Moluccas in the Museum: Museological Representation of the Moluccans and the Role of Colonial History and Community Inclusion

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Introduction

The current – anno 2023 – permanent Moluccas exhibition of the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden (National Museum of Ethnology), today part of the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), presents a pre-independence cultural-historical perspective on Moluccan heritage. Acknowledgment and representation have been matters of great importance and struggle for the Moluccan community since their arrival in The Netherlands in 1951. The Moluks Historisch Museum (Moluccan History Museum, also known as Museum Maluku) became a primary institutional achievement of that struggle and functions as an educational centre of Moluccan history, identity and integration.[1] The main goal of the museum was to narrate Moluccan socio-political and socio-cultural history, particularly their post-1951 history in The Netherlands, from Moluccan perspectives.[2] It was a matter of reclaiming agency over the Moluccan historical narrative and integrating Moluccan voices into the Dutch socio-cultural institutional fabric.[3] When seeking to learn more about the Moluccas in the permanent exhibition of one of The Netherlands' main cultural history museums, the National Museum of Ethnology, one is presented with a very different approach to Moluccan culture and history as compared to that of the Moluccan History Museum. The National Museum of Ethnology rather focuses on broad pre-1940 cultural-historical context and ethnographic artefact-specific information. This exhibition does not explicitly discuss the colonial history or the history of the Moluccan community in The Netherlands and does not include forms of Moluccan self-representation.

[1] Henk Smeets and Fridus Steijlen, *In Nederland Gebleven: De Geschiedenis van Molukkers 1951-2006* (Amsterdam; Utrecht: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker/Moluks Historisch Museum, 2006), 302-5, 311-12; Myengkyo Seo, "Museum in Transnationalism: The Moluccan History Museum in The Netherlands, 1987-2012," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 42, no. 124 (2014): 380-83, https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1080/13639811.2014.937932; Magdaleen Kingmans, Xaf Lasomer and Jaap Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek: Een Geschiedenis van Molukkers in Nederland* (Utrecht: Landelijk Steunpunt Educatie Molukkers, 1997), 71.

[2] Moluks Historisch Museum, *Moluks Historisch Museum: Persreacties – Een Selectie* (Utrecht: Moluks Historisch Museum, February 1988); Seo, "Museum in Transnationalism," 383-84.

[3] Kingmans, Lasomer and Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek*, 71; Moluks Historisch Museum, *Persreacties – Een Selectie*; Seo, "Museum in Transnationalism," 383-84, 386-87.

The National Museum of Ethnology is one of the top ethnology museums in The Netherlands and therefore one of the primary reference points for the general Dutch public to learn about minority cultures such as the Moluccans. Therefore, it is valuable to examine how the museum has represented Moluccans, specifically through the display of Moluccan objects collected during colonial times. This thesis will do precisely that by answering the following main question: how has the National Museum of Ethnology exhibited the Moluccan world between 1995 and the present day, and why so? Moreover, to what degree did the exhibitions discuss and problematise the colonial context of the objects? How were Moluccan perspectives included in the exhibitions and their curation? The manner in which the exhibitions engaged with the colonial history of their collections will be researched because it can affect i.e. the narrative and image – which help to construct the representation – that the exhibitions produce of the Moluccan cultures they display. The inclusion of Moluccan perspectives in the exhibitions will be investigated because both the degree and form of the museum's acknowledgment of and engagement with the Moluccan community and its experiences, agency and emancipation and the lack or presence of concrete involvement of the community in curatorial processes can influence the way the exhibitions' representations of the community take shape. This thesis will investigate these points by presenting an analysis of two past temporary exhibitions and the current permanent Moluccas exhibition of the National Museum of Ethnology.

The aim of this thesis is threefold. The first objective is to examine what image the National Museum of Ethnology has been presenting of the Moluccan community to its visitors in its three exhibitions since 1995. The second objective is to assess the extent to which the museum has engaged with the emancipation and agency of the Moluccan community, through its representation and inclusion of the Moluccan community in exhibitions. This assessment can function as a barometer of more general museological institutional acknowledgment and incorporation of Moluccan perspectives and experiences on their own history and cultures. As this thesis only has the space to draw general, tentative conclusions with regard to these last two points, subsequent research would be needed in order to paint a more detailed, comprehensive and reliable picture of such acknowledgment and presence of the Moluccan community in the broader Dutch museum world and the Dutch cultural institutional fabric at large. The third objective is to contribute to the topical museological

debate of how to decolonise ethnographic exhibitions, using the Moluccas exhibitions of the National Museum of Ethnology as a case study.

Relevance:

Scholarship 'Decolonising' and 'Community Inclusion'

There is an elaborate body of scholarship about the concepts 'decolonising an exhibition' and 'community inclusion'. According to Beatrice Harris and Jette Sandahl, who researched a decolonised Australian exhibition on Aboriginal peoples and the role of the curator in decolonising exhibitions respectively, the core of decolonising an exhibition consists of two main steps.[4] It begins with becoming aware of the western-biased perspective of the museum, which oftentimes obstructs understanding of the topic at hand and is usually informed by orientalism and colonially conditioned discriminatory perceptions. The process is completed by actively analysing that bias, informing oneself about alternative, especially minority-formulated perspectives and adjusting the museum approach to be more self-aware, critical and inclusive, both in its narrative and in its curating methods.

Community inclusion can imply that the museum actively creates or redefines its own manner of representation to express the words and perspectives of the minority itself or it can take the form of minority self-representation. In the case of the latter, the community collaborates with a museum or creates and manages a museum of its own. As Lisa Michelle King argues, indigenous communities have the right to claim self-representation when a museum presents a distorted, orientalist and colonially-informed image of them.[5] Ellen Hoobler and Leanne Unruh explain, through case studies of a community-led Oaxacan

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[4] Beatrice Harris, "Indigenous Representation in the 'moral Museum': Perspectives from Classical Ethical Theory," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 33, no. 2 (2018): 195–211, https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2018.1442738; Jette Sandahl, "Curating Across the Colonial Divides," in *Curatopia: Museums and the Future of Curatorship*, ed. Philipp Schorch and Conal McCarthy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 72-89, Curatopia : Museums and the Future of Curatorship (leidenuniv.nl).

[5] Lisa Michelle King, "Revisiting Winnetou: The Karl May Museum, Cultural Appropriation, and Indigenous Self-Representation," *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 28, no. 2 (2016): 44-47, Revisiting Winnetou: The Karl May Museum, Cultural Appropriation, and Indigenous Self-Representation (leidenuniv.nl).

museum and museum-community collaborations in Canada and South Africa, that a perspective shift from western-centred to minority-experienced and the active agency of the minority community form the foundation of a decolonised and inclusive museum exhibition.[6]

Apart from a few concise macro-level studies there is no existing scholarly work that addresses the representation and inclusion of the Moluccan community in non-Moluccan museums or the decolonisation of Moluccan objects on museum display. This is where this thesis will prove to be a relevant contribution, because it will conduct an in-depth investigation of precisely those three elements of the (making of the) image of Moluccans for society at large. The agency and acknowledgment of the Moluccan community will here be addressed within the cadre of representation through mainstream museum exhibitions. By also investigating how the museum engages with the colonial history of those Moluccas exhibitions it will become clear how the presence or lack of efforts for the decolonisation of those exhibitions affects the image and narrative the museum presents of the Moluccan community.

Relevance:

Representation, Decolonisation and Agency for Moluccan Community

Acknowledgment by Dutch society for Moluccan history and culture is not sufficient yet, as a number of Moluccans express. Intrinsic to this lack of acknowledgment seems to be a lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding on the part of the general Dutch population.[7] Resulting discrimination, prejudices and misconceptions by other Dutch citizens

[6] Ellen Hoobler, ""To Take Their Heritage in Their Hands": Indigenous Self-Representation and Decolonization in the Community Museums of Oaxaca, Mexico," *American Indian Quarterly* 30, no. 3/4 (July 2006): 450-53, "To Take Their Heritage in Their Hands": Indigenous Self-Representation and Decolonization in the Community Museums of Oaxaca, Mexico (leidenuniv.nl); Leanne Unruh, "Dialogical Curating: Towards Aboriginal Self-Representation in Museums," *Curator* 58, no. 1 (January 2015): 78-80, Dialogical Curating: Towards Aboriginal Self-Representation in Museums (leidenuniv.nl).

[7] "Molukkers in Nederland: 70 Jaar op Weg Naar Huis," Programma's, NPO Start, accessed June 17, 2021, Molukkers in Nederland: 70 jaar op weg naar huis gemist? Start met kijken op NPO Start; Coen Verbraak, *De Molukkers: Een Vergeten Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Alfabet Uitgevers, 2021), 28-32, 43, 59, 125-26, 131-35, 138-39, 153-54, 162-64, 167, 169, 184-86, 195-98, 210-12, 218-20; Henry Timisela, "Mijn Jaren in een

and negligent governance by Dutch politicians have sustained the societal distance between Moluccans and Dutch society at large.[8] It is only in the recent years that Moluccan perspectives are starting to enter mainstream media. The general Dutch population is thus only now beginning to learn about Moluccan perspectives, which means that overall awareness about the stories, culture and pain of the Moluccan community is still to properly cultivate in Dutch society. It is for this reason that cultural institutions, such as the National Museum of Ethnology, which is a renowned ethnology museum known among a broader portion of society, could play an influential role in generating awareness about the Moluccan community. The National Museum of Ethnology thus could have an important influence on the awareness and therewith acknowledgment of the history and experiences of the Moluccan community.

When considering how minority communities such as the Moluccans are represented in a museum, it is important to also consider the colonial context behind the relationship between that community, the museum and the home country of the museum. If there is no awareness of that colonial context in the curation process, the exhibition could be influenced by a framework of colonial thinking that has historically been present in the museum. As three Moluccan museum- and art professionals explain, as a result of this the exhibition might not be truly representative of the minority community it displays because it employs a narrow, biased, or even discriminatory perspective on that community.[9] Moreover, when the colonial context is not taken into consideration, the injustice endured by the community until well after colonial times, caused by colonial power dynamics and discriminatory frameworks of thinking that persist in postcolonial society, is also not acknowledged and understood.[10]

Bomberjack," in *Toma Terus: 70 Jaar Molukkers in Nederland*, ed. Wim Manuhutu, Glenda Pattipeilohy and Henry Timisela (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2021), 44-51.

[8] Dieter Bartels, *Ambon is op Schiphol, Deel 2* (Utrecht: Inspraakorgaan Welzijn Molukkers, 1990), 539-49, 551-55; Timisela, "Bomberjack," 44-51; Abdelkarim El-Fassi, "Apa's," in *Toma Terus: 70 Jaar Molukkers in Nederland*, ed. Wim Manuhutu, Glenda Pattipeilohy and Henry Timisela (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2021), 56-57; Tamara Soukotta, "Oude Wonden die Nog Steeds Bloeden," in *Toma Terus: 70 Jaar Molukkers in Nederland*, ed. Wim Manuhutu, Glenda Pattipeilohy and Henry Timisela (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2021), 98-101.

[9] Zippora Elders, Jeftha Pattikawa and Malou Sumah, "Verbeelding Voorbij Kaders: Dekoloniaal Denken, Kunst en Klassen," in *Toma Terus: 70 Jaar Molukkers in Nederland*, ed. Wim Manuhutu, Glenda Pattipeilohy and Henry Timisela (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2021), 113-17.

[10] Elders, Pattikawa and Sumah, "Verbeelding Voorbij Kaders," 113-17; Verbraak, *De Molukkers*, 43, 59, 133-34, 153-54, 210-12, 220.

Precisely this lack of acknowledgment and understanding has been a source of pain, anger and frustration for many members of the Moluccan community in The Netherlands.[11] That is why it is important that an influential public institution such as a museum addresses the colonial context of its exhibition on a minority community such as the Moluccans.

Community inclusion plays an important role in bringing about acknowledgment of community experiences. By presenting the voices of the minority community itself, the community regains its agency over its own story. In so doing, the community dismantles the dominant hold the western majority has over them and their stories and heritage.[12] As the three Moluccan professionals in the museum and art-scene express in a collective essay, if a minority community's perspectives are taken seriously, it can restore the community's agency, self-image and increase societal understanding of their history and experiences.[13]

Short History of Moluccans in The Netherlands

During the Indonesian war for independence Moluccans played an important role in the Dutch colonial army, or KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger/Royal Dutch-Indies Army). This support for The Netherlands has made them main targets for Indonesian revolutionaries.[14] After The Netherlands had acknowledged Indonesia's independence in 1949, tensions and fighting broke out in the Moluccas as the Indonesian government intervened in a Moluccan proclamation of independence into the Republik Maluku Selatan (Republic of the South-Moluccas, RMS in short).[15] Consequently, between 1950 and 1951 the

[11] Verbraak, *De Molukkers*, 16-20; NPO Start, "Molukkers in Nederland."; Bartels, *Ambon is op Schiphol*, 539-40, 553-55; Timisela, "Bomberjack," 44-51; El-Fassi, "Apa's," 56-57; Soukotta, "Oude Wonden," 98-101.

[12] Elders, Pattikawa and Sumah, "Verbeelding Voorbij Kaders," 114-17; Hoobler, ""To Take Their Heritage in Their Hands"," 450-53, Unruh, "Dialogical Curating," 78-80; King, "Revisiting Winnetou," 44-47; Moluks Historisch Museum, *Persreacties – Een Selectie*.

