptional diligence.[184]

Thirdly, Van den Bosch traced the alleged laziness of Javanese back to their lack in evolutionary development. In his view, Javanese (and non-western populations more generally) were still stuck in an infancy stage of civilization. Instead of being guided by logic and reason, they were driven by direct "urges", "passions" and "animalistic needs".[185] Hence, the local work culture was not focused on the long-term or goal-orientation, but aimed at satisfying direct needs.[186] Usurpingly, Van Den Bosch observed that natives showed very little interests in acquiring wealth in comparison to White Europeans and preferred to live a quiet and simple family life without much personal growth or development.[187] Consequently, Javanese (or any of the other East-Indian racial groups) would work until their basic needs were met, to regress into inactivity shortly after – i.e. their "natural" state of mind. [188]

Reviewing these explanation, it becomes very clear that Van Den Bosch draws on racialized argumentations – constantly plotting the hardworking White European against the idle colored native. In his view, the tropical climate and fertile soil had inflicted upon the character of the Javanese "race" and explained their natural inclination for lethargy and lack of material needs. Although prolonged interaction with enlightened Europeans may improve their work ethic to some extent, it would never be defeated completely. Instead of tracing this behavioral characteristic to the Javanese's alleged cultural backwardness, Van den Bosch primarily understood it as a sign of their natural and innate state of inferiority. Laziness was thus naturalized, seen as fixed by nature, and inherent to the Javanese "race" – a type of racial argumentation Goldberg calls "racial naturalism". [189]

At first sight, this reasoning seems to resemble Van den Bosch's earlier theories on the sources of idleness among the White poor. As already explained, in his *Discourse on the possibility* ...

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[184] Translated from original Dutch: "Eene andere eigenfschap in dat karakter is mede het gevolg van onze grondgefteldheid, namelijk onze arbeidzaamheid; de aard van onzen grond legt ons de verplichting op, om, behalve den arbeid […] nog te zorgen voor dijken, dammen, fluizen, waterleidingen, flooten, en zo veel andere bemoeijingen, die elders of overbodig, of althans veel minder algemeen noodzakelijk zijn. Ons befstaan hangt derhalve geheel af van onze meerdere werkzaamheid", Johannes van den Bosch "Iets over het Nationaal Karakter," 889

[185] Van den Bosch, *Nederlandse Bezittingen*, 13; on this topic, also see: Pols, H. "Psychological knowledge in a colonial context: Theories on the nature of the" native mind" in the former Dutch East Indies, " *History of Psychology* 10, no 2 (2007): 111-131.

[186] Ibidem, 12-14

[187] Ibidem, 30

[188] Ibidem, 30

[189] Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 46

of a Public Institution for the Poor ... (1818), he repeatedly stated that *all* human beings are cursed with an "innate" love for idleness and that paupers just gave in to this congenital proclivity.[190] Contrary to the Javanese, however, the idle White poor had taken on a lethargic lifestyle because the capitalist economy under which they lived produced poverty and unemployment. In the eyes of Van den Bosch, White indolence was thus conceived of as fundamentally social instead of biological; as a motivation for moral uplifting, instead of a rationale for repression. Although the idea of moral uplifting did enter into Van den Bosch's writings on Java in a later stage in time, it never became as dominant in comparison to his publications on Dutch poverty. [191]

6.4 The Institutionalization of a Racial Capitalist Regime

It was eventually the racial naturalist version of the stereotype that carved itself into the policy documents that formed the basis of the Cultivation System. After returning to the Netherlands in late 1828, Van den Bosch was commissioned by the Dutch king to prepare a plan for how to make the East Indies profitable again. In his advice of March 1929 and his policy report of October 1830, Van den Bosch suggested to expand the yet existing practices of forced cultivation and intensify collaborate with the local nobility to be ensured of the native's compliance.[192] In line with his previous writing, he justified this policy by explicitly referred to "lazy nature" of the Javanese. Because Javanese had the tendency to "neglect" their lands in the absence of direct force, he argued, expanding the practice of free labor would only further deteriorate the already declining profitability of the colony. [193] Expanding the regime of forced cultivation was therefore, at least in the short run, considered the only viable solution.

The Cultivation System institutionalized the racial capitalist regime which was already emerging from 1800 onwards. In short, a regime characterized by a strong Dutch colonial state, monopolized cash crop production and a low-skilled native workforce working under conditions of forced labor. In this system, the interests of capital were more easily protected through differentiation than assimilation (see *§2.2*). As Breman describes, in the period the Javanese economy was characterized by a lack of labor, not of land. Under such material conditions, problems related to the indeterminacy of labor can only be solved through extra-

[190] Johannes van den Bosch, Bosch, *Verhandeling over het mogelijkheid*, 100.
[191] Johannes van den Bosch, "Rapport van Den Gouverneur-Generaal Van Den Bosch", 356; Bosch, J. van den, 1851 "Advies Van den luitenant-generaal Van den Bosch over het stelsel van kolonisatie." Reprinted in Steyn Parve, D. C. *Het Koloniaal monopolie-stelsel getoest aan geschiedenis en staatshuishoudkunde* (Zalt-Bommel, 1851 org. Publ. 1829) 317
[192] Van den Bosch, "Rapport van Den Gouverneur-Generaal Van Den Bosch, " 356
[193] Ibidem.

economic force. If workers can live off small-scale subsistence farming or flee to yet uncultivated lands, they will prefer to remain independent and not offer their labor power to capital's unbridled disposal. [194] As a consequence, to be ensured of enough agricultural laborers Javanese workers had to be forced to work in this period. As we have seen in this chapter, constructing the Javanese's work ethic as fundamentally different from the White one served this end by justifying a type of labor that would have been unimaginable in the metropole.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the discursive formation of the lazy Javanese in the first half of the nineteenth century. After briefly exploring how the idea of laziness figured under VOC rule, it reviewed the decision-making process around three colonial policies in which racialized ideas about lazy Javanese were of politic significance. − Charter of the East indies (1803) and Mackenzie report (1813) and the Cultivation System (1830). This chapters showed that in this period, laziness was often portrayed as a stable if not innate character trait of racial groups living in a tropical climate and on a fertile soil, thereby depicting the difference between hardworking White Europeans and Idle colored Javanese as absolute – a type of racial argumentation Goldberg calls "racial naturalism". It moreover argued that the discursive power of this version of the trope, should be placed against background of the racial capitalist regime of the time. In this economic constellation, the interest of capital were most easily safeguarded if the native was excluded from instead of assimilated in the White economy.