[13] Elders, Pattikawa and Sumah, "Verbeelding Voorbij Kaders," 113-17; Unruh, "Dialogical Curating," 78-80, 87-88; Seo, "Museum in Transnationalism," 383-87; Moluks Historisch Museum, *Persreacties – Een Selectie*.

[14] Sylvia Pessireron, *Molukkers in Nederland, 'Wij Kwamen Hier op Dienstbevel…': Kampverhalen uit Lage Mierde* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2003), 23-24; Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland Gebleven*, 37; Seo, "Museum in Transnationalism," 382; Kingmans, Lasomer and Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek*, 20-22.

[15] Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland Gebleven*, 38-42, 51-54; Seo, "Museum in Transnationalism," 382; Kingmans, Lasomer and Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek*, 22-26.

Dutch government brought almost 13000 Moluccans to The Netherlands for a temporary stay.[16] However, this Dutch move was not so much aimed at keeping Moluccans safe and helping them build the future of their community and their aspired independent homeland. Instead the objective was to stop the conflict in the Moluccas in order to bring Dutch soldiers home safely and build a constructive relationship with the Indonesian government.[17] As a result, the government had only a short-term plan for the housing and care of the newly arrived Moluccan community. When that short-term plan was no longer feasible the Moluccans were largely expected to independently arrange their lives and livelihoods in Dutch society, which ultimately confronted them with the fact that they were not going to get the promised Dutch support for their own Moluccan nation-state.[18] Moreover, the conditions of their initial living situation in The Netherlands were unsuitable to begin with due to a lack of government planning, and only deteriorated as the years went by and the needs and sentiments of the Moluccans went ignored. The frustration and pain caused by the Dutch neglect, lack of understanding and discriminatory policies and the unfulfilled ambition of a sovereign Moluccas formed a trauma in the Moluccan community and for some still live on today.[19]

Role of Existing Literature about Moluccan Community

Coen Verbraak's book *De Molukkers: Een Vergeten Geschiedenis, In Nederland Gebleven: De Geschiedenis van Molukkers 1951-2006* by Henk Smeets and Fridus Steijlen and Dieter Bartels' *Ambon is op Schiphol* are arguably the three most renowned books on the history of Moluccans in The Netherlands. The books by Bartels as well as by Smeets and Steijlen are broader and more general overviews of that history, while Verbraak's book lays

[16] Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland Gebleven*, 72-76; Kingmans, Lasomer and Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek*, 30-32; Pessireron, *Molukkers in Nederland*, 24-25.

[17] Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland Gebleven*, 72.

[18] Pessireron, *Molukkers in Nederland*, 26-34, 39-52, 67, 75-84; NPO Start, "Molukkers in Nederland."; Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland Gebleven*, 307; Kingmans, Lasomer and Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek*, 32-44.

[19] Verbraak, *De Molukkers*; NPO Start, "Molukkers in Nederland."; El-Fassi, "Apa's," 56-57; Timisela, "Bomberjack," 47; Soukotta, "Oude Wonden," 98-101; Kingmans, Lasomer and Tuit, *Op Zoek Naar Een Eigen Plek*, 32-44.

the focus on personal stories and oral testimonies about that history by the community itself. There is also a collection of books written by the Moluccan community itself about their history and experiences. Additionally, the article *Museum in Transnationalism: The Moluccan History Museum in The Netherlands, 1987-2012* by Myengkyo Seo deals specifically with museological (self-)representation of the Moluccan community. It mainly discusses how the Moluccan History Museum was created in the socio-political circumstances of the Moluccan community in The Netherlands and explains how the museum represents Moluccan history and culture. This article is especially relevant for understanding the nature and considerations of Moluccan self-representation. Still, all these relevant and insightful works of writing are crucial for gaining understanding of the history, socio-political developments, sentiments and experiences of the Moluccan community, and will thus be consulted for this thesis.

Methodology

This thesis will analyse three Moluccas exhibitions by the National Museum of Ethnology to determine how they represent the Moluccan world, to what degree they include the Moluccan community in the curation process and how they engage with the colonial history of their collections, or in other words, what their state of decolonisation is. Firstly the 1995 temporary exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden: Het Mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken* (Forgotten Islands: The Mystery of the Southeast Moluccas) will be analysed. Secondly the analysis will move to the 2005 temporary exhibition *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* (Indonesia, discovering the past). The third and final analysis chapter will discuss the current permanent Moluccas display, *Molukken* (Moluccas), in the Indonesia Room of the National Museum of Ethnology. The former two exhibitions were the only temporary exhibitions about the Moluccas the Museum of Ethnology has created to this day. They are also relevant for this analysis because the decade-long gap between them enables an insightful comparison of curatorial approaches and measurement of curatorial trends and -changes. The current Moluccas exhibition was chosen for this thesis because it shows the present-day approach of the museum to representing the Moluccan world and its current engagement with colonial history and minority representation. By comparing the museum's curation of the current exhibition with that of the temporary exhibitions of the past one can gain insight into the

changes and continuations in the museum's approach to representing Moluccans, discussing colonial history and incorporating minority inclusion in its curatorial methodology.

The main methods used to examine the exhibitions are primary source analysis and discourse analysis. In the context of this thesis primary source analysis entails the close examination of a variety of primary sources through the lens of research questions with the goal of gaining detailed insight into the creation and creators, content, curatorial objectives and -methodology of the three different Moluccas exhibitions. Discourse analysis will be applied within the analysis of primary sources, as a means to specifically focus on the narratives and discourses of the primary sources. This thesis will analyse several scales and types of narrative and discourse. These include but are not confined to: the perspectives chosen by exhibitions to approach Moluccan cultures and history with; the information exhibitions provide about the objects on display; the narratives or stories exhibitions tell about the Moluccan world; and the tone and word use of the exhibition narratives. This thesis chooses to focus specifically on narratives and discourses because they literally communicate the perspectives, standpoints and stories put forward by an exhibition to the visitor. Narratives and discourses are thus clear indicators of how these exhibitions present, and represent, Moluccan cultures and history.

The primary sources most consulted for this research are museum catalogues, personal correspondence with curators, newspaper articles, books written by Moluccans about their own history and experiences as a minority in The Netherlands and the current permanent Moluccas exhibition at the National Museum of Ethnology. Because it is no longer possible to visit the two temporary exhibitions, their analyses largely rely on the catalogues. For Chapter 2 this is *Vergeten Eilanden: Kunst & Cultuur van de Zuidoost-Molukken* by Nico de Jonge and Toos van Dijk and for Chapter 3 it is *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* by Endang Sri Hardiati and Pieter ter Keurs. These are the sources with the most comprehensive and detailed information about especially the objects, topic, perspectives and narratives of the exhibitions. Personal correspondence with the curators will mainly provide information about the curators and their objectives and the community inclusion for all three exhibitions.

Articles in the national Dutch newspapers *Trouw*, *De Volkskrant* and *Algemeen Dagblad* will be consulted to retrieve the following information for the temporary exhibitions: the content and curators of the exhibitions; the approach of the museum; the museum's inclusion of and relation with the Moluccan community; narratives of experts; and the context, motivations and objectives of the exhibitions. Texts written by members of the Moluccan community, elaborating on their history, experiences and perspectives as a minority community in Dutch society, will be consulted to gain insight into Moluccan sentiments with regard to their representation in large public institutions such as the National Museum of Ethnology. These texts are also used to include Moluccan perspectives and to exemplify, bring attention to and engage with forms of Moluccan agency. The current permanent Moluccas exhibition at the National Museum of Ethnology, *Molukken*, will be the central source for the analysis of that same exhibition.

Additionally, websites of museums, Leiden University, Catholic organisations and -media and the Dutch public television will be used. Curators and initiators of the exhibitions such as Pieter ter Keurs and bishop Andre P.C. Sol; policies, histories, exhibitions and the general institutional identity of the National Museum of Ethnology and the Moluccan History Museum; and Moluccan history, sentiment and (self-)representation will be distilled from and analysed through that variety of websites. Besides primary sources this thesis will draw from secondary literature, which mostly consists of journal articles and academic books. Secondary sources will mostly be consulted to elaborate on the historical- and colonial context of the exhibitions, the Moluccan collection as a whole and the National Museum of Ethnology; relevant academic theories and -concepts; and the history of the Moluccan community.

For historical context Chapter 1 will elaborate on the colonial history of the Museum of Ethnology and its Moluccas exhibitions. Chapter 1 therefore will introduce the colonial dimension of the museum's Moluccan objects and clarify why it is relevant to examine if and how colonial history plays a role in the way the museum represents the Moluccan world. After Chapter 1 will follow three analysis chapters. In each of the analysis chapters the main research question and two sub-questions will be answered through close analysis of several aspects of all three Moluccas exhibitions. Each analysis chapter will follow the same order with

regard to discussing the various aspects of the exhibitions. Each chapter opens with an introduction, which concisely sketches why and how the exhibition came about, explains the analytical approach and -foci and provides a short, generic and summarised overview of the exhibition. Subsequently the analysis begins with a discussion, examination and scrutiny of the curators, initiators and inspirers of the exhibition and their objectives for creating it. The following section of the analysis starts investigating the content of the exhibition itself. It introduces the general topic of the exhibition, the objects that were on display, the perspectives from which the objects and narratives are approached and the elements, angles or types of the objects and narratives that were most focused on in the exhibition. Next follows a section that specifically zooms in on the narratives and discourses present in the exhibition. This part of the analysis closely examines and scrutinises all and more of the above-mentioned examples of narrative and discourse put forward by the catalogue- and accompanying (in the case of the current permanent exhibition) texts and the object identifications (the short 'labels' providing information about individual objects). The subsequent section analyses the curatorial methods and -choices, the physical display lay-out of the exhibition and its centre pieces. The last section of each analysis chapter investigates to what degree and in what form the museum included the Moluccan community in the curation of its exhibition. All these different sections, each discussing different aspects of the exhibitions, provide different pieces of the puzzle of how the exhibitions were created and how they presented, and thus represented, the Moluccan world. The analysis chapters will be followed by a Conclusion chapter, discussing the findings produced in the analysis chapters and identifying possible trends and developments between the three exhibitions. The conclusion will close by answering the research questions and indicating how this thesis contributes to existing scholarship.

▲1
Historical Background:
Colonial origins of Museum & Collection

In 1914 the National Museum of Ethnology added Werwat and her assumed daughter, two ancestor statues from the Kei islands in the Southeast Moluccas, to its Moluccas collection.[20] The statues had been taken from the ritual centre of the Kei village Gelanit by a subordinate of A.J. Gooszen, military commander of Ambon and Ternate, during military expeditions in 1913-1914. Gooszen had ordered that object collecting be a specific mission priority, resulting in an approximately 1000 pieces large Moluccas collection.[21] In total those military missions, spanning New Guinea and adjacent Moluccan islands, gathered around 6000 objects that Gooszen directly donated to the National Museum of Ethnology. That donation has come to make up the lions' share of the museum's present Moluccas collection.[22] Consequentially, the current permanent Moluccas exhibition features a number of those donated objects, and Werwat and her daughter take up a rather prominent place in the display.

Besides military expeditions, Pieter ter Keurs identifies four other forms of colonial collecting practices and -objectives that ethnographic museums benefited from: scientific expeditions, individual collecting activities, colonial exhibitions and private donations by individuals.[23] Examining the manner in which objects were collected in the Dutch East Indies and how they came to build the collections of the National Museum of Ethnology is essential for understanding the history of the museum and its collections as well as their relationship

[20] Endang Sri Hardiati and Pieter ter Keurs, *Indonesia: De Ontdekking van het Verleden* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2005), 192, 194-95.

[21] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 192-95.

[22] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 191-95; Pieter ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony: Hybridity, Power and Prestige in the Netherlands East Indies," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 37, no. 108 (June 2009): 156-57, COLLECTING IN THE COLONY (leidenuniv.nl).

[23] Pieter ter Keurs, "Things of the Past? Museums and Ethnographic Objects," *Journal des Africanistes* 69, no. 1 (1999): 69-72,
Things of the Past ? Museums and Ethnographic Objects (persee.fr).

with minority communities and other relevant parties in the present day. For that reason, the current chapter will elaborate on the following questions: how was the National Museum of Ethnology created and developed? How were Moluccan objects collected for the National Museum of Ethnology and what were the contexts and power dynamics within which this collecting was conducted? These questions will be answered by first discussing how racist and orientalist essentialism informed both how museums categorised and characterised their newly acquired objects and how the Dutch colonial government executed its divide-and-rule politics. Next it will become clear that discriminatory frameworks of thought also existed more broadly within the colonial science of anthropology, and that this science not only influenced much of the academic world that studied indigenous peoples whose objects were collected, but also formed the foundation of many colonial policies. This will be followed by a short history of the National Museum of Ethnology, its foundation and how some of its collections were established. The chapter will be concluded with a concise history of the museum's Moluccas collection, and more specifically, some of the collecting methods and objectives that brought the Moluccan objects to the museum.

Discriminatory Essentialism in Museum and Politics

Remains from ancient monuments and cultural objects from indigenous peoples living in the colonies were taken and collected by colonial administrators, missionaries, military detachments, orientalists, scientists and the colonial elite. Considered ethnological, anthropological and archaeological treasures from a scientific standpoint, many of those artefacts were then shipped and donated to the colonial motherland to be put on museum display.[24] When the documentation was conducted with care and diligence, which was not

[24] Ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony."; Caroline Drieënhuizen, "Being 'European' in Colonial Indonesia: Collectors and Collections Between Yogyakarta, Berlin, Dresden and Vienna in the Late Nineteenth Century," *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 134, no. 3 (2019); Geschiedenis Museum Volkenkunde," Themas, Museum Volkenkunde, 2021, Geschiedenis Museum Volkenkunde | Volkenkunde in Leiden; Marieke Bloembergen and Melle Monquil, *Provenance Report Regarding Four Buddha Heads Gifted by Artis in the NMVW and the Social Lives of Borobudur*, part of Pilot Project Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPROCE) (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam and ECR/NIOD in collaboration with KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Open University, Leiden University and Reinwardt Academy, March 2022), 32-37, PPROCE rapport 28.pdf.

standard practice by far, the collected objects were registered and categorised to provide an anthropological or ethnographic 'birth certificate'; information about the obtainment and origin of the object.[25] This process had resemblances with the colonial power structures under which it was conducted, as both operated with a system of generalised racist, orientalist divisions and labels revolving around 'tribes', 'ethnicities', civilisational hierarchies and the idea of 'the Native' as an essentialist characterisation of the indigenous population as a whole.[26]

Moreover, characterisation through concepts such as 'race' and 'exoticism' typified the indigenous population as being even more distinctly 'other', which in turn helped the Dutch colonial administration create a more targeted, divisive, complex and 'legitimised' mechanism of discriminatory politics.[27] Colonial politics thus used this labelling system to create a structured form of rule over the many different peoples in its territory, anthropological and ethnographic institutions used it to make clear-cut sense of the artefacts they gathered.[28] The label-based registration system used to administer museum collections thus existed within a colonial framework and lay at the foundation of how artefacts were obtained, interpreted and (re)valued towards the place and time in which they are situated nowadays.

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[25] Ciraj Rassool, "Museumlabels en kolonialisme," in *Woorden Doen Ertoe: Een Incomplete Gids voor Woordkeuze Binnen de Culturele Sector,* ed. Wayne Modest and Robin Lelijveld (Zwaan Printmedia, 2018): 21-22,
WordsMatter_DEF_juli2018.pdf.

[26] Rassool, "Museumlabels en kolonialisme," 21-22; Jean Kommers and Léon Buskens, "Dutch Colonial Anthropology in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 35, no. 3 (2007): 352-69,
54592.pdf;jsessionid=8384C0159B19527E372DD9AE8857F01B (ru.nl); Marieke Bloembergen and Melle Monquil, *Buddha Heads*, 35-37; Fenneke Sysling, "The Human Wallace Line: Racial Science and Political Afterlife," *Medical History* 63, no. 3 (June 2019): 315-20,
the-human-wallace-line-racial-science-and-political-afterlife.pdf (leidenuniv.nl).

[27] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995),
1% - Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest (leidenuniv.nl); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, "Reasons Aside: Reflections on Enlightenment and Empire," in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Graham Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013),
Reason Aside: Reflections on Enlightenment and Empire - Oxford Handbooks (leidenuniv.nl); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979).

[28] Kommers and Buskens, "Dutch Colonial Anthropology," 352-69.

Broad Influence of Colonial Anthropology

Feeding this system of categorisation and identification was the scientific discipline of ethnology, and anthropology more broadly, as it existed during colonial times. Colonial anthropology was not the separate discipline we know today as Cultural Anthropology.[29] Instead, it comprised several disciplines that are now considered separate fields of study, such as Ethnology and History, which helped to paint a broad, and thus both scientifically more informative and politically more useful, picture of the culture or people of interest.[30] It inspired and shaped the creation, approach, agenda, narrative, and largely the collections of the National Museum of Ethnology and at the same time it was informed, infused and enabled by orientalism, racism and the inequal power balance of colonialist versus colonised. Colonial anthropology thus gave the collections, agenda and exhibitions of the National Museum of Ethnology an inherently colonial dimension.

Indeed, colonial anthropology was one of the main academic sources of inspiration for colonial policies as well as intellectual institutions such as the National Museum of Ethnology and the KITLV (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies).[31] Colonial anthropology was oftentimes informed by orientalist frameworks of thinking.[32] Theories popular among colonial anthropologists and scientists of related fields, like Indologists, were social Darwinism and social evolutionism, which argued for and supported a hierarchical classification of different peoples, cultures and societies.[33] Academic argumentation based on these theories were, although in different degrees of radicalism, used by KITLV board members Arabist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and Indologist Christiaan van den Berg in both their scholarly work and their

[29] Ter Keurs, "Things of the Past?," 69.

[30] Kommers and Buskens, "Dutch Colonial Anthropology," 352-69.

[31] Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, "Imperialism, Orientalism and Ethics," in *Dutch Scholarship in the Age of Empire and Beyond*, ed. Harry A. Poeze (Leiden; Boston: BRILL, 2014), [9789004257870 - Dutch Scholarship in the Age of Empire and Beyond] Imperialism, Orientalism and Ethics (1870–1914) (1).pdf.

[32] Kuitenbrouwer, "Imperialism."; Kommers and Buskens, "Dutch Colonial Anthropology," 352-69.

[33] Sysling, "The Human Wallace Line," 315-20; Kuitenbrouwer, "Imperialism," 63-72.

role as government advisors for socio-political policies in the Netherlands East Indies.[34] In this manner they advocated, both within academia and the colonial government, for western domination and occupation over the peoples in the colonies, arguing that the local and indigenous populations were backward and uncivilised and either in need of western guidance to a better, modern lifestyle or requiring firm Dutch rule to help keep society in the colonies peaceful and orderly.[35]

Origins of the National Museum of Ethnology

The National Museum of Ethnology was established in 1837 in Leiden, as one of three national museums erected in the city in the early 19th century.[36] Its creation and development were tightly connected to the colonial desire to create a better understanding of the colonies in order to get firmer control over them. The information needed about the Netherlands East Indies was gathered on numerous scientific expeditions, sent by King Willem I, and cultural objects were taken back home as study material, exotic curiosities and ethnographic artefacts. Most of them indeed eventually became part of the National Museum of Ethnology collection.[37] Originally the Japansch Museum (Japanese Museum), it was founded by Philipp Franz B. von Siebold (with support from King Willem I due to his affiliation with art, culture and colonial science) who collected a large quantity of natural and cultural artefacts in Japan during his work as medical officer at the Dutch trading post of Deshima.[38] Initially, the museum collection thus mostly consisted of Japanese objects, but starting in 1860 the museum acquired increasingly more artefacts from Indonesia. The Indonesian collection, which includes Moluccan artefacts, grew to be the largest of all from the late 19th century onwards

[34] Kuitenbrouwer, "Imperialism," 63-72.

[35] Kuitenbrouwer, "Imperialism," 66, 70-72.

[36] Reimar Schefold and Han F. Vermeulen, *Treasure Hunting? Collectors and Collections of Indonesian Artefacts* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2002), 81.

[37] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 17-18.

[38] Schefold and Vermeulen, *Treasure Hunting?,* 81-82; Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 16-17; Ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony," 155.

until the present day.[39] The reason for this sharp growth after 1860 is twofold: the transformation of the museum from the Japanese Museum into the National Museum of Ethnology, and a new 1862 government policy encouraging active collecting practices for state institutions.[40] Before the museum became the National Museum of Ethnology its institutional role in the practice of colonial collecting was not clearly outlined yet and its collection consequently consisted of private collections donated by or bought from individual colonial professionals and expedition members.[41] When the collecting activities started to take flight after 1862, structural collecting approaches and regulations were formulated for the first time, initiated by museum director Dr. Lindor Serrurier among others. This further fuelled the overall growth of the entire collection of what was now since 1864 the National Museum of Ethnology, and specifically expanding its Indonesian collection fivefold.[42] Moreover, World Exhibitions and Colonial Exhibitions contributed significantly to the fast growth of the museum collection. After the Dutch displayed a large amount of artefacts from the East as well as West Indies at the exhibition of 1878 in Paris, 1700 Indonesian objects of that collection were acquired by the museum. What is more, the International Colonial and Export Exhibition of 1883 in Amsterdam led to another sizeable collection expansion of over 4000 ethnographic objects.[43] During the first decades of the 20th century it was military expeditions that brought about the largest additions to the museum collection. During the Aceh war, for example, G.C.E. Van Daalen led notoriously violent military campaigns in Aceh and the Gajo-Alas region, all the while collecting ethnographic objects, a number of which were later sent to the museum in Leiden.[44] The creation and collection of the National Museum of Ethnology were thus founded on and fuelled by colonial political objectives, nationalist sentiments and orientalist frameworks of thinking.

[39] Schefold and Vermeulen, *Treasure Hunting?,* 81-82; Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 16-19; Ter Keurs, "Things of the Past?," 69; Ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony," 154-57.

[40] Ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony," 154-55; Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 18-19.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 18-19; Schefold and Vermeulen, *Treasure Hunting?*, 82-84.

[43] Schefold and Vermeulen, *Treasure Hunting?*, 84.

[44] Kuitenbrouwer, "Imperialism," 57-58, 71; Ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony," 155-56.

Creation of the Moluccas Collection

Moluccan objects were overwhelmingly collected in the period 1875-1925, when the rising scientific interest in 'exotic cultures' was paired with the political and economic ambitions of that period.[45] The Moluccas collection of the National Museum of Ethnology was mostly gathered by political administrators and military officials and their subordinates, for all of whom research into the local cultures was usually part of the job description.[46] J.G.F. Riedel, commissioner of Amboina in 1880-1883, created the first Moluccas collection of the National Museum of Ethnology. Besides exploring and annexing the then unknown Sulawesi, Timor and dozens of Moluccan islands and putting his interest in particularly adat law to use in scientific publications and political relations, he fervently collected around 160 Moluccan objects of various kinds, complemented by elaborate and structured object documentation.[47] Subsequent commissioner of Amboina in 1891-1998 G.W.W.C. van Hoëvell played an important role in the growth of the Moluccas collection. When still working as assistant-commissioner of Gorontalo, Sulawesi, he collected a variety of Moluccan objects during a government-assigned research mission on the southern Moluccas in 1887-1888. Those objects were the first of their kind to be obtained by the museum and therefore became an important expansion of the Moluccas collection.[48] Some Moluccan objects were obtained by the Dutch government as a judicial payment. It was common for political administrators to act as judiciaries and impose traditional local adat punishments when a crime was committed. Those punishments usually took the form of a fine, which meant that the convicted local had to pay the Dutch administrator with an object, the type of which depended on the local tradition at hand. On Tanimbar adat law prescribed golden jewellery of various kinds as the traditional fine, which is likely the reason why a set of Tanimbarese golden earrings, or *lelbutir*, found its way to the National Museum of Ethnology in the early 1890s.[49] The above-mentioned

[45] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172.

[46] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172-81, 191-96.

[47] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172-75.

[48] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 177-81.

[49] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 176; Nico de Jonge and Toos van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden: Kunst & Cultuur van de Zuidoost-Molukken* (Amsterdam: Periplus Editions i.s.m. C. Zwartenkot, 1995), 108-20; "Oorhangers – *lelbutir (Tanimbar)*," Collectie, Museum Volkenkunde, 2022,

commander A.J. Gooszen was awarded by the Dutch government for the collections he donated to several museums around 1913-1915, among which was the National Museum of Ethnology. The objects taken on his military expeditions in New Guinea and adjacent islands have enlarged the museum's Moluccas collection with around 1000 new objects. The object documentation was incomplete and largely meagre, likely because the collecting was part of a military operation which usually entailed accomplishing objectives fast and forcefully, leaving no room for tact, diligence and research in general. Moreover, Gooszen's objective was to gather mass numbers of objects in very little time.[50] His seemingly tactless hoarding of ethnographic objects could have been motivated by his final professional ambition. Convinced that the National Museum of Ethnology was the most suitable institution to hold these collections, Gooszen hoped to generate such gratefulness and respect from the museum for his donations that they would offer him a position after his retirement, and in so doing grant him the opportunity to create a special, representative New Guinea department in the museum's exhibition design.[51]

In conclusion, the creation and development of the National Museum of Ethnology were initiated and constructed by colonialism. The collections were oftentimes gathered for a political agenda or scientific research, and the collecting was always enabled and conducted by the inequal balance of power between the coloniser and the colonised. Moreover, the narrative and value attached to the objects were informed by the same racist and orientalist frameworks of thought that underlay colonial governance itself. These same colonial dynamics led to the creation of the museum's Moluccas collection. Colonial political and economic objectives, the power advantage and -display of political administrators and the military, and discriminatory convictions and cultural ignorance of the collectors led more than 1000 pieces of Moluccan material culture to be taken from their Moluccan homes in Dutch hands. A number of those objects have been part of the two temporary Moluccas exhibitions and are on display in the museum today.

NMVW-collectie (wereldculturen.nl).

[50] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 194-96.

[51] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 194-96; Ter Keurs, "Collecting in the Colony," 156-57.

▲ 2
Analysis:
Vergeten Eilanden: Het Mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken

Introduction:

The Exhibition and its Background

In 1995 the National Museum of Ethnology curated its first temporary exhibition about the Southeast Moluccas.[52] With this exhibition, *Vergeten Eilanden: Het Mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken* (Forgotten Islands: The Mystery of the Southeast Moluccas), the curators and initiators intended to make the Dutch public acquainted with cultural forms, artistic expressions and daily life of the various peoples of the Southeast Moluccas. Through 125-plus objects of material culture *Vergeten Eilanden* presented the visitor with the cultures and arts of the Southeast Moluccas, focusing particularly on the role of symbolism in Southeast Moluccan life. Besides the strikingly aberrant opening section devoted to the anthropological photography of missionary Petrus Drabbe, the exhibition was divided into different sections that each represented a specific type of symbolism or object category. The stars of the show seemed to be the ancestor statues.