[194] Breman, *Mobilizing labour for the global coffee market*, 201

7. Historicizing Laziness, Assimilating the Native: 1860-1903

This chapter documents the discursive formation of the lazy Javanese in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first section (*§7.1),* shows how discussions about the future of the Cultivation System in the 1860s repoliticized the racial-economic trope. While liberals favored the abolishment of forced labor and challenged the idea that Javanese had an innate tendency for laziness, conservative defended this policy and the associated stereotype. The second (*§7.2)* third (*§7.3)* and fourth (*§7.4*) and fifth (*§7.5)* sections all document different ways in which liberal and unaligned Dutch officials and intellectuals attempted to refute or redefine the racial naturalist version of the stereotype. What their arguments had in common was that they traced the Javanese alleged laziness to the socio-economic circumstances under which natives were expected to work. Most prominent, was the assertion that Javanese had not yet developed the materialist urges associated with industrial capitalism exactly because the Cultivation System (1830-1870) had always robbed them of the fruits of their own labor. Section five (*§7.5)* explains how this discursive shift aligned with emergence of a new racial capitalist regime. In short, a regime in which the colonial state defended the interest of private business and rebranded the colony as a sales market for Dutch industrial production. In this economic context, the native was no longer excluded from White economy but, instead, demanded to assimilate.

7.1 Politicizing Laziness, Debating Economic Reform in the Indies

Although many liberals of different standing criticized the classic version of the stereotype after Van Hogendorp and Raffles did around 1800 and 1810, it was not until the 1860s that the trope started to be discussed and disputed more regularly. Not only liberal newspapers and magazines like *De Gids* and *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* started to challenge the racial naturalist version of the stereotype more frequently, also civil society organizations like The Indies Society (het *Indisch Genootschap*) and The Society for Public Welfare of the Javanese (*Maatschappij tot Nut van den Javaan*) were committed to debunking the myth.[195] This latter organization, which was founded by the colonial physician Willem Bosch (1798-1874) in 1866, organized public lectures, debates and meetings all around the Netherlands in order to educate

[195] For instance, see: P.J. Veth, "De cultuur-wet", *De Gids* 30 (1866): 277; Willem Bosch, "De Vrije en Gedwongen Arbeid der Javanen feitelijk toegelicht", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 20, no. 11 (1858): 273-352.

the wider public about the malpractices of the Dutch colonial government.[196] At these events, invited speakers often pointed at the inaccuracy of the slur and explained what political purpose it served in relation to legitimizing forced labor.[197]

The main cause of the increasing debate about the idea of lazy natives was the arrival of what came to be known as "the colonial question" (*de koloniale kwestie*): the political dispute on the future of the Cultivation System between the liberals and conservative bloc. Although both parties lacked a definite political vision on the future of Dutch colonial rule, liberals favored the reform or even abolishment of the Cultivation System while conservatives defended it frantically. For liberals, the state-led cultivation system was at odds with their laissez-faire ideology of free trade and noninterference and represented a highly repressive model of colonialism they no longer wanted to be associated with.

Albeit phrased in this idealistic language, Willem Wertheim pointed out that the liberal reform agenda was, in fact, strongly informed by the material interests of Dutch private capital.[198] In this period, the revenues the Dutch state extracted from the Cultivation System were, after all, unprecedented and increasing annually. To illustrate, the sales of coffee and sugar alone, yielded 459 million guilder in the period 1851-1860 and 612 million guilder in the period 1861-1870 for the Dutch Treasury. This enormous revenue stood in stark contrast with the returns the private sector on Java realized. Although running a private business within or outside the institutional structure of the Cultivation System was not impossible, getting access to cheap land and labor posed challenges, particularly for the those capitalists working outside the system.[199] Consequently, for all cash crop production combined, the sales levels of private business were estimated at "only" 71 million guilder in 1851-1860 and 127 million guilder in 1861-1870.[200]

Conservatives, on the contrary, emphasized the administrative sophistication, effectivity and financial profitability of the Cultivation System, as demonstrated by the enormous governmental "colonial surplus" (*het batig slot*) flowing into the State's Budget annually.[201]

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[196] Maartje, J. Janse, De Geschiedenis van de 'Maatschappij tot Nut van Den Javaan" *Utrechtse Historische Cahiers* 20, no. 3/4 (1999) 9, 30, 33.
[197] "Een Rotterdamsche Meeting, " *Java-bode : Nieuws, Handels- en Advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie,* December 31, 1869; "Zwolle, 12 December, " *Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zwolsche Courant : Staats-, Handels-, Nieuws- en Advertentieblad,* December 13, 1867.
[198] Willem F. Wertheim cited in Cees Fasseur, "Purse or principle," 34
[199] Knight, "Peasant Labour and Capitalist Production," 250.
[200] Alex Gordon, "Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics: Calculating the Size of Indonesia's Colonial Surplus in the Cultivation System, 1831–1877," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38, no. 5 (2010): 775
[201] Gordon, "Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics," 759-84.

To defend the system of forced cultivation, they voiced concerns during political debates and in the media about whether the "lazy" Javanese would still be willing to work at the Dutch plantations or sugar mills if there were no longer forced to do so. Usually, conservatives simply reiterated the racial naturalist line of argumentation which asserted that Javanese's alleged laziness was imagined as a stable character trait informed by environmental conditions or long held Eastern traditions. Particularly, the conservative Ministers of the Colonies Jan Rochussen (1797-1871) and Johannes Hasselman (1815-1895) repeatedly invoked the trope and stubbornly defended its reliability against any criticism. [202] In a debate about the future of the Cultivation System held in the Second Chamber in 1868, Hasselman, for instance, stated:

> One tends to lose sight (it happens! too often) on the fact that we are talking about a land and climate that does not demand disciplined labor: on the contrary, it invites relaxation and indolence, and to not carry out more work than minimally required to satisfy ones needs. [203]

Akin to Van Den Bosch's position of several decades earlier (see *§6.3*), Hasselman continued this climate-deterministic line of reasoning to explain why the Dutch, in contrast to the Javanese, had turned into diligence nation. He wrote:

> When living on a land that does not yield anything for several months a year, one is forced to become economical. The Easterner does not live under such conditions. What is acquired with great effort and toil in here, admittedly supported by the Westerners' physique and superior muscle power, is unimaginable yonder. In that context, nature simply yields so much that people can afford to remain unemployed, as nothing incites or encourages them to become industriousness. [204]

Most liberals, however, became increasingly critical of this version of the stereotype and started to pay more attention to the socio-economic sources of Javanese's ostensible lack of work discipline. Depicting the racial narrative as a "hackneyed jingle against free labor", they argued that it could no longer function as a persuasive justification for the Cultivation System as it

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[202] see e.g. Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1860-1861, 45; Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1865-1866, 55; Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1867-1868, 22, 228

[203] Translate from original Dutch: "Men verlieze toch vooral niet uit het oog ('t gebeurt helaas! te dikwijls) dat men hier staat tegenover een land en een klimaat, dat niet tot arbeid noopt: dat integendeel, eer geneigd maakt om rust te genieten, indolent te wezen en niet meer te doen dan datgene wat de geringe behoefte vorderen" Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1867-1868, 22, 228