[52] Martijn de Rooi, "Indonesië Gaat Bijzonder Jaar Tegemoet," *Algemeen Dagblad*, January 21, 1995, 7; Bram van Kersbergen, Frans van Schoonderwalt and Nell Westerlaken, "Special over de Molukken," *De Volkskrant*, October 21, 1995, 29; Annemieke Jansen, Judith Koelemeijer, and Truus Ruiter, "Opmaat, Beeldende Kunst," *De Volkskrant*, October 6, 1995, 30.

Creation, Curators, Initiators and their Objectives

The exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden: Het Mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken* came about because of the fieldwork on the Southeast Moluccas in 1981-1983 conducted by cultural anthropologists Nico de Jonge and Toos Van Dijk. During their fieldwork they became fascinated by Southeast Moluccan cultural expressions. Moreover, at the start of their research on the islands they met with former bishop of Ambon Andre P.C. Sol, who expressed his wish of Southeast Moluccan cultures getting a spotlight. Sol had worked as missionary on the Kei islands in the late 1940s and later served as bishop of Ambon from 1964 until 1994.[53] De cultural anthropologists' fieldwork on the islands inspired the museum to curate this exhibition. Van Dijk and De Jonge deemed it relevant to dedicate an entire exhibition to the cultural heritage of the Southeast Moluccan islands, because they argued it comprises the most fascinating cultural objects and expressions of the Indonesian archipelago.[54] Thanks to their elaborate research they served as advisors to the curating of *Vergeten Eilanden: Het Mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken*, after publishing the accompanying catalogue.[55]

The exhibition had a wholly cultural perspective and as will become clear below, colonial history was inadequately elaborated. Indeed, the choice was made to stress the beauty, skill and fascinating nature of Southeast Moluccan arts and cultures rather than discuss the problematic, destructive and sometimes violent mechanisms and history that brought the objects to the museum. The professional background of De Jonge and Van Dijk,

[53] Tessel Pollmann, "De Vergeten Eilanden van de Zuidoost-Molukken," *De Volkskrant*, November 4, 1995, 29; Willem van der Post, "Mysterie van Vergeten Eilanden Ontrafeld," *Algemeen Dagblad*, October 10, 1995, 21; De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, ix, xv; "Monseigneur André Sol (100) overleden," Berichten, www.ambonadoptieproject.nl, Accessed November 24, 2022, Monseigneur André Sol (100) overleden - www.ambonadoptieproject.nl; "Tijdens Kerstvieringen extra collecte Mgr. Andre Sol," Nieuws, Parochie St. Pancratius, published December 15, 2019, Pancratiusparochie Sloten - Nieuws (pancratiussloten.nl); "Mgr. André Sol (100) overleden," Nieuws, KN, published March 29, 2016, Mgr. André Sol (100) overleden - Katholiek Nieuwsblad; "In Memoriam: Andreas Petrus Cornelis Sol, Bisschop van Ambon," Nieuws, sloten-oud osdorp, published April 10, 2016, In Memoriam: Andreas Petrus Cornelis Sol, Bisschop van Ambon – Sloten-Oud Osdorp (slotenoudosdorp.nl).

[54] De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, ix.

[55] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, cover page, ix; Haro Hielkema, "Gekerstend, Leeggeroofd en Vergeten," *Trouw*, October 7, 1995, 37.

being cultural anthropologists rather than historians, arguably caused discussion of colonial history to take a backseat in the exhibition and to be insufficiently critical where present.

Pieter ter Keurs

The exhibition's curator was Pieter ter Keurs. His strong fascination for so-called tribal societies has inspired and motivated the creation of this exhibition about the many tribal cultures that used to inhabit the numerous Southeast Moluccan islands.[56] Ter Keurs specialises in critical analysis of object collecting and the history of cultural heritage and museums, within the academic research field of material culture.[57] He has conducted on-site research in several parts of Indonesia and in Papua New-Guinea in 1983-1984 and 1994.[58]

Even after the above-written introductory macro-overview of the exhibition, a curious discrepancy can be noted between the academic background of Ter Keurs and the focus as well as some of the design of the exhibition. Firstly, the exhibition does not zoom in on how the individual objects were collected and what role colonialism played in this process. Critical reflection on collectors, their activities and motives is mostly absent. Moreover, most objects miss the information about under what conditions, why and by whom they were collected. As the head-curator of this exhibition was a scholar specialised in critical analysis of object collecting and the history of cultural heritage and museums, it is a strange and unfortunate deficiency that specifically that dimension was mostly absent in the exhibition.

Secondly, the exhibition was opened by a room furnished with enlarged photographs taken by and displaying the work of Dutch colonial missionary, ethnographer, collector and author Petrus Drabbe on the Southeast Moluccan island of Tanimbar during the 1920s. The decision to set the tone of the exhibition with an eye-catching display of a colonial missionary's gaze at Southeast Moluccan peoples was a conscious curatorial choice. This choice gave the visitor a first impression of the Southeast Moluccas through the lens, quite literally in this case,

[56] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21.

[57] "Pieter ter Keurs: Hoogleraar Museums, Collections and Society, Profiel," Universiteit Leiden, Accessed November 25, 2022,
Pieter ter Keurs - Universiteit Leiden.

[58] Universiteit Leiden, "Pieter ter Keurs, Profiel."

of a colonial religious servant. Such an accentuation of this colonial perspective of the people of Tanimbar, especially as the exhibition opener, does not particularly express a critical stance towards the colonial- and collecting history of the exhibition.

The Exhibition: General Topic, Objects, Central Lens and Main Foci

The General Topic

Through displaying Southeast Moluccan material culture the exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden* presented the visitor with the cultures, arts and lifestyles of the Southeast Moluccas, particularly concentrating on the symbolism embedded in them. The objects all date from before 1980 and most of them as well as the cultural traditions they exemplify stem from pre-colonial and colonial times.[59] The Southeast Moluccan cultural life that was exhibited is a presentation of the past; certain aspects, like ancestor worship, still persisted on the islands and in diasporic Southeast Moluccan communities, but much of the material culture that caried and represented much of the daily, religious and ritual life in the Southeast Moluccas is gone.[60] The cultural life and heritage after independence that is included in the catalogue are the few pre-1950 customs and cultural expressions that did survive, as well as religious beliefs and symbolism that have remained part of Southeast Moluccan cultures. The post-1950 cultural life and heritage on the islands were thus not nearly as detailed and elaborately described as those that existed during and before colonisation. At the same time there is an overall absence of critical reflection on the colonial background of the collectors and collection (this will become more clear in the next sub-chapter). When displaying so many objects with colonial histories an exhibition is incomplete when it leaves out that colonial context. Moreover, it is insufficiently critical when it does not acknowledge and criticise the

[59] Pollmann, "Vergeten Eilanden," 29.

[60] Pollmann, "Vergeten Eilanden," 29; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37; Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, x-xi.

problematic manner in which those objects became part of museum collections and consequently ended up in this exhibition, for it thereby leaves out the dark side of how this exhibition was able to come about.

The Objects and the Central Lens

The objects displayed to tell the story of the cultural, artistic and daily life on the Moluccas were a collection of over 125 very diverse pieces of material culture. They included jewellery and golden decorative items, clothing and wickerwork, utensils and earthenware, religious accessories and ceremonial items, boat- and house ornaments, god statues and altars, and a variety of ancestor statues (see appendix 1).[61] The objects show the artisanry and tastes of the Southeast Moluccans, they indicate the everyday activities and tasks within Southeast Moluccan households and communities and the equipment they used for them and they represent the religious life and the role material culture plays in it. In the exhibition's focus on Southeast Moluccan culture, the concept of 'culture' thus has a broad definition, encompassing all aspects of Southeast Moluccan lifestyles. Indeed, the catalogue also elaborates on other societal elements such as community politics and rule of law, family structures and hierarchies, division of labour between men and women, boat-, house- and village construction and design, trade and economy, and status, warfare and hunting.

Nevertheless, there was very little presence of items of everyday use such as household items, furniture, cooking utensil, hunting- and fishing equipment and agricultural tools. This leaves a gap in the exhibition's representativeness because these aspects were also part of Southeast Moluccan lifestyles. In fact, the catalogue indicates that agriculture and fishing constituted vital aspects of Southeast Moluccan society as their main sources of sustenance.[62]

[61] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37; Pollmann, "Vergeten Eilanden," 29; Jansen, Koelemeijer and Ruiter, "Beeldende Kunst," 30.

[62] De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, xii-xiii.

Although 'culture' encompasses many aspects of Southeast Moluccan lifestyles in this exhibition, all of them were presented and explained through one single lens: religion in the form of 'symbolism'. Symbolism in this exhibition means the cultural, religious and social meaning and significance of customs and objects in the context of two main cultural traditions or symbolisms shared by nearly all Southeast Moluccan islands: ancestor worship and maritime symbolism. Belief in the omnipresence of one's ancestors and deceased loved ones in the world of the living informed most of Southeast Moluccans' behaviour, social organisation and daily life, and it remains inherent to the cultural identity of many Southeast Moluccans to this day.[63] Maritime symbolism comprises the way religious symbolism revolving around boats informed much of both the maritime aspect of life on the islands (fishing, trade voyages, social interaction with other villages, warfare) and the social organisation, village and house construction, worldview and material culture on land.[64] The all-encompassing, fundamental symbolism embedded in Southeast Moluccan life and worldview is dualism. The symbolic meanings of objects, people, practices and nature are understood in terms of complementing, harmonising and unifying opposites; man and woman are synonymic with e.g. hot and cold, sky and earth, and death and life and their union ensures social and cosmic balance. Besides these specific foundational symbolisms the deeper meaning of various objects was focused on and the porka ritual was explained. This ritual is a fertility celebration and forms an example of animistic symbolism in the Southeast Moluccas, during which the holy creation is re-established through several activities, including renewing the divine marriage between the skygod and the earth goddess, performing ceremonial dances and headhunting.[65]

Focus on Aestheticism

Something that also stands out in the exhibition as well as the catalogue is that the aestheticism of the objects is highlighted. Many pages consist mostly of photographed objects

[63] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37; De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, 48-67, 86-105.

[64] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, xii-xiii, 32-47, 68-85; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37.

[65] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, 66-67; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37.

rather than text and they jump off the pages in big quantities and large sizes, in such a way that the reader can study the small details of the depicted object in most cases. The catalogue is thus at least as much a visual book as a textbook, putting the objects themselves truly in the spotlight. An argument can also be made that the choice of objects for the exhibition was informed by a desire to emphasise the beauty of Southeast Moluccan material culture. An important share of the collection on display consisted of craftly sculpted or carved statues, altars and decorated sections of boats and houses. The rest of the collection overwhelmingly consisted of other visually striking objects such as richly decorated ceremonial objects, colourful jewellery, large and small detailed golden accessories and colourful detailed and decorated handwoven cloths, hand-painted pottery and handmade wickerwork. Only few objects in the exhibition were less eye-catching than these, but the exhibition also included some objects that depicted an emphasis on practical functionality and looked less exuberant. (See appendix 2). This indicates that Southeast Moluccan peoples did make and use objects where they focused less on their appearance. Seeing as the exhibition merely included few of these objects, sometimes even a single item or one single set, whereas it presented large arrays of various pieces within the eye-catching categories, there seems to have been a conscious preference for emphasising the visual beauty of Southeast Moluccan cultures and lifestyles.

The Exhibition: Narratives and Discourses

Uncritical Prominence Colonial Collectors

The narrative with which the objects are explained is mainly western-centred and insufficient in critical reflection, although a few elements indicate an attempt to show Southeast Moluccan perspectives. The first indication of an overwhelmingly western-centred perspective and insufficient critical reflection is the fact that the objects are also linked to their colonial collectors. This is executed in a rather neutral manner, providing short elaborations on how the collector discovered, interpreted and took the object, his perspective on the people and their customs, and the larger work of the collector as well as its significance to the

corpus of knowledge about the Southeast Moluccas. Moreover, the catalogue relies heavily on the work of those colonial collectors as fundamental source material. Additionally, their involvement in the study and collecting of the objects is regularly described. This is brought about in several ways: by repeatedly mentioning the colonial administrator who discovered or studied the object, tradition or custom by name and pointing out their specific contribution[66]; by presenting quotes from those colonial administrators about their discovery, observations or opinion pertaining to the cultural expression at hand[67]; and by comparing the Southeast Moluccan cultural element with the Dutch or western equivalent or point of view. The background of the colonial collectors is not elaborated on and therefore the forceful or violent approach and the orientalist or racist persuasions some of them had, as well as the general oppressive and destructive colonial framework they were all part of, are not problematised nor mentioned.

The Exhibition: Curatorial Methods and -Choices, Display Lay-out and Centre Pieces

Curatorial Methods and -Choices & Display Lay-out

The exhibition used a variety of methods in its presentation, including various multimedia.[68] The exhibition was divided into several individual categories, each displayed in its own designated space. The lay-out of the exhibition thus served to discuss the various elements of Southeast Moluccan cultures, arts and lifestyle separately, thereby emphasising the specific significance, role and form of each within the larger fabric of Southeast Moluccan cultural expressions. This could be valuable in the sense that this approach pays close attention to the individual cultural forms, which indicates a thorough and detailed interest for

[66] De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, 50. This is one example of the many occurrances throughout the catalogue.

[67] De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, 34. This is one example of the many occurrances throughout the catalogue.

[68] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21.

and presentation of Southeast Moluccan cultural life rather than a generalised macro point of view. Moreover, this approach acknowledges the importance and category-specific features of the individual cultural expressions, which can in turn highlight the structures, connections, complexity and variety of Southeast Moluccan cultures and lifestyles.

The first room of the exhibition, the one that introduced the visitors to the Southeast Moluccas, displayed a western-centred, colonial gaze on Southeast Moluccan peoples and their cultures. A selection of enlarged, high-resolution photographs taken around the late 1920s by missionary, ethnographer, collector and author Petrus Drabbe on the Southeast Moluccan island Tanimbar welcomed visitors into the exhibition here. The photographs depicted the people of the Southeast Moluccas as they went about their daily lives and cultural activities and as posing for portraits.[69] The tone of the exhibition was thus set by a colonial point of view, as the first the visitors saw of the Southeast Moluccas in the exhibition was not Southeast Moluccan cultures as leading the narrative or explained from indigenous perspective, but serving as the study object of and interpreted by a colonial servant. Providing visitors with a colonial gaze on Southeast Moluccan peoples as their introduction to the Southeast Moluccan cultures they were going to observe could affect the manner in which they viewed and understood the objects on display, leading them to interpret the material culture through a lens of western-centred- and orientalist bias. In other words, Drabbe's photographs formed a deflecting, distorting and biased representation of both the Southeast Moluccan cultures on display and the content and focus of the exhibition as a whole.

Centre Pieces

The eyecatchers among the various objects on display were arguably the ancestor statues and god statues. Newspapers praised and elaborated extensively on the statues and ancestor worship compared to other aspects of the exhibition, and pictures of the statues dressed up most articles.[70] Moreover, a god statue functioned as the face of *Vergeten Eilanden*

[69] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; Pollmann, "Vergeten Eilanden," 29; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37.

[70] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21; Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37; Pollmann, "Vergeten Eilanden," 29.

in newspaper advertisements promoting the exhibition.[71] Additionally, the catalogue highlights both ancestor statues and deity statues. The first pages of the catalogue consist page-filling pictures of the statues and in the rest of the book the statues are depicted plentifully, large and prominently as well. What is more, the ancestor statues on display were very diverse, representing a high variety of types, shapes, forms and geographical origins. Indeed, particularly ancestor statues seemed to have been the most varied object category of the entire exhibition. (See appendix 3). Ancestor worship was one of the two Southeast Moluccan religious traditions that formed the main narrative of the exhibition, which can partially explain the prominent focus on ancestor statues by the exhibition and the media. Moreover, several Moluccans, of both Southeastern- and Middle-Moluccan descent, were also especially impressed by the ancestor statues, and one statue in particular. A group of Southeast Moluccans had gotten a tour through the museum depot before the opening of the exhibition. Particularly Werwat had made a startling impression on them. The group leader showed his respect to the statue in their language of the island of Klein-Kei and apologised to her for the fact that she was in a museum instead of at home in Gelanit. He concluded by explaining to her that it was all for a good cause: she would introduce their culture to the Dutch public by featuring in the exhibition.[72]

Additionally, the director of a museum on Ambon, a Middle-Moluccan island, was also drawn to Werwat during his visit to the exhibition. Fascinated by the ancestor statues on display, as he gazed at Werwat he stated he was stunned to learn that the Kei islands indeed used to have ancestor statues.[73] His reaction exemplifies how the Southeast Moluccas are a distinctly separate and unfamiliar region within the Moluccas as a whole, with people on the Middle-, most populated islands knowing relatively little about their Southeastern counterparts. Ancestor statues, with Werwat in a star role, thus had an important function in both representing Southeast Moluccan culture on behalf of the Southeast Moluccan

[71] Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, "Vergeten Eilanden, het mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken," Advertisement, *De Volkskrant*, December 16, 1995, 1; Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, "Vergeten Eilanden, het mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken," Advertisement, *De Volkskrant*, December 29, 1995, 25; Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, "Vergeten Eilanden, het mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken," Advertisement, *De Volkskrant*, December 30, 1995, 1; Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, "Vergeten Eilanden, het mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken," Advertisement, *Het Parool*, December 30, 1995, 42.

[72] Hielkema, "Gekerstend," 37.

[73] Ibid.

community in the Netherlands, and presenting it to the general audience in the exhibition and the media.

The prominence and high variety of ancestor statues and god statues in *Vergeten Eilanden* is a token of the exhibition's choice to focus on the religious dimension of Southeast Moluccan cultures. The statues were generally the most popular part of the exhibition among visitors, journalists and Moluccans alike. But more importantly, chosen as the primary objects to exemplify the exhibition's focus on the religious aspect of Southeast Moluccan cultures, they were deliberately emphasised in the media through the exhibition's advertisement and by curator Ter Keurs and inspirers and contributors bishop Sol, De Jonge and Van Dijk in their newspaper interviews. As mentioned above, this only partially explains the explicit focus on ancestor statues and god statues. After all, of those two it was ancestor worship that was a primary narrative, and still then it was only one of two main religious narratives displayed in the exhibition. The other narrative, boat symbolism or nautical symbolism, is generally only mentioned in passing by newspaper articles, giving the impression that, accompanied by god worship, ancestor worship was the first and foremost topic of the exhibition. This is rather a misrepresentation of the exhibition because from the total amount of over 125 objects on display, approximately 20 were ancestor statues.[74] This means that the majority of the objects were at least partially related to boat symbolism, or they were representations of the overarching symbolic dualism embedded in Southeast Moluccan religion rather than embodiments of specifically ancestor- or deity worship. The attention for ancestor worship and deity statues in media and by the exhibition's representatives was thus disproportionately high.

[74] Van der Post, "Mysterie," 21.

The Exhibition: Community Inclusion

Moluccan Individuals & Ambonese Museum

As Nico de Jonge recalls in an email to this author, members of the Moluccan community were involved in the exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden*. Unfortunately, due to lack of time on by behalf, De Jonge could not consult his archives, leading to him remembering only two names of Moluccan individuals: Sylvia Pessireron and Aone van Engelenhoven.[75] Additionally, there was interaction with Museum Siwalima in Ambon, the Moluccas. Sylvia Pessireron has her family roots on Ceram, in de Middle Islands of the Moluccas.[76] Pessireron is an author, scriptwriter and lecturer and her work is strongly inspired by her Moluccan identity and the history of the Moluccan community as a whole.[77] Aone van Engelenhoven's family roots lay on the Leti islands in the Southeastern Islands.[78] Van Engelenhoven is a Linguist at Leiden University specialised in Southeast Asian and Austronesian languages. At the time of the curation of Vergeten Eilanden Van Engelenhoven was working on his PhD on the Leti language spoken in Tutukei.[79] Museum Siwalima displays material culture and the flora, fauna and geography of the entire Moluccas. Seeing as they were involved in the exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden* it can be assumed that the museum indeed presents objects from the Southeastern Islands.

According to De Jonge's recollections these community members also indirectly influenced the current permanent Moluccas exhibition through their involvement in *Vergeten Eilanden*, which functioned as its main source and inspiration. Although it is not exactly clear

[75] Do note that more Moluccan individuals were directly involved in *Vergeten Eilanden* and thereby indirectly had their influence on the current permanent Moluccas exhibition in the National Museum of Ethnology. I am by no means implying that the two individuals identified in this thesis made the most substantial contribution. I have simply not been able to trace all the individuals that were involved. Moreover, due to a lack of space I aimed to paint a macro-picture of the different backgrounds (family roots, professions and expertise) and capacities (individuals and institutions) the Moluccan community was involved, rather than elaborating on each individual separately.

[76] Nico de Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023.

[77] "Sylvia Pessireron," LinkedIn, accessed August 18, 2023, (23) Sylvia Pessireron | LinkedIn; Pessireron, *Molukkers in Nederland*.

[78] De Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023.

[79] "Aone van Engelenhoven," LinkedIn, accessed August 18, 2023, (23) Aone van Engelenhoven | LinkedIn.

what their involvement entailed, based on this information and their professional background it can be assumed that they had important influence on at least the narratives, sub-topics and possibly object selection of *Vergeten Eilanden*. This direct form of community inclusion is very significant because it directly affected the content of the exhibition and thereby its representation of the Moluccan world. These members of the Moluccan community have thus applied their agency in shaping their representation by the National Museum of Ethnology.

Collaboration Moluccan History Museum

The Moluccan History Museum had been planning to curate a Southeast Moluccan cultures exhibition in 1995 as well. This led to a collaboration between the Moluccan History Museum and the National Museum of Ethnology to jointly coordinate their exhibitions in such a way that they accommodate and complement one another. The result was that the National Museum of Ethnology focused on the past, the broader cultural-historical dimension and the entire Southeast Moluccan island group, while the Moluccan History Museum zoomed in on topical, contemporary forms and functions of specifically the arts and craftmanship of Tanimbar and how they changed and evolved as a result of the effects of globalisation.[80] The exhibition *Hedendaagse Kunstnijverheid van Tanimbar* (Present-day Arts and Crafts of Tanimbar) of the Moluccan History Museum opened one week prior to *Vergeten Eilanden*, on the 30th of September 1995.[81] The collaboration thus directly affected the topic, the curatorial approach and the practical organisation of *Vergeten Eilanden*. In that sense, the Moluccan History Museum helped to concretely shape the form and planning of the exhibition. In this manner the National Museum of Ethnology involved community inclusion in another significant and relevant way in the curation of *Vergeten Eilanden*. However, it seems that the Moluccan History Museum only influenced the macro-level of the exhibition consisting of its topic or focus, perspectives and displayed collection. They do not seem to have been involved in the narratives and discourses that explained the Southeast Moluccan cultural expressions and identified the objects. The Moluccan History Museum thus affected what was exhibited

[80] Moluks Historisch Museum/Museum Sedjarah Maluku, *Op Weg Naar Zelfstandigheid: Verslag van de Activiteiten van het Moluks Historisch Museum van 1 Januari tot en met 31 December 1995* (Utrecht: Moluks Historisch Museum/Museum Sedjarah Maluku, May 1996), 4, 6.

[81] Moluks Historisch Museum, *Op Weg Naar Zelfstandigheid*, 6; De Rooi, "Indonesië," 7.

but not particularly how it was exhibited, making this case of community inclusion a bit limited.

▲ 3
Analysis:
Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden

Introduction:

The Exhibition and its Background

In 2005-2006 the exhibition *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* (Indonesia, discovering the past) was hosted in Museum Nasional in Jakarta and De Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. It was a temporary exhibition about Indonesian material heritage and the product of a collaboration between the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, The Netherlands, and the Museum Nasional Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia. When in the early 2000s the Indonesian government requested to exhibit Indonesian objects from the National Museum of Ethnology's collection, Dutch officials assumed this was a precursor of Indonesian restitution demands and feared a consequential diplomatic conflict.[82] To safeguard international relations between the two countries a museological collaboration and a new conceptualisation of Indonesian cultural heritage were conceived. The museums founded the Shared Heritage Project to exchange knowledge of their collections of Indonesian material culture, which they now officially considered 'shared heritage' between both countries.[83] The exhibition *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* was a product of that project.[84]

The exhibition examined the colonial- and collecting history of both museum's Indonesian collections. The Indonesia collections of both museums were merged to present one large, shared collection of Indonesian material cultural heritage. The Moluccas formed only a small section of the exhibition, reflecting their status and geographical situation as

[82] Cynthia Scott, "Sharing the Divisions of the Colonial Past: An Assessment of the Netherlands-Indonesia Shared Cultural Heritage Project, 2003-2006," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 2 (2014): 181-83, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2012.738239Ó2012.

[83] Scott, "Sharing the Divisions," 181-83; Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 6-9.

[84] Scott, "Sharing the Divisions," 182; Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 6-9.

marginal minority region of the Indonesian archipelago. In the exhibition display the Moluccas are represented by a total of 7 objects. This small collection comprises jewellery, golden accessories and ancestor statues. Ancestor statues form the largest share of this collection; they constitute 4 of 7 objects. Indeed, the ancestor statues were arguably the highlight of the Moluccan section of the exhibition. The objects are presented along the lines of the professional biographies of their colonial collectors.

Creation, Curators, Initiators and their Objectives

Museum Nasional Indonesia and the National Museum of Ethnology created the exhibition as an alternative to an Indonesian loan and exhibition of Dutch colonial collections, aiming to prevent an Indonesian restitution request and consequential diplomatic conflict.[85] The museums thus started a collaboration on behalf of their respective governments, with the prevention of bilateral political strife as the first and foremost motivation and objective. One particular conception, gaining popularity among the colonial museums of Europe at the time, formed the foundation of the project, enabling the aspired shift away from ownership- and restitution claims towards a collaborative understanding of the collections: the idea of 'shared heritage'.[86] Rather than characterising the Indonesian cultural heritage in the Dutch museum collections as fundamentally Indonesian and therefore in foreign and illegitimate possession by Dutch museums, the project reframed the heritage as shared by both Indonesia and The Netherlands. The shared nature of the Indonesian heritage was based on the historical connection between the countries and the fact that both museums' Indonesian collections had the same collecting origins; they were collected by the same individuals and often initially formed one collection together, before being divided between museums and organisations in the two countries.[87] By framing the Indonesian heritage as belonging to both Indonesia and

[85] Scott, "Sharing the Divisions," 181-83.