[204]Translated from original dutch: "In een land toch, dat gedurende eenige maanden van het jaar weinig of niets oplevert, is men wel gedwongen in meerdere of mindere mate spaarzaamheid te betrachten. De Oosterling verkeert niet in dien toestand. Wat hier met moeite en inspanning wordt verkregen, en waartoe ook de ligchaamsbouw van den Westerling en zijne meerdere spierkracht medewerkt, daarvan heeft men ginds geen denkbeeld. De natuur geeft dáár zooveel om niet […] dat de mensch er als 't ware in den regel werkeloos kan blijven en er weinig is dat hem tot arbeidzaamheid opwerkt en aanspoort," Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1867-1868, 22.

represented an outdated model of colonialism they were eager to move away from.[205] Within the liberal camp, however, three subgroups could be identified, all criticizing the racial naturalist variant of the stereotype on different grounds.[206]

7.2 Laziness as the Logical Outcome of Design Flaws in the System

A first group, stated that Javanese's laziness was not inborn but caused by design flaws in the Cultivation System itself. They stated that because the maximization of work effort did not automatically benefit the native personally, the system encouraged indolence instead of discipline. In the sugar industry, for instance, peasant's work effort was more or less disconnected from agricultural wage rates (*planterslonen)*. This was because agricultural wage rates were calculated after the sugar cane was processed and estimates could be made about the total sugar production− usually sixteen months after the planting started. This not only meant that the peasant wage rates were partly dependent on the skills and the machinery of the factory owners processing the cane, but also made it hard to determine which individuals had been responsible for the cultivation of the land.[207] Moreover, the fact that actual agricultural wage rates were not related to the productivity levels of the individual farmer but based on the total agricultural yield per village (*desa),* disconnected work effort from material compensation even further. During a debate, the liberal Member of Parliament Charles Mirandolle (1827-1884), for instance, explained:

> As the remuneration was allocated over the total production, it would happen that pay levels between two peasants were the same, even though one planter cultivated his land with diligence and devotion, thus achieving high production levels, while his neighbor had scamped his work, yielding little to no harvest at all. In other words, lazy behavior was rewarded with a bonus, at the expense of those who performed their work with diligence and devotion.[208]

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[205] De Vischerijen in Indië", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 22, no.3 (1860): 12; "Maandelijks overzigt der Indische Letterkunde, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 19, no. 9(1857): 176; "Kolonie en Moederland", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 4, no. 4 (1866): 325

[206] It should be noted that some authors did not fit these neat categories and levelled critique on different grounds at the same time.

[207] Cees Fasseur, "Organisatie en sociaal-economische betekenis van de gouvernementssuikerkultuur in enkele residenties op Java omstreeks 1850," *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde, Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 133, no. 2-3 (1977): 289; Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1869-1870, 101, 1551.

[208] Translated from original Dutch: "zo gebeurde het, als een planter ijverig en vlijtig zijn grond bebouwd had en dus een hooge productie verkreeg, terwijl zijn, terwijl zijn buurman het werk had laten verloopen en dus weinig of geen productie had, de betaling echter werd omgeslagen over de ggeheele productie, en zoo ontvingen beide gelijke betaling; zoodat er zoodoende eene premie gegeven werd aan de luiheid, ten koste van hem die ijverig en naarstig zijn werk had verrigt." Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1869-1870, 101, 1551.

Similar design flaws were identified in relation to the compulsory labor service (*herendiensten)* i.e. the colonial tax system which obliged agricultural population without land to perform at least 66 days of compulsory labor a year. Instead of developing a tax basis that rewarded work effort, this system defined tax rates in a set number of compulsory work days. Willem Bosch, the founder of The Society for Public Welfare of the Javanese, for instance, explained how these ground rules incentivized laziness instead of discipline.

> The system does not differentiate between the diligent and the sloth, the well-intentioned and the rascals, the intelligent and skillful and the worthless. In measuring compulsory labor in terms of *time,* every worker is treated as an equal while, in reality, they are not: the time of the former is precious, while the time of the latter is of little value. Natives do not have to deliver the same amount of labor output (i.e. harvest) to the state, but the same amount of labor *time*. Whereas the former contributes significantly to wealth accumulation and development, the latter does not contribute much at all.[209]

7.3 Debunking the Myth with Empirical Evidence

A second group, largely consisting of people that used to reside in the Indies, attempted to establish the falsity of the stereotype on factual grounds. They reproached conservatives for parroting one another without seriously looking into the "factual circumstances" in the archipelago, or observing Javanese's work ethic first hand.[210] The conservative reluctance to let go of the idea that the Javanese displayed a natural tendency for indolence stemmed, in their view, from a place of ignorance: a deliberate state of unawareness about facts or realities that do not work in one's advantage. Addressing this audience, the *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie,* for instance, wrote in 1861:

> Our opponents always claim that the Javanese is indolent. The hackneyed jingle against free labor, put forward by those with little to no expertise on the topic. Even if he has not read a book about the Indies or maybe even does not know what the Dutch East-Indies actually are, he still insists: the Javanese people are lazy; if their one day's wage provides them with enough foodstuffs for three

[209] Translated from original Dutch: "het stelsel maakt geen onderscheid tusschen den ijverige en den luiaard, den welwillende en den kwalijkgezinde, den *intelligente* en bedrevene en den onbruikbare. Allen worden gelijk gesteld in het verlies *van tijd,* die voor den eenen kostbaar is, voor den anderen weinig waarde heeft; allen moeten *niet* dezelfde hoeveelheid arbeid (produkt) aan den staat leveren, maar wel denzelfden *tijd,* hetzelfde *getal* dagen, waardoor de eerstgenoemden onschatbaar veel aan welvaart en ontwikkeling derven, de laatsten echter zeer weinig". Bosch, "De Vrije en Gedwongen Arbeid der Javanen feitelijk toegelicht", 309

[210] "Maandelijksch Overzicht der Indische Letterkunde", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 21, no. 3 (1859): 203. Also, see: "De Zwanenzang van de Conservatieve Koloniale Politiek", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie 2, no. 4 (1868), 296*; "Maandelijksch Overzicht der Indische Letterkunde", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 19, no. 9 (1857): 176

> days, the Javanese will lay on their backs and refuse to work the remaining two days. They just parrot one another and hold on to this false idea mindlessly.[211]