[86] Scott, "Sharing the Divisions," 181-82.

[87] Scott, "Sharing the Divisions," 182-83; Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 6-32; Evelien Baks, "Exclusieve pracht en praal uit Indonesië," *Algemeen Dagblad*, December 15, 2005, 4.

The Netherlands, the countries could examine the colonial history of their shared past and their Indonesian collections together, respecting one another's bond with the cultural heritage.[88]

There is a certain degree of discrepancy between the political foundation of the exhibition and how the catalogue expresses the motivation and objectives behind the creation of the exhibition. In fact, the catalogue does not mention any political motivation, let alone how Indonesia's request to exhibit Dutch collections and Dutch fearful reluctance to honour it initiated the whole project, or that the project and the exhibition were conceived and designed to prevent political bilateral conflict. The foreword of the directors of the two museums and De Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam merely describes in very cryptical manner how the collaborative project came about. They state that Indonesia and The Netherlands have a long, complex, turbulent historical relationship, continuing its rollercoaster in postcolonial times. They then proceed by pointing out that the Indonesian cultural heritage has nevertheless always functioned as common ground that brought the nations together on several levels. Referring specifically to the museum world, the sciences and the public at large, the foreword concludes the paragraph by vaguely articulating that this general peace-making feature of Indonesian heritage 'recently lead to the collaboration between the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta, the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden and De Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam' in the form of the Shared Heritage Project.[89] The Indonesian and Dutch government are only mentioned as involved in or linked to the project or the exhibition by way of crucial funding.[90] At the same time, the two museums are put forward, repetitively and regularly by full name, as the creators and historical sources and -foundation of the project and the exhibition. In this manner, even without explicitly saying it, the catalogue creates the impression that the museums also initiated the Shared Heritage Project and the exhibition. This obscures the controversial political dynamics that were the true initiator of the project and exhibition.

[88] Scott, "Sharing the Divisions," 182-83.

[89] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 6.

[90] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 6.

Nico de Jonge

The curator responsible for the Moluccas collection, and the East-Indonesia section of this exhibition as a whole, was Nico de Jonge. In 2002 De Jonge started working at the University Museum of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen as Conservator Ethnology and from 2003 onwards functioning as Adjunct-Director of the museum. For the duration of a few years, while working in Groningen he worked simultaneously on *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden*, detached in Leiden as East-Indonesia expert from the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.[91] He selected the objects to be displayed from both the collection of Museum Nasional Indonesia and the National Museum of Ethnology, chose the collectors who were to form the structure of the exhibition and the catalogue chapter and wrote both the exhibition texts and the catalogue chapter, among other things.[92] This curatorial role came forth from his professional specialisation in East-Indonesia, with particular experience in the Southeast Moluccas.

[91] "Nico de Jonge," OKV, accessed August 16, 2023, Nico de Jonge | OKV; Nico de Jonge, email to author, August 14, 2023.

[92] De Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023.

The Exhibition: General Topic, Objects, Central Lens and Main Foci

The General Topic

The exhibition *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* revolved around the colonial collections of Indonesian material culture from both the Museum Nasional Indonesia and the National Museum of Ethnology. The Indonesian cultural heritage originated from all across the Indonesian archipelago and the Moluccas only formed a minor aspect of the exhibition. This is reflected by the catalogue as it bundles them together in the final chapter, *Verzamelaars op Verre Eilanden: Oost-Indonesië* (Collectors on Distant Islands: East-Indonesia), with all the other small islands and islands groups that constitute East-Indonesia. Rather than focusing on the objects themselves, the exhibition chose to examine their colonial history and collecting context.[93]

The chapter discussing the Moluccan collection (*Verzamelaars op Verre Eilanden: Oost-Indonesië)* wholly presents the objects along the lines of their colonial collectors, whose professional lives and collecting activities (in effect their concise professional biographies) form the main narrative. A total of four collectors' professions is discussed: administrative officers, military servants, church ministers and scientists.[94]

The Objects and the Central Lens

The Moluccan section of this exhibition consisted of a meagre total of seven objects. This small collection was hardly varied, comprising only 3 different categories of objects, i.e. jewellery, golden decorative status objects and ancestor statues. To be precise, the objects constituted a beaded necklace, a decorative golden plate and -golden board, a replica of an ancestor statue presumably inspired by Werwat, a 'column' (zuilbeeld) ancestor statue, the ancestor statue Werwat and the ancestor statue that presumably depicts her daughter. Besides the small size of the collection and the lack of variety in chosen objects, the objects

[93] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 6-32; Baks, "Pracht en praal," 4.

[94] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172.

represent merely three different Moluccan (groups of) islands: the Kei islands, the Leti islands and the island of Wetar. Wetar is only represented by the beaded necklace, the Leti islands are displayed with the two golden objects and the column ancestor statue and the Kei islands are depicted by three ancestor statues of one and the same type. By presenting only 1 or 2 different kinds of objects for each island (group) the collection fails to properly represent the broad range of cultural expressions of the individual islands and island groups as well as the high complexity and variety of the cultural fabric of the Moluccas as a whole. Indeed, the combination of the meagre size of the Moluccan collection, its lacking variety and its inclusion of merely three island (groups) makes the collection incomplete and misrepresentative of Moluccan cultures, because it is merely a fraction of the totality of objects and cultures that form part of Moluccan life and geography.

The main lens or perspective through which the Moluccan objects are presented is their collecting context, specifically the manner in which they were collected and by whom, sometimes including the collector's objectives. As explained above, the catalogue chapter and presentation of the Moluccan collection completely revolve around the professional biographies of its collectors. The elaborations of their careers, oftentimes including descriptions of their personalities and excerpts from their written work, constitute the entire narrative. The objects feature alongside the text in the form of large images and the few that are mentioned in the text are woven through the narrative by way of being mentioned, either individually or anonymously as part of a larger collection, as having been collected by the collector in question and in particular collecting circumstances. The Moluccan objects thus take a secondary position in the narrative and in their own display, as they mostly function as physical examples, references and illustrations of the collectors' work.

Focus on Aestheticism & Ancestor Statues

Besides the fact that the meagre size, insufficient variety and geographical underrepresentation of the Moluccan collection causes it to be crucially incomplete and to misrepresent Moluccan cultures, there are two other features that stand out. First of all, aesthetic quality seems to have been a main selection criterion in the creation of the Moluccan

collection. Each of the objects is aesthetically striking in some way, whether it is the shining gold of the golden plates, the colour and detail of the beaded necklace or the size and characteristic craftmanship of the ancestor statues (see appendix 4). This emphasis on the eye-catching qualities of the objects automatically excludes a variety of objects which' production did not necessarily involve high attention for aesthetics, such as household items and other objects for everyday use. This in turn inevitably causes the collection to be incomplete and misrepresentative of the cultures and people they originate from, because they present only a fraction of the objects made and used by them. The third conclusion is connected to this point, namely that the emphasis on ancestor statues seems to present the visitor with an overwhelmingly religious perspective on Moluccan material culture. This religious angle makes the representation of Moluccan cultures incomplete as well, because it similarly leaves out most other aspects of Moluccan lifestyles that are not directly related to religious practices and beliefs, but that nonetheless constitute vital components of daily life on the Moluccas.

The Exhibition: Narratives and Discourses

Inaccurate Labelling

The collection as a whole is presented as the 'Moluccas collection', but all objects on display are from the Southeast Moluccas. Moreover, the identifications of the individual objects do state the specific Southeast Moluccan island or island group of origin, but rather than indicating that it is a Southeast Moluccan island (group) it is followed by the generic characterisation of 'Moluccas'. Only the sections in the main text that specifically discuss when, how and where the objects were collected indicate that they originate from the Southeast Moluccas. However, these are merely a few short passages in the text, and other passages talk about 'the Moluccas', 'early Moluccan collection', 'dozens of Moluccan islands' and 'neighbouring Moluccan islands' instead.[95] This not only makes that this important distinction does not easily become clear when looking at the exhibition introduction and the

[95] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172-181, 191-96.

object identifications and when reading the text less than closely. It also causes confusion when one does read the entire text with close attention. There is a large social, cultural and political distinction between the Southeastern Islands and the Middle- and Northern Islands. Objects from the Southeastern Islands thus do not resemble the objects from the other islands, which means that a collection of exclusively Southeast Moluccan objects is not representative of the Middle- and Northern Islands, nor of the Moluccan archipelago in its entirety. In other words, by mostly labelling a Southeast Moluccan collection as a general 'Moluccan collection', the exhibition presents an incomplete and misleading representation of Moluccan material culture.

Lack of Critical Reflection on Colonial Context

As explained earlier, the objects were discussed from the perspective of their relation with their collectors. Both the general narrative (in terms of the information that is given and that which is left out) and the discourse (referring to the tone in which the collectors are discussed) are less than critical about the colonial context of the collectors and their work. Some sections display critical, negative opinions about character traits, objectives, methods and the reputation of the collectors.[96] At the same time other sections speak highly positively of them, referring to their activities, personality, methods and reputation in words such as 'legendary', 'merits', 'important role', 'surprisingly professional', 'very critical', 'enriching', and describing in close detail the various merits of their work the virtues of their character, praising their diligence and dedication in collecting, and thoroughly elaborating on how they were praised by colleagues and rewarded with various official decorations.[97] Consequently, the power imbalance, oppression, discrimination and problematic consequences that formed part of their collecting activities are mostly omitted from the narrative. Moreover, even though the lack of consent and the use of force and violence during collecting are mentioned, they are not sufficiently elaborated, analysed, criticised or problematised.[98] In fact, in the section that

[96] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172, 175, 177, 179-181, 195.

[97] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 172-73, 175, 177-81, 195-96.

[98] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 181, 191-95.

discusses military exploration missions and military collector A.J. Gooszen the authors state that such exploration missions were generally peaceful and did not typically involve military violence.[99] Apart from a vague indication of the use of force during Gooszen's collecting activities, the entire four-page long elaboration on several military exploration missions portrays such missions as adventurous scientific research expeditions rather than armies on missions to map colonised territories for oncoming annexation.[100] The dark side of collecting is discussed in an introductory chapter of this catalogue but it is thus not sufficiently considered in the cases of these individual collectors. This is problematic; since the author chooses to zoom in and elaborate on individual collectors and their role in the creation of the Moluccan collection, it is inconsequent to leave out the problematic side of these individual collectors' activities.

Secondary Role for Object in Object Identifications

The identifications accompanying the images of the objects also focus on their collector and collecting circumstances. Besides the type of object and its most basic cultural meaning, the identifications do not mention the larger social or cultural role, significance or usage of the objects. The standard information provided in the identifications consists of the object's island of origin, its collector and year of collecting, its material, its size and its archival serial number. The additional column of text accompanying some of the objects describes its collector and his special considerations and objectives as well as the particular reason and circumstances of its collection. An additional line of text added to some identifications describes the object's basic cultural meaning, e.g. "Het beeld representeert Werwat, een belangrijke voorouder."[101] (Transl. The statue represents Werwat, an important ancestor). The object identifications in this exhibition thus reflect the main text in ascribing the identity of objects a secondary position and describing, explaining and presenting the objects through the perspective of their relation with their collectors.

[99] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 191-92.

[100] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 192-95.

[101] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 192.

The Exhibition: Curatorial Methods and -Choices, Display Lay-out and Centre Pieces

Curatorial Methods and -Choices & Display Lay-out

Colonial Collector Central to Exhibition & Ambiguous Degree Critical Reflection Colonial Context

The curators of *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* displayed the objects under the banner of their respective collectors.[102] Similar to the catalogue narrative in the chapter about the Moluccas and other eastern islands the exhibition lay-out thus fully revolved around the colonial collectors and their activities. This is problematic if the exhibition narrative had a similar lack of critical discussion of the colonial context of the individual collectors as that chapter of the catalogue does. Seeing as the exhibition lay-out was fully structured around these individual collectors, with each display representing one specific collector as the overarching, common denominator of the objects on display, it is relevant to portray the collecting activities of those collectors as comprehensively as possible. This is important in order to provide the visitor with a sufficiently accurate and reliable understanding of those collectors as well as the collecting origins of the objects. Providing a comprehensive presentation of the collectors entails including acknowledgment and critical reflection on the problematic aspects of how and why they collected the objects on display in the exhibition displays.

It is not clear whether this was the case in *Indonesia*. A newspaper article in the Algemeen Dagblad that discussed the exhibition at considerable length seems to indicate that critical reflection on the colonial context of the collectors and their gathered collections was not a priority. Pieter ter Keurs, one of the two curators, was interviewed by the author of the article. He elaborates on the various manners of collecting during colonial times. He states that the reasons for collecting are very diverse and proceeds to sum up the objectives and types of collecting and collectors. He ends by mentioning spoils of war as means of building

[102] Baks, "Pracht en praal," 4.

collections and states that it does not form such a large share of the collecting origins; “Minder dan drie procent uit de collectie is meegenomen tijdens de drie koloniale oorlogen op Bali, Lombok en Atjeh”[103], says Ter Keurs. (transl.: Less than three percent of the collection was taken during the three colonial wars on Bali, Lombok and Atjeh.)

At the same time he does not mention that there was display of dominance and use force and violence involved in other manners of collecting besides warfare as well, such as military exploratory expeditions. Moreover, Ter Keurs’ words do not indicate the fact that there was an inherent power advantage for the Dutch colonials in their interaction with the people of the former Dutch East Indies. Even in cases where the objects were obtained through mutually agreed trade agreements, in which the local people thus consciously consented to giving away their possessions, this still took place in a situation of unequal power relations, with the coloniser in the advantageous position.[104] This is not articulated by Ter Keurs, however. In other words, in the article Ter Keurs does not express critical reflection on or substantial acknowledgment of the dominance of the colonial collector, the use of force and violence in collecting activities other than warfare and the questionable degree of consent on the part of the colonised people.

Centre Pieces

As discussed above, besides aestheticism the focus of this Moluccan exhibition was ancestor statues. Indeed, of the total of seven objects four were ancestor statues (among which one replica). De Jonge included some of the objects of *Vergeten Eilanden*, which he curated as well, in this exhibition, specifically a ‘zuilbeeld’ ancestor statue from Leti, Werwat and her daughter. Moreover, as will become apparent in the next chapter, Nico de Jonge had curated the current permanent Moluccas exhibition of the National Museum of Ethnology, and in doing so had put particular emphasis on ancestor statues. De Jonge had first put these three ancestor statues in the permanent Moluccas exhibition and subsequently used them in *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden*. These were the only objects from his then newly

[103] Baks, “Pracht en praal,” 4.

[104] Hardiati and Ter Keurs, *Indonesia*, 22-25.

created permanent Moluccas Exhibition that he selected for *Indonesia*. It thus seems that his particular interest for ancestor worship led him to make the curatorial choice of having more than half of the Moluccas display of *Indonesia* consist of ancestor statues, and thereby to make ancestor statues the overwhelming focus of the Moluccas display. It can thus be argued that ancestor statues, as a group of objects, were the centre pieces of this Moluccas exhibition.

The Exhibition: Community Inclusion

According to Nico de Jonge's recollections, curator of the Moluccas section of *Indonesia*, there have not been any Moluccan people, from the Southeastern Islands nor from the Middle- or Northern Islands, involved in the curation of the exhibition or the production of the catalogue.[105] Francine Brinkgreve, curator for the sections on Bali and Java, similarly indicated Nico de Jonge, as Moluccas expert, as being the only person with direct affiliation with the Moluccas who worked on the exhibition.[106]

The Moluccas section of the exhibition *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* was very small and formed in fact part of the larger section 'East-Indonesia'. I argue however, that the size of a display or exhibition is irrelevant for considering the inclusion of community members of the respective culture, land or people on display. What matters is that the community in question is being represented in public manner by public organisations and -institutions. It is relevant and valuable for large public institutions such as those who created this exhibition to engage in community inclusion. After all, due to their status and power and the relatively large audience they reach they can make a large impact when setting a good example by engaging in community inclusion. It is thus an unfortunate loss that there does not seem to have been any involvement of Moluccans in the curation of the Moluccas display of *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden*.

[105] De Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023.

[106] Francine Brinkgreve, email to author, August 7, 2023.

▲ 4
Analysis:
Molukken

Introduction:
The Exhibition and its Background

In the late 1990s the National Museum of Ethnology was completely renovated. Part of the renovation was a complete rearrangement of the exhibitions. Functioning as a pilot project, the Indonesia exhibition, which would become the 'Indonesia room', was the first to be wholly newly curated. Pieter ter Keurs and Nico de Jonge curated the entire room together in 2000, and De Jonge became specifically responsible for curating a Moluccas display. The Indonesia room, with the Moluccas display being part of it, became the first permanent exhibition of the newly renovated museum and functioned as the curatorial template for the creation all the other permanent exhibitions. In 2012 and in recent months of this year (2023) the Indonesia room has undergone a number of curatorial changes, but the Moluccas exhibition has remained unchanged. This is how the museum renovation and rearrangement of the late 1990s and early 2000s has led to what is now still the current permanent Moluccas exhibition of the National Museum of Ethnology, *Molukken*.

The current permanent Moluccas exhibition, forming part of the Indonesia room of the National Museum of Ethnology, takes a cultural-historical perspective to specifically Southeast Moluccan cultural objects. The exhibition revolves around religion on the Southeast Moluccas, particularly the symbolic meaning of objects and ancestor worship. In fact, the exhibition mostly revolves around ancestor worship, with 11 of the 17 objects on display being ancestor statues. Consequently, most of the exhibition's centre pieces are indeed ancestor statues. The exhibition does not contain many different types of objects, but the objects do vary greatly in their style and craftmanship. They are divided over the display in such a way that the few object types are scattered and the exhibition thus forms a visual mix of styles and object types. The objects are all collected during colonial times and the focus is generally on Southeast

Moluccan religion as it existed in those times. Nevertheless, the colonial history of the objects is barely discussed in the exhibition narrative. On the other hand, the object identifications contain rather elaborate and detailed object-specific information, which makes the exhibition narrative as a whole quite large and comprehensive.

Creation, Curators, Initiators and their Objectives

As touched upon in the previous chapter, the curator of the current permanent exhibition was Nico de Jonge. In 2000, together with Pieter ter Keurs he curated the entire Indonesia room, but the Moluccas display was specifically his work, as De Jonge states himself. Additionally, De Jonge wrote the texts for all the displays in the room.[107]

According to Nico de Jonge's own recollections, the current permanent Moluccas exhibition, and the Indonesia room in general, were curated as the first permanent exhibition of the renewed National Museum of Ethnology after the museum was completely renovated in the late 1990s. The Indonesia room, and the Moluccas exhibition being part of it, were created with the objective for it to function as a pilot project for assessing the success of the collaboration between the various partner organisations involved in the renovation and new curation of the museum. As De Jonge states, the responses to the Indonesia room were very positive, which led to the rest of the exhibitions of the newly renovated museum to be curated according to the same approach as this pilot project.

What the content of the exhibition is concerned, it was the objective of both Nico de Jonge and Pieter ter Keurs to create an exhibition (which counts for the Moluccas display as well as the entire Indonesia room) that moved away from what De Jonge calls the "'klassieke' Indonesië-presentatie" ('classic' Indonesia-presentation) in which Java and Bali and their colonial and royal histories take, in a very real sense literally, the centre stage.[108] Instead, as

[107] De Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023; Brinkgreve, email to author, August 7, 2023.

[108] De Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023.

De Jonge states, they wanted to show a broader, more authentic and complex Indonesia; they wanted to present Indonesia from the perspective of its indigenous religions and its international, worldly nature. This latter perspective constituted the influence of both the various world religions and the interconnected domestic trade network on Indonesian cultures.[109] In the Moluccas exhibition this curatorial approach translated into a display that overwhelmingly focused on ancestor worship, as will become clear below. Moreover, the colonial history of Indonesia with the Dutch would be included in the exhibition, but only as a small part of the larger narratives mentioned above rather than as a central narrative.

In the curation of the current permanent Moluccas exhibition and the Indonesia room as a whole De Jonge, together with Ter Keurs, actually made a conscious decision not to make colonial history be a central narrative in the displays. This had to do, as De Jonge put it, with the fact that they wanted to focus on the lesser known indigenous and culturally dynamic side of Indonesia to show a more authentic and complex Indonesia than can be seen in a narrative that revolves around the colonial influences on Indonesia. It can also be that, just as seems to have been the case with *Vergeten Eilanden*, De Jonge's background as cultural anthropologist rather than as historian caused him to be less inclined to focus on the colonial history of the objects in the Moluccas exhibition. In other words, his being trained as cultural anthropologist instead of historian might have contributed to the fact that colonial history barely forms part of the current permanent Moluccas exhibition.

[109] Ibid.

The Exhibition: General Topic, Objects, Central Lens and Main Foci

The General Topic

The current permanent Moluccas exhibition, *Molukken*, takes a cultural-historical perspective on Moluccan material culture. The Moluccan cultural objects are discussed from a religious perspective, focusing on the role of symbolism in everyday life and cultural expressions, the prominence of maritime traditions in social and cultural life both on water and land, and the significance of specifically ancestor worship as well as more general convictions about life and death. The objects on display were all collected during colonial times and the exhibition indeed mostly discusses Moluccan cultures as they existed during and before colonialism.

The objects originate from six different Moluccan islands and island groups, all located in the Southeast of the archipelago: the Tanimbar islands in general, Yamdena (part of the Tanimbar islands), the Leti islands in general, Lakor (part of the Leti islands), Damar and the Kei islands. Three of the objects were made and collected on the Kei islands by descendants of Bandanese who fled to Kei when Jan Pieterszoon Coen violently annexed Banda in the 17th century. These three objects are thus officially Bandanese cultural expressions, which is presumably why they are identified as originating from Banda. However, that Bandanese tradition had become part of cultural life on the Kei islands and these particular objects thus physically originated from Kei, which is also indicated by the additional information provided by the touchscreen accompanying the display. In other words, all objects in this exhibition come from the Southeastern Islands. The various islands represented in this exhibition are spread out over the entire Southeastern region of the Moluccas. The Kei islands are in the northeast and south of them, in successive order, the Tanimbar islands, Damar and the Leti islands lead increasingly southwest to the border with Timor.[110] This makes that the exhibition is quite a broad geographic representation of the Southeast Moluccas. The objects on display exemplify this broad, wide-ranging representation as well. They vary greatly in style, reflecting the cultural stylistic differences between the various islands that make up the Southeast

[110] De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, ix.

Moluccas. Despite its small size, the exhibition thus seems to be a rather accurate stylistic and geographic representation of the Southeast Moluccas.

The Objects and the Central Lens

The exhibition consists of 17 objects, ranging from household items to boat decorations and ancestor statues. Nevertheless, the collection on display is hardly varied, as it revolves emphatically around ancestor worship: of the 17 objects 11 are ancestor statues and the general contextual information focuses largely on ancestor worship. The remaining objects on display are two earthenware storage jars, one earthenware water pitcher, one prow decoration, one god statue and one family altar.

Both the 11 ancestor statues and the remaining objects reflect the main narrative of the exhibition, which is presented on stickers with text stuck to the display case. This narrative elaborates on the religious symbolism revolving around life and death in both everyday objects (earthenware) and more specifically ritualistic and religious objects (ancestor statues, god statue and family altar), and on maritime traditions (prow decoration). The central lens of the exhibition is thus religion, or specifically, the manners in which religion played a role in Southeast Moluccan lifestyles and how that was reflected in their material culture.

Focus on Ancestor Worship

As touched upon above, the exhibition revolves overwhelmingly around ancestor worship. Of the total of 17 objects on display 11 are ancestor statues, filling more than half of the display with ancestor statues of various types, styles and origins. The direct cause of this focus on ancestor statues and ancestor worship in general is the fact that curator Nico De Jonge wanted to put Moluccan ancestor statues in the spotlight.

As explained above as well as in the previous chapter, ancestor statues seem to have particular appeal for its observers, which becomes apparent from their popularity in the 1995 exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden* analysed earlier. Ancestor statues are highly overrepresented;

their share of the collection on display is disproportionately large in comparison with their role in Southeast Moluccan religions. The role of ancestor worship is indeed very large, but maritime symbolism and conceptions about life and death have very large roles in Southeast Moluccan religious life as well and are also greatly reflected in their material culture. Indeed, these two elements do not only form part of specifically Southeast Moluccan religious customs, but are woven into the fabric of e.g. social organisation, house construction, economic and artisanal task division and maritime activities such as fishery and political voyages to neighbouring peoples and islands.[111] There might thus be an additional reason for devoting more than half of the exhibition to ancestor worship. Arguably this additional reason is the appeal of ancestor statues. By focusing on ancestor worship and ancestor statues in particular, the exhibition's representation of Southeast Moluccan religions gets out of balance, with too much weight on ancestor worship and consequently too little attention for other elements of religions on the Southeastern Islands.

The Exhibition: Narratives and Discourses

Confusing Titling

As discussed above, the exhibition displays Southeast Moluccan objects only. However, the physical display case of this exhibition has the title *Molukken* (Moluccas), which implies that the objects on display originate from all regions of the Moluccas, while they thus actually represent only one, culturally highly distinct, region of the Moluccas. At the same time the touchscreen in front of the display case that visitors can consult for additional object-specific information titles the exhibition *Indonesië – Zuidoost Molukken* (Indonesia – Southeast Moluccas). The exhibition thus has two titles. At the same time, the visitor is arguably more likely to notice the large title on the physical display case and assume it to be the main title, which thus says '*Molukken'*. What is more, the text sticker on the display begins by stating the following: "Ancestor worship is very important on the Moluccas. This is reflected in the skilfully carved wooden ancestor statues.". Only a few sentences later the text starts talking in terms

[111] De Jonge and Van Dijk, *Vergeten Eilanden*, xii-xiii, 32-47, 66-85, 109, 121-22, 125, 138.

of ‘Southeast Moluccas’. This is problematic for two reasons. First of all, the introductory words suggest that the ancestor statues on display originate from the entire Moluccan archipelago, while they are really only from the Southeastern Islands. Second of all, it can cause confusion as to whether the objects on display and the cultural and religious expressions they reflect are specifically Southeast Moluccan or whether they can be found all over the Moluccan archipelago. In other words, the main title of this exhibition and the manner in which it recurs in the narrative are inaccurate because they mischaracterise the representativeness of the display. Additionally, the exhibition has two titles, which can confuse the visitor, and the truly accurate of the two titles is presented as secondary, easily missed by a visitor’s eye.