To contradict this position, this group pointed at historical and socio-economic realities that would not have been possible if the premise "the Javanese are lazy" held true. Put differently, they used the counterfactual to prove the conservative position as wrong. Many, for instance, considered it rather ridiculous to depict the Javanese as lazy, given the enormous colonial surplus the Dutch state extracted from their hard labor annually. Others highlighted the fact that this same "lazy" Javanese had founded "empires" in the period that preceded Dutch rule "of which we could still behold the remnants in awe."[212] However, the most popular rhetorical move was to point out that the Javanese were already working under conditions of free labor in several sectors of the colony. This strategy not only allowed them to debunk the idea that Javanese would never work in the absence of force but also show the benefits of this type of labor and push for its further implementation in the archipelago. In the many publications, news articles and political debates on the topic of the "colonial question" references were, for instance, made to the successful implementation of free labor in the fishing industry (colony-wide),[213] the sugar industry (Tuban),[214] the tobacco industry (Sembang, Kediri and Rembang, Java),[215] the weapons industry (Surabaya, Java),[216] the transportation industry (colony-wide),[217] and the infrastructure sector (Garut, Java).[218] The devoted and diligent manner in which the Javanese cultivated their rice fields (*paddies*) was, moreover, also an object of liberals' admiration and weaponized as proof against the racial naturalist version of the trope.[219]

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[211] Translated from original Dutch: "Onze tegenstanders beweren altijd dat de Javaan Indolent is. Het oude afgezaande referijn tegen vrijen arbeid, dat de minst deskundige ons voorhoudt, zelf dan, wanneer hij nooit een werk over Indië heeft gelezen, misschien zelf niet weet, wat eigenlijk Nederlandsch-Indië is, bestaat daarin, dat men ons toevoegt: de Javaan zijn zo lui; wanneer zij zoo veel in een dag kunnen verdienen, als zij in drie dagen noodig hebben, dan liggen zij de twee volgende dagen op den rug en willen niet werken. De een praat de ander na, en wil het goed geloof volhouden", "De Visscherijen in Indië", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 22, no.3 (1860): 12.

[212] "Maandelijks overzigt der Indische Letterkunde", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie 19*, no 9 (1857): 176. Also, see: "Koloniale Beschouwingen", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie 1, no 1(1872):* 60;

[213] "De Visscherijen in Indië", 12

[214] J. De Mol van Otterloo, *De Vrije Arbeid te Rembang and Kedirie – Getoets Aan de Waarheid* (Utrecht: Kemink and Zoon, 1859) 13

[215] Van Otterloo, *De Vrije Arbeid te Rembang and Kedirie,* 6, 13; "Een Paar Voorbeelden", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 2, no. 4, (1868): 309; "Maandelijks overzigt der Indische letterkunde", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 19, no. 9, (1857): 176

[216] Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1862-1863, 73, 817

[217] "Wat is Waarheid? – Vrije Arbeid Blijkens Officiële Stukken", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 21, no. 3(1859): 215.

[218] J.P. de Bordes, *De Spoorweg – Samarang-Vorstenland* (Den Haag: De Gebroeders van Cleef, 1970) 101

[219] Report of the Proceedings of Upper House of the General Assembly 1862-1863, 73, p. 817; "Wat is Waarheid?, 216-217

In attempts to persuade their conservative audience, these liberals often emphasized that free labor would even boost, instead of decrease productivity levels.[220] In his publications *De Vrije Arbeid te Rembang and Kedirie* (1859) the former tobacco planter J. De Mol van Otterloo, for instance, explained that state recruited forced laborers with time-wages and free laborers working on a piece-wage basis had worked side by side on his plantation in the period between 1850 and 1853. Although the free laborers earned a higher wage, their productivity level was also higher, as their piece wages incentivized them to maximize work effort. In the end, free laborers were therefore still "cheaper" than their forced counterparts who "idled continuously".[221] Building on extensive numerical analysis, some laborious liberals even attempted to unequivocally "prove" that free labor was more efficient than forced labor. Willem Bosch, for instance, estimated that free labor could multiply labor productivity up to 25 times, thereby prefiguring the Frederick Taylor's principles of Scientific Management of some decades later. [222]

7.4 Forced labor as the Historical Suspension of Capitalist Subjectivity

A third and most critical group related Javanese's laziness to the repressive nature of the cultivation system itself, thereby echoing Hogendorp's position of some decades earlier. They argued that the natives' lack of discipline was not induced by a set of small design flaws that had crept into the system – as the first group did – but, instead, the consequence of the coercive and exploitative logic of the Cultivation System itself. Their commentary targeted three components of the labor regime in particular: the unfree nature of cultivation work, the low or non-existing wages and the impossibility for Javanese to accumulate wealth.

The forced nature of the work, to start with their first point, would negatively affect Javanese's work ethic simply because this robbed them from their individual conduct and human agency. Instead of evoking an intrinsic motivation for work within the natives themselves, work effort was imposed by a foreign power and from above: a state of affairs the Javanese could derive "no pleasure" from whatsoever.[223] Second, because natives' hard work paid extremely bad or was not financially compensated at all, these liberals argued that the wage could not function

[220] "Koloniale Beschouwingen," 60; H.J. Lion "Onderzoek naar den Vrijen Arbeid, in verband met een onderzoek naar de mogelijkheid, om het kultuur- of dangstelsel op Javan door vrije arbeid te vervangen", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 16, no.7 (1864): 5
[221] Van Otterloo, *De Vrije Arbeid te Rembang and Kedirie,* 13
[222] Bosch, "De Vrije en Gedwongen Arbeid der Javanen feitelijk toegelicht", 297
[223] "De luiheid der Javanen", *De Locomotief : Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad,* August 21, 1858

as an economic incentive boosting productivity levels.[224] To put it in formal terms, the cultivation system was, in their view, not successful in balancing workers' "wage-effort" calculation - i.e. the amount of effort Javanese agricultural workers were willing to exert in exchange for a certain amount of wage.[225] This position contrasted with those actors pointing at the design flaws in the system, as it did not just consider existing pay rates insufficiently tied to individual productivity, but regarded the monetary compensation too low to function as an work incentive in the first place. Lastly, because Javanese lacked investment opportunities, they could only consume their wage and not repurpose it for wealth accumulation. In this respect, the long-grown practice of communal land ownership was considered to be the main culprit, as privatized agricultural land would provide an easy investment outlet for a populations largely consisting of poor peasants. "Whereas privatized land galvanizes industriousness in people, communal land usage will always be an obstacle to this" a member of the East-Indies Society (*Indisch Genootschap*), for instance, proclaimed during their general meetings of 1862.[226]

This third group thus emphasized that the Cultivation System had done the exact opposite of what it was designed to do when founded by Van den Boch. Instead of elevating the native and spreading bourgeois virtues of hard work and diligence across the archipelago, it had only hampered Javanese's "material" and "intellectual" development and stimulated laziness. [227] Because of to the unfree and exploitative nature of the labor regime, the Javanese had failed to cultivate a desire for material improvement and a longing for wealth maximization – a work culture that western workers, presumably, had acquired already. To substantiate this points, one Dutch contemporary, for instance, compared the lack of material needs of the Javanese with a similar lack of needs of his Batavian forefathers living between the first century BC to the third century AD. He wrote:

> However, it is not always remembered that this was the same for all peoples in the infantile stage of civilization. Also our forefathers, the Batavians, how little did they need! And look at their offspring now, their needs and desires advanced significantly! Nations that do not remain stationary in their civilization and

[224] "De Tabakscultuur en de Vrije Arbeid," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 19, no. 5 (1857): 558.
[225] Chris Smith, "The double indeterminacy of labour power: labour effort and labour mobility." *Work, employment and society* 20, no. 2 (2006): 390
[226] "Indisch Genootschap – Algemene Vergadering van Vrijdag 28 November 1862," De Oostpost: Letterkundig, Wetenschappelijk en Commercieel Nieuws- en Advertentieblad, March 5, 1863.
[227] Bosch, "De Vrije en Gedwongen Arbeid der Javanen feitelijk toegelicht", 332

> prosperity, will at some point experience a rise in material needs. As soon as the Javanese will start to obtain possessions, they developed these needs as well.[228]

As becomes clear, in this version of the stereotype, Javanese's alleged laziness was thus not naturalized by its connection to environmental circumstances, but instead traced to the relative degree of economic civilization of the Javanese people– a type of racial argumentation Goldberg calls "racial historicism" [229] In this racial narrative, Java's economic history was imagined as a linear process implicitly gravitating towards the western capitalist teleology. The fact that the Javanese people had "not yet" developed a disciplined work culture located them – rather literally – backward in time. In a sense, the Javanese alleged idleness placed them in what Dipesh Chakrabarty terms the "imaginary waiting room" of history: not yet modern, not yet capitalist, not yet disciplined. [230]

The solution this group presented was closely aligned to the policy proposals presented by preceding liberal colonial officials like Van Hogendorp and Raffles: the abolishment of trade restrictions and the expansion of free labor and private ownership of land. They asserted that if Javanese were able to cultivate crops of their own choosing, benefit from the fruits of their own labor and decide when and where to work themselves, they would start to show work discipline and develop material urges automatically. In other words, when the Javanese would get access to the economic privileges available to their European counterparts, it would not take long before they would catch up, assimilate and turn into a good White capitalist subjects themselves. Although usually framed as a solution to the native's deplorable socio-economic circumstances, moving towards a racial capitalist regime in which trade restrictions were lifted and more agricultural lands were enclosed would, of course, also benefit private business interests by allowing them to finally eat a bigger piece of the colonial pie. Combining this emancipatory narrative with a purely business rationale, The liberal Member of Parliament, Philip Bachiene, for instance, wrote after rejecting the idea that the Javanese had an in-built tendency for laziness:

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[228] Translated from original Dutch: "Men bedenkt daarbij echter niet altijd, dat het met alle volken, in de kinderheid der beschaving, even zoo is geweest. Ook onze stamvaders, de Batavieren, hoe weinig hadden zij noodig! en ziet heden hun nakroost, hoe ontelbaar veel zijn zijne behoeften niet! Zij ontstaan bij ieder volk, dat in beschaving en welvaart niet stationair blijft; zij zullen ook bij de Javanen ontstaan, zoodra dezen maar in het bezit der middelen komen, om er aan te voldoen," Bosch, "De Vrije en Gedwongen Arbeid der Javanen feitelijk toegelicht," 306.

[229] Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 46

[230] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference-New Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).10

> Give him [the Javanese] the assurance that whatever he produces and wins will not be taken from him, that he is the master of his own time and industry, that his wage level and the price of commodities are determined by the dynamics of the free market. In such a system, you will be guaranteed of huge agricultural yield in Java and Sumatra, increased trade with the motherland and a flourishing shipping industry […] [It will] incite new needs in the natives and, at the same time, provide them with the means to satisfy these needs.[231]

In sum, although the racial historicist argument may have been most explicit in this last group, all these liberals clearly attempted to move away from the racial naturalist version of the trope. Instead of arguing that the fertile soil or tropical climate had implanted the Javanese "race" with a natural proclivity for laziness, these liberal traced this behavior back to the socio-economic circumstances under which natives were expected to work (*group 1* and *group 3*) or debunk the truth value of the claim whatsoever (group 2). Around the 1860s, it was the racial historicist version of the narrative that rose in prominence and attained the most discursive power, eventually carving itself into colonial policies that made up the new racial capitalist regime. Before explaining this shift it is, however, necessary to briefly review the ideas of the notorious Dutch colonial critic and former Assistant Resident of Lebak (Java) Multatuli, as his opinions on the topic were, as usual, a thorn in the side of established opinions.

7.5 Multatuli: If the Javanese is Lazy, how to designate the Dutchman?

Mutatuli's ideas on the racial-economic trope of the lazy Javanese and its connection to free labor can be found in his essays: *Over Vryen-Arbeid in Nederlandsch-Indie* (On free labor in the Dutch East-Indies) published in 1862 and *Nog-eens: Vrye-Arbeid in Nederlandsch-Indie* (Once again: on free labor in the Dutch Eats-Indies) published in 1870.[232] In his satirical and erudite writing style, Multatuli argued that at the end of the day it did not matter much if the Javanese workforce was exposed to forced or free labor if the Dutch continued to systematically abuse, exploit and murder this group in their unremitting pursuits for colonial

[231] Translated from original Dutch: "Geeft hem [de Javaan] de zekerheid, dat hetgeen ieder voortbrengt en wint, hem door niemand ontnomen zal worden, dat een ieder meester zij van zijnen tijd en zijne nijverheid, dat het arbeidsloon en de prijs der koopwaren geregeld worden door vrije mededinging, en weest dan gerust van de toekomst over de voorbrenging van Java ,Sumatra etc, over de toekomst van de scheepvaart en den handel van het moederland. […] waar de beschaving nieuwe behoeften bij den inboorling in het leven zal roepen, en hun terzelfder tijd de middelen verschaffen, om in die behoefte te voorzien," Philip Bachiene contribution to the proceedings congress of the association for social science development of October 2, 1864, Amsterdam quoted in, "Internationaal Kongres te Amsterdam – Van Den 2nd Oktober 1864, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 4, no. 3 (1866): 268.

[232] Multatuli, *Over Vrijen Arbeid in Nederlandsch Indie* (fourth edition, Amsterdam: G.L. Funke, 1873, original published in 1862); Multatuli, *Nog-Eens: Vrye-Arbeid in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Delft: Waltman, 1870)

surplus. [233] Instead of being preoccupied by what he considered as false contradiction, Multatuli called the political elites, media and the Dutch nation at large to no longer ignore, or indeed actively cover-up, this open secret and take seriously article 55 of the Government Regulation (*Indisch Regeringsreglement*) ruling that the Javanese would be protected against power abuse of any form.

Power abuse was, after all, as prevalent among free-market capitalist who employing Javanese under conditions of free labor, as it was within the context of the state-led Cultivation System. He wrote:

> In the Indies, I have seen atrocities happing no matter the political color of the Governor-Generals in office, atrocities that that had nothing to do with the Cultivation system. In Lebak, for instance, there were famines every years and no Cultivation System. But also in other places in which natives are submitted to conditions of free labor […] their living conditions are far from enviable. [234]

Akin to Marx's critique of bourgeois notions of freedom, Multatuli took issue with the celebratory liberal narratives that portrayed free labor as the road towards the native's emancipation. To work under conditions of free labor, he insisted, should not be equated with working out of free will, especially not in colonial Java. Not only did Multatuli consider it "preposterous" to "dictate" Javanese's freedom via top-down colonial state legislation[235], he also explained that even if Javanese worked under conditions of formal freedom the European business elites would still use native regents as their mouthpiece and benefit from the possibilities they had to impose extra-economic control onto the locals.[236] By doing so, Multatuli responded to those contemporaries who had taken him as a supporter of free labor after reading his fierce critiques of the Cultivation System in *Max Havelaar* (1860).

His position on the alleged laziness of the Javense was, unsurprisingly, somewhat different from the one voiced by conservative and liberal voices discussed thus far. Instead of exploring empirical validity of the claim, or tracing Javanese's alleged laziness to their hampering economic civilization, Multatuli parodied the colonial narrative and exposed how it had helped to keep the Dutch system of exploitation in place – whether organized around conservative or

[233] Multatuli, *Over Vrijen Arbeid in Nederlandsch Indie*, 27.
[234] Translated from original Dutch: "Ik heb in Indie gruwelen gezien onder Gouverneurs-Generaal van allerlei kleur, gruwelen waarmee 't Kultuurstelsel niets te maken had. In Lebak byv. werkte geen Kultuurstelsel, en dáár was toch jaarlijks hongersnood. En ook elders is de toestand van de bevolking die overgeleverd wordt aan Vry-arbeiders […] verre van benydenswaardig", Multatuli, *Over Vrijen Arbeid in Nederlandsch Indie*, 27.
[235] Multatuli, *Over Vrijen Arbeid in Nederlandsch Indie*, 94
[236] Ibidem, 125

liberal principles. He cynically stated that under the pretext of elevating the native with Dutch "virtues", the Javanese had enjoyed the "pleasures of deprivation" and could finally "abjure" individual welfare, wealth and greediness, as these were simply unimageable under the current system. [237] In fact, if teaching the Javanese Dutch morality meant teaching them how to develop more material needs, Multatuli concluded that "one does not have to hurry much with its moral uplifting". [238] By reversing the roles between the Dutch and Javanese, he held up a mirror to his Dutch audience and intended to demonstrate how ludicrous complaints about the native's laziness actually were. He wrote:

> "Those who scold the Javanese for not answering sympathetically to the question: Javanese, I want coffee …should also be understood as unjust, as they tend to forget that they would respond way worse themselves if the Javanese would come to them to ask: 'Dutchman, I want cheese' ". [239]

In order words, Multatuli considered laziness the only legitimate response to a colonial capitalist system that was so extremely unjust and exploitative. Instead of expressing his views on the truth value of the allegation, his position on the topic was more agnostic. "Do not steal from the Javanese, do not loot his possessions, do not kill him….then we will know in due time if he is willing to work voluntarily", he stated fiercely. [240] In other words, in a context were the combined forced of colonialism and capitalism made life almost impossible, Multatuli considered accusing the Javanese of being lazy as a red herring for the more pressing political issues at stake. Although he was clearly ahead of this time with these critiques, an independent Indonesia was, even for Multatuli, still a bridge too far.

7.5 Working towards a New Racial Capitalist Regime

After an erratic political process and three failed bills, under the liberal Minister of Colonial Affairs Engelbertus de Waal (1821-1905) the "colonial question" was finally resolved with the approval of the Agrarian Law (1870) and The Sugar Law (1870). Although these pieces of legislation were les far-reaching than the proposals of de Waal's predecessor Fransen van de Putte (1822-1902), they did reflect the liberal solution and the racial historicist version of the stereotype connected to it.

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[237] Multatuli, Over Vrijen Arbeid in Nederlandsch Indie, 111
[238] Multatuli, *Nog-Eens: Vrye-Arbeid in Nederlandsch-Indië, 52*
[239] Translated from original Dutch: "[W]ie 't kwalyk neemt dat de Javaan niet antwoordt op de vraag: Javaan, ik wil koffi…is óók onrechtvaardig, en vergeet dat hyzelf ergers zou doen dan niet-antwoorden, wanneer die Javaan hem kwam zeggen: 'Hollander, i wil kaas.' " Multatuli, *Over Vrijen Arbeid in Nederlandsch Indie*, 108
[240] Ibidem, 1

The Agrarian Law (1870) opened the door to foreign investment by allowing private business to lease uncultivated waste lands from the colonial sate – the so-called "free zones". In its rhetoric, the law was supposed to "protect" the natives against the greediness of foreign capital and allow them to benefit personally from the land over which they held claims –the supposed solution against their laziness. For instance, the law formalized that native landowners could lease their cultivated lands to non-natives and ruled that indigenous lands could not be sold to non-natives (*Grondvervreemingsverbod*). It even ruled that, under certain conditions, indigenous landholders could obtain western rights of ownership to their land. In practice, however, many of these protections remained merely a paper reality and did not sufficiently shield the native landowner against the economic pressure of foreign capital – an ambition that did not seem to have been the central purpose of the law in the first place. [241]

The Sugar Law (1870), in turn, organized the gradual dissolution of government sugar cultivation. More specifically, it ruled that that free planting of sugar cane was to be gradually introduced after 1879 and stipulated that all government sugar cultivation should be terminated before 1890. [242]At least on Java, this law fitted a longer trend in which the mobilization and management of labor was no longer primarily secured via extra-economic means but increasingly also via purely economic ones – i.e. a situation in which labor no longer has access to communal farm land and is required sell their labor power in order to survive.[243] In 1866, for instance, Minister van de Putte had already tried to abolish the much hated pancèn services (*heerendiensten*) locals were expected to carry out for their native chiefs – a measure that eventually materialized in 1882 as the Second Chamber initially did not consent. [244] In 1865, similarly, he formally ended the widespread penal practice of flogging as a form of punishment often inflicted upon the "lazy" Javanese that tried to withdraw themselves from the forced labor service. Breman reminds us that it should come as no surprise that the expansion of free labor and reduction of extra-economic force coincided with a state-sanctioned process of corporate land enclosure on Java. After all, the more waste came in the hands of western planters, the easier it would be to prevent massive desertion of labor. [245]

[241] In the sugar industry, for instance, lease arrangement were rarely registered officially and usually organized between planters and dessa heads instead of small landowners. Moreover, as from 1899 onwards the government only licensed one mill per given area, the competition over land disappeared, in turn, allowing mill owners to fix lease levels far below their market price. Gordon, "The agrarian question," 11-13
[242] Fasseur, "Purse or principle" 40
[243] Ibidem, 47
[244] Ibidem, 48
[245] Breman, *Mobilizing labour for the global coffee market*, 201

Granting the Javanese access to economic privileges like free labor and an expanded authority over their agricultural land, these two laws were pictured as the native's first step towards good capitalist subjectivity. However, emerging under this liberatory veil, was a new regime of racial capitalism characterized by free trade, privatized land and labor exploitation by private businesses. Unsurprisingly, private sector dividends rose exponentially in the period after 1870. According to Alec Gordon's estimates, for instance, private dividends rose from 181 million guilders in the period 1880-1889 to 591 million guilders in the period 1900-1909. [246] In other words, as Multatuli already predicted, it was not the native who benefitted financially from the policy reforms but just another agent of capital – i.e. the Western private sector on Java.

With the *Ethische Politiek* (Ethical Policy) of 1901, the new racial capitalist regime came full circle. A feeling had crept upon the Dutch that after centuries of colonial exploitation they had developed a financial and moral obligation to give something back to the Indonesian people. Expressed as an *eereschuld* (debt of honour), the Dutch started to invest money in infrastructure and healthcare to boost economic development in the archipelago and introduce liberal institutions like the rule of law and credit cooperations.[247] In line with this, was the idea that the Dutch had a historical duty to "nurture, tutor, and instruct" the backward Indonesians towards "maturity".[248] In relation to the Javanese' work culture, this meant inciting the native with work-discipline, economic drive and a sense of entrepreneurship via colonial policy. In contrast to the policies of 1870, active nurturing and state intervention was considered necessary to reach this goal− a discourse that had emerged in relation to idle White pauper almost a century earlier (see §5.4).

Contemporary historiography shows, however, that beneath this emancipatory rhetoric lay, again, commercial interests.[249] In the new racial capitalist regime, the Indies were no longer solely imagined as a plantation colony for cheap cash crop production but increasingly used as a sales market for Dutch industrial commodities such as cotton. Illustrative, for instance, was that an actor like the Dutch chamber of commerce had also pressed the view of the declining

[246] Alec Gordon, "A Last Word: Amendments and Corrections to Indonesia's Colonial Surplus 1880-1939," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 3 (2018): 513

[247] Robert Cribb, "Development policy in the early 20th century" in Jan Paul Dirkse, Frans Mario Rutten eds, *Development and Social Welfare: Indonesia's Experience under the New Order* (Leiden: KITLV, 1993) 227-28, 236-239

[248] *Frances Gouda, Dutch Culture Overseas – Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995) 5; Cribb, "Development policy in the early 20th century", 225-226.

[249] Cribb, "Development policy in the early 20th century," 226

welfare in the Indies.[250] Higher wage levels in the Indies would, after all, benefit sales of Dutch industry. Unsurprisingly, furthering industrialization on Java did not figure prominently in the Ethical Policy, as local production could have replaced the consumption of product shipped overseas. [251] To sum up, with the emergence of the Ethical Policy, the assimilation of the native had come full-circle. Not only were the native supposed to act like a disciplined free laborer who would continue their work after direct needs were met, they were also expected to take on the role of modern consumer.

Ironically, when around 1914 it became clear that the ambitious Ethical Policy failed to have the desired effect and barely contributed to the economic development in the archipelago, it was not the underlying commercial rationale focused on the interest of private business but the alleged laziness of the native that was being blamed. In the eyes of the *Commissie Mindere Welvaart* (Commission Stagnating Welfare), it was because the Javanese lacked "economic needs" and "self-confidence" and acted overly submissive when interacting with "stronger races", that the policy had failed to bring about the desired result. [252] What kind of racial argumentation this narrative drew on and whether it inaugurated yet another racial capitalist regime shift are questions that reach beyond the scope of this thesis and should be taken up in future research.

Conclusion

This chapter showed how the discursive figure of the lazy Javanese changed in nature in the second half of the nineteenth century. Increasingly, Javanese alleged laziness was no longer imagined as an innate character trait connected to environmental conditions but connected to socio-historical circumstances under which they were ought to work. Most prominent, was the assertion that Javanese had not yet developed the materialist urges associated with industrial capitalism exactly because the Cultivation System (1830-1870) had always robbed them of the fruits of their own labor - a type of racial argumentation Goldberg calls "racial historicism". Instead of merely describing this discursive shift, this chapter also explained that these new understandings aligned with the shift towards a new racial capitalist regime in which private

[250] Frans Hüsken, "Declining welfare in java – Government and private inquiries, 1903-1914," in Robert Cribb (ed), The late colonial state in Indonesia – Political and economic foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942 (Leiden: KITLV, 1994) 217
[251] Cribb, "Development policy in the early 20th century," 240
[252] Commissie Steinmetz, *Onderzoek Naar de Minder Welvaart der Inlandsche Bevolking op Java En Madoera – XII Oorzaken der Minder Welvaart* (Batavia: Drukkerij G. KOLF & Co, 1914), 2.

business were getting free reign and the colony was reimagined as a sales market for Dutch industrial goods. In this economic context, the native was no longer excluded from capitalist subjectivity but expected to assimilate into it – i.e. selling their labor power voluntarily, leasing their land to private capital and consuming Dutch industrial commodities.

8. Conclusion

This thesis traced the transformation of the discursive figure of the lazy Javanese across two regimes of racial capitalism. It examined how this discourse changed and what role(s) in played in legitimizing economic colonial policy in the period between 1800 and 1901. To provide an answer to this question, I did not limit myself to a single site or specific genre of sources, but instead sharpened my historical gaze more flexibly to those locations and documents in which the trope appeared and was of political significance.

Chapter two, three and four spelled out the analytical and theoretical strategy of this study. In short, it was my ambition to trace the transformation of racialized discourses around work and rest without losing sight of the historical-materialist context in which they emerged. To do this, I drew on racial capitalism theory: a strand of contemporary Marxist thinking sensitive to both topics. However, theories on racial capitalism conceptualize the relation between "race" and capitalism in two different ways. The first strand insists that racial capitalism facilitates processes of racialized differentiation by redirecting the inequalities it produces to racist fictions of embodied otherness, such as those related to laziness. The second strand, contrarily, assumes that capitalism not only produces differences but also erases them. In its annexation of non-capitalist outsides, capitalism replaces indigenous economic practice with ones more "legible" in terms of capital, hence imagining natives workers as White capitalist subjects in the making. Echoing the position of Shiri Pasternak, I solved this theoretical conundrum by conceiving of racial capitalism as a more flexible economic constellation in which the logics of differentiation and assimilation alternate depending on the interests of capital.

Chapter five, six and seven presented my empirical findings. Chapter five explored discourses about the idle poor by analyzing protestant dogmas, economic theory and poverty relief policies in the context of the Netherlands. This chapters argues that at the turn of the eighteenth century, ideas about the causes *of* and solutions *for* the poor's alleged lack of work discipline started to diverge from the way Javanese's alleged laziness was perceived, thereby constructing the former as White and the latter as colored. Figures like Johannes van den Bosch and Hendrik Willem Tydeman understood the poor's idling lifestyle as a social anomaly, which was, at least partly, caused by macro-economic forces outside their own control. In contrast to the lazy natives, the domestic poor were not born lazy but reluctantly drawn to it since work was simply unavailable to them. They was pitied, considered in need, and constructed as deserving of social investment and state paternalism which would teach them how to become disciplined.

Chapter six and seven, in turn, moved my discussion to the context of Java and the Dutch East-Indies more generally, thereby drawing on analyses of colonial labor policies, political debates, books, opinion magazines and newspaper articles. The chapters showed that the figure of the lazy Javanese knew two discursive renderings that drew on different types of racial argumentation: racial naturalism and racial historicism. In the first version, popular from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, the Javanese lack of work discipline was naturalized and portrayed as an inborn and somewhat stable character trait of "races" close to the Equator. In this racial narrative, the tropical climate and the fertile soil had ingrained the Javanese "race" with a tendency for laziness, as it made hard work challenging and not necessary for personal survival. Although the second version was already in circulation, it only gained in prominence once the future of the Cultivation System was put under pressure in the 1860s. In this second version of the trope, laziness was not naturalized but historicized. In short, this meant that Javanese alleged laziness was perceived as resulting from a lack of economic civilization on the island. In fact, it stated that because the Dutch had robbed the Javanese from the fruits of their labor for so long, the Javanese had failed to cultivate a desire for material improvement and wealth maximization − a character trait the "superior" White Europeans had already obtained.

These two chapters did not only describe this discursive change but also placed it against the background of the racial capitalist regime shift on Java that occurred more or less in tandem. The first racial capitalist regime, emerging around the turn of the eighteenth century, revolved around a strong colonial state, monopolized cash crop production and forced labor − i.e. the Cultivation System (1830-1870). In this regime, the native's exclusion from the White economy had to be justified. Constructing Javanese alleged laziness as innate and thus difficult to change served this end, as this rendered them unsuitable to work under conditions of free labor. The implementation of the Agriculture Law (1870) and Sugar Law (1870) inaugurated the second racial capitalist regime. In this regime, commodity trade was liberalized and private capital's access to cheap land and labor drastically expanded. The native was no longer excluded but, instead, commanded to assimilate by taking on the role of free laborer, small agricultural landlord and consumer, of course serving the interests of private capital while doing so. Constructing Javanese alleged laziness as temporal and informed by their backward economic civilization served this end. These findings contribute to the historiography on the racial-economic trope of the lazy natives and theories on racial capitalism in the following four ways:

First, this study nuances existing empirical research on the discursive figure of the lazy native by revealing that in the context of colonial Java, this figure knew two main renderings that drew on different types of racial argumentation – an distinction largely ignored in the international historiography on the topic. My findings, moreover, showed that in the context of Dutch colonialism, these different understandings were the object of heated discussions and political disputes. How Dutch colonial officials, politicians or public intellectuals explained Javanese alleged laziness had, after all, direct implications for what kind of colonial economic policies they considered desirable. Echoing Ann Stoler's ideas, my thesis thus invites social scientists and historians to no longer talk about *the* "myth" of the lazy native – as if there was only one and the colonial reason producing it spoke with one voice – but to become more specific in their historical descriptions of this stereotype and the economic policies connected to it. [253]

Second, this thesis broadened the historiography on the idea of laziness by analyzing discursive constructions of the idle poor (metropole) and the lazy Javanese (colony) within "a single analytical field" [254] Comparing the circulation of these two stereotypes in the different writings of Van den Bosch allowed me to render visible the class-stigmatized but racially-privileged figure of the idle White poor – a subject position that could not have been studied if "race" and class would have been explored in isolation. As already reiterated in this conclusion, in imagining the domestic poor as not solely responsible for their own moral failures and as deserving of state intervention, Van den Bosch constructed them as White. This, of course, in contrast to the Javanese, who's innate laziness could never be exorcised completely. Contrary to Albert Schrauwer's argument, this finding gestures to the existence of a clear racial color line in Van den Bosch's writings on domestic and international colonialism instead of a sense of continuity. [255]

Third, this thesis contributes to racial capitalism theory by showing that the economic shifts in racial capitalist regime coincided with a discursive shift in how the native workforce of colonial Java was constructed as Other. This finding not only confirms recent reservation of Black Marxists like Shiri Pasternak and Jacky Wang to conceive of racial capitalism as a transhistorical totality, but also extends these critiques by pointing at the interrelation between racial capitalism's economic regimes and racialized ideologies about labor productivity. [256]

[253] Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, 1; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 51
[254] Cooper and Soler, *Tensions of Empire*, 4
[255] Albert, Schrauwers, "The "Benevolent" Colonies of Johannes van den Bosch,"323
[256] Wang, *Carceral Capitalism*, 101; Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism, 301*

Comparative historical research is, however, needed to further explore and theorize this seeming alignment between racial economic regimes and racialized ideology. Should we, for instance, understand this connection as a historical coincidence or as a logical necessity? Put differently, does every racial capitalist regime produce an racialized subject suited to serve the interest of capital or does racial ideology operate relatively autonomously from the economic sphere?

Fourth, this thesis expands the scope of racial capitalist theory dealing with Empire by pointing out that racial ideas did not only mark the boundaries between free and forced labor, but were invoked to defend all sorts of economic privileges and inequalities. As Dutch colonial official insisted that the Javanese would not respond to "normal" economic incentives or continue food production after direct needs were met, implied that awarding them good pay or a private plot of land would only be a waste of financial or natural resources. This finding invites scholars of colonial racial capitalism to decenter the discussions about labor and shift attention to the racialized ideologies surrounding economic institutions, such as land ownership, debt and consumption – questions theorists of neoliberal racial capitalism have already taken up with great zeal. [257]

[257] For instance, see: Paula Chakravartty and Denise Ferreira Da Silva. "Accumulation, dispossession, and debt: The racial logic of global capitalism—an introduction." *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2012): 361-385.

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