Omission of Colonial History in Main Narrative

As mentioned earlier, the exhibition revolves around religious, cultural expressions and objects dating from colonial times. The main narrative on the text sticker speaks in past tense when it discusses the customs and traditions that no longer exist in those forms and capacities on the Southeast Moluccas. However, it does not elaborate on the reason why those cultural expressions have largely disappeared. In that sense, it omits to discuss the colonial history of the objects on display. Even though the format of such a text sticker is designed to contain only brief summaries, definitions and -conceptualisations, such a sticker can afford enough room to add one or several sentences to briefly indicate the role of the colonial Dutch in the loss of cultural expressions and material culture on the Southeastern Islands of the Moluccas. It is thus quite an unnecessary deficiency that this exhibition does not acknowledge that colonial history in its main narrative.

The object identifications also mostly omit discussing the colonial history of the objects. In only four of them the colonial history is mentioned in some detail: the identifications of the three earthenware objects, of which the sentences about the colonial history are all identical, mention that the Bandanese ancestors of the people who produced the objects had fled from Banda due to the military invasion by Jan Pieterszoon Coen, and the identification of Werwat explains who took her, roughly in which circumstances and that another collector had previously decided not to take her for the fear of creating a religious

vacuum for Islam to fill. Although violence and force is implied to a certain extent, the nature or scope of the violence and display or use of force that came into play in these particular pieces of colonial history is not explicitly indicated. Moreover, most of the object identifications do not mention the collector of the object and his background, methods and objectives. In other words, the colonial history misses for the most part from *Molukken*, and in the few cases where the colonial context of the objects is included it is very vague, the collector remains unnamed or the violence and force involved is not sufficiently expressed. This can be explained by the curatorial choice to deliberately shift the focus away from colonial history. However, in light of the present-day topicality of decolonisation in societal debate and museum agendas it would be valuable to add the colonial context of the objects nonetheless. More elaboration on this follows in the next sub-chapter.

The Exhibition: Curatorial Methods and -Choices, Display Lay-out and Centre Pieces

Curatorial Methods and -Choices & Display Lay-out

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Nico de Jonge, together with Pieter ter Keurs, wanted to curate an Indonesia room that moved away from the emphasis on colonial history and instead focused on a more complex, authentic indigenous and worldly Indonesia. As De Jonge explains, he and Ter Keurs structured the entire Indonesia room around three main topics or perspectives: the influence of the large world religions on Indonesian cultures; the dynamic nature of Indonesian cultures through cross-pollination of cultural elements across the various islands of the archipelago; and the indigenous, "ethnic" religions of Indonesia that lay underneath the newly adopted world religions.[112] The world religions that took root in Indonesia as a 'thin layer' coating the indigenous beliefs, as De Jonge puts it, would form a main narrative by showing how Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and, only as last priority, the colonially imported Christianity reshaped, added to and hybridised the local

[112] De Jonge, email to author, August 15, 2023.

religions.[113] The second main topic, the dynamic nature of Indonesian cultures, had its foundation in the trade network between the various Indonesian islands. This brought the variety of cultures into contact with one another, leading them to integrate each other's influences and thereby reshape their own cultural identity on a regular basis. Lastly, the indigenous religions that remained ever-present underneath the thin cover of newly imported world religions were especially relevant to highlight, according to De Jonge. As he phrased it, by focusing on this "relatief onbekende basis" (relatively unknown basis) of Indonesian religious traditions the exhibition could present an authentic picture of Indonesia.[114] These indigenous religions had three main elements according to De Jonge: ancestor worship, fertility and the role of status.[115] As De Jonge explains, they wanted to dedicate individual displays to these three elements. This is how the Moluccas display became mostly dedicated to the element of ancestor worship. De Jonge is specialised in the Moluccas and had at the time of this curation already become familiar with the religions and objects of the Southeast Moluccas, including ancestor worship and -statues, mostly through his fieldwork on the islands in the 1980s and his involvement in the exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden*. After the choice was made to dedicate the Moluccas display mostly to ancestor worship De Jonge, after selecting the objects together with Ter Keurs, created a Moluccas display that was filled with both familiar objects from the *Vergeten Eilanden* exhibition and discoveries from the museum depot.[116]

It can be valuable to display the Moluccas, or really the Southeast Moluccas as explained above, from its indigenous side rather than through the perspective of their relations with the colonial Dutch. However, doing so by focusing entirely on religion, and for the most part specifically on ancestor worship, might be rather limited. Moreover, it is a reproduction of how the museum had presented the Southeast Moluccas in the temporary exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden*, without adding any substantially 'new' or undiscussed elements. It might thus have been valuable for the National Museum of Ethnology to create a permanent Moluccas exhibition that reaches beyond the already familiar religious side of the

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

Southeast Moluccas to portray other, non-religious aspects of Southeast Moluccan lifestyles, to show what cultural life on the Southeast Moluccas looks like in the present day or to make the link between the objects on display and the Southeast Moluccan community in the Netherlands. In that manner the museum would also make the visitor acquainted with a lesser or yet unknown narrative about the islands.

Nico de Jonge and Pieter ter Keurs thus made a conscious curatorial decision to let colonial history take a backseat in the Indonesia room and its Moluccas exhibition. This can thus be identified as the main reason why the colonial history of the objects and critical reflection on it are mostly absent in the Moluccas display. I argue that it is relevant nonetheless to include critical reflection on the colonial context of exhibitions. This permanent Moluccas exhibition was curated when colonial history was not yet a large point on museum agendas. Moreover, if an exhibition is created with the deliberate intention to shift the focus away from colonial history and thereby take a wholly different perspective on the objects at hand, it is arguably understandable that this curatorial line is followed fully and decisively. However, in the present times colonial history is evermore topical in public debate, museum methodology and museum policies. What is more, other parts of the Indonesia room have recently undergone changes in the displays and their narratives. On the 10th of July of this year (2023) the National Museum of Ethnology returned four of its Indonesia collections to Indonesia: the Singasari statues, the Lombok treasure, the Kris of Klungkung and objects from the Pita-Maha collection.[117] Additionally, in light of that restitution the museum changed the old Singasari narrative to a text about the process of and reasons for restitution of museum objects, and placed a rather elaborate and explicit text where the Lombok treasure used to be displayed that explains how the objects were stolen violently by the colonial Dutch. The museum has thus already been decolonising part of the Indonesia room. I argue that it would be relevant and valuable to extend this decolonising approach by adding detailed information of and critical reflection on colonial history to the current permanent Moluccas exhibition.

[117] "Alles over de restitutie aan Indonesië," Onze Collectie, Museum Volkenkunde, last modified August 1, 2023, Alles over de restitutie aan Indonesië | Volkenkunde in Leiden.

Centre Pieces

I argue the centre pieces of this Moluccas exhibition are the five objects depicted in the photographs below. Specifically these objects are (as labelled by the object identifications on the exhibition's touchscreen): an ancestral mother from Lakor; the heaven god from Lakor; a family altar (from Yamdena in the Tanimbar islands); ancestor statue Werwat (from the village Gelanit on Kai Kecil); and the daughter of Werwat (from the village Gelanit on Kai Kecil). In the exhibition they are located here, in corresponding order: on the far left above the three earthenware objects; on the front-right of the ancestral mother from Lakor and the earthenware objects; on the front-right of the heaven god from Lakor; on the far front-right, directly next to the display case; on the far-front right, next to the daughter of Werwat.

They have a few features in common. First of all, they are all visually striking in some way. The first three objects all have detailed, elaborate decorations and are finely carved. Moreover, the heaven god and the family altar are very large. The last two objects are both carved in an identically robust way without much detail or decoration, look quite weathered and especially Werwat is rather large as well. Second of all, with the exception of the ancestral mother from Lakor, each object takes prominent positions in the display. The heaven god from Lakor and the family altar both take front-centre positions in the display case and Werwat and her daughter stand separately from the display case as a pair, right along the main walking route through the Indonesia room, facing the door to the next exhibition room. Third of all, apart from the heaven god every object is directly related to ancestor worship. So although the ancestor statues as a collective object group is not the centre piece of this Moluccas exhibition, most of the individual centre pieces are nonetheless ancestor statues. For the most part, the most striking objects for the current permanent Moluccas exhibition were thus selected specifically to serve the emphasis on ancestor worship.

The centre pieces as displayed in the current permanent Moluccas exhibition of the National Museum of Ethnology. Pictures taken by the author at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, The Netherlands, 15 August 2023.

Ancestral mother from Lakor.

Heaven god from Lakor and Family altar from Yamdena.

Werwat and Werwat's daughter.

Details of the family altar from Yamdena.

Details of the heaven god from Lakor.

The Exhibition: Community Inclusion

As Nico de Jonge recalls, members of the Moluccan community were involved in the current permanent exhibition indirectly, through their involvement in the exhibition *Vergeten Eilanden*. As elaborated in Chapter 2, they include but are not limited to Sylvia Pessireron, Aone van Engelenhoven and Museum Siwalima in Ambon.

Members, organisations and institutions of the Moluccan community were thus not directly involved in this exhibition. It seems that their influence on the current permanent Moluccas exhibition came mainly in the form of their influence on the objects and narratives of *Vergeten Eilanden* that were selected and that formed the inspiration for this exhibition. They thus did not directly participate in the curation of the exhibition. Nevertheless, it is relevant that their contributions, perspectives and expertise that helped form *Vergeten Eilanden* were indeed used in the creation of the exhibition. In that manner they inspired the choice of topics, objects, central lens and main focus of the exhibition and possibly some of their expertise and perspectives ended up in the exhibition narratives. This led the exhibition to include at least part of their voices. At the same time, it would have been valuable to include the community directly as well. Then community perspectives would have been more prominent in the narratives and display, making the exhibition more of a direct, active collaboration between the museum and the community. In that manner the community would have had more agency in how they were represented, which could have been meaningful for the community, especially considering the fact that the museum in question is one of the most renowned ethnology museums in The Netherlands.

▲ Conclusion

Several trends or continuities can be identified in the three exhibitions analysed in this thesis. Firstly, all three exhibitions revolved exclusively around the Southeast Moluccas (in the case of *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden* this refers to the Moluccan section of the exhibition) and consequently did not discuss the history of the Moluccan community in The Netherlands. None of the exhibitions thus engaged with the emancipation of the Moluccan community in terms of gaining acknowledgment for their experiences and pain as a minority in The Netherlands. Secondly, all three exhibitions put emphasis on religion, particularly ancestor worship, and highlighted ancestor statues. A few ancestor statues even featured in every exhibition. In so doing all three exhibitions presented an incomplete and imbalanced image of Southeast Moluccan cultures and religions. Thirdly, in each exhibition Nico de Jonge was involved. He applied his experience as advisor in *Vergeten Eilanden: Het Mysterie van de Zuidoost-Molukken* to his curation of the subsequent two exhibitions. This resulted in all three exhibitions having certain characteristics in common, most notably the emphasis on religion and specifically ancestor worship. Moreover, considering De Jonge's expertise as cultural anthropologist rather than historian it arguably also contributed to *Indonesia* and *Molukken* having a similar lack of critical reflection on colonial history as *Vergeten Eilanden*. This brings me to the fourth continuity, namely the fact that all three exhibitions were insufficiently critical about the colonial history of the objects. In that sense none of the exhibitions adequately engaged with the decolonisation of their collections, displays and narratives.

There were two substantial developments discernible from the analysis of the three exhibitions. These were not increasingly upward or even steady developments, however. They indicate either a circling back to the approach of the first exhibition or a zigzag movement of alternate approaches from one exhibition to the next. Important to note: the current permanent Moluccas exhibition was curated before temporary exhibition *Indonesia*, but it is considered to be chronologically last in line. This is because the temporary exhibition only lasted for approximately a year, whereas *Molukken* has existed for more than 20 years now.

In this sense changing the approach was not a substantial option or consideration for *Indonesia*, while *Molukken* has had plenty of time to reconfigure itself. In fact, other parts of the Indonesia room, which *Molukken* is part of, have changed curatorially over the years, with July-August of this year (2023) having seen the most recent changes.

Firstly, there was a rising and subsequently falling line with regard to the engagement with colonial history. *Vergeten Eilanden* had almost no attention for colonial history, emphatically focusing on the religious-cultural aspect and aestheticism of Southeast Moluccan material culture. *Indonesia* was a betterment in this respect because it revolved around the colonial collectors of the objects on display. However, at the same time it was not sufficiently critical about the problematic colonial context of these collectors and their activities. Lastly, the current permanent Moluccas exhibition circled back to the approach of the *Vergeten Eilanden* in that it also barely included colonial history. Secondly, each exhibition engaged to a vastly different degree with community inclusion. *Vergeten Eilanden* seems to have engaged the most with community inclusion, involving Moluccan individuals of different family roots and professional backgrounds, an Ambonese museum and the Moluccan History Museum directly in its curation process. *Indonesia* forms a large contrast with *Vergeten Eilanden* as it did not include the Moluccan community at all. *Molukken* took an approach that fell somewhere in between, because it involved only the indirect influence of Moluccan individuals and the Ambonese museum.

In conclusion, to answer the research questions central to this thesis, the National Museum of Ethnology has exhibited the Moluccan world between 1995 and the present day exclusively through displaying Southeast Moluccan material culture, by focusing overwhelmingly on Southeast Moluccan religion and by laying emphasis on ancestor worship. This is arguably largely because of the professional background of Nico de Jonge, who was inspirer and advisor to *Vergeten Eilanden* and curator of *Indonesia* and the current permanent Moluccas exhibition. Familiarised with the religious-cultural aspect of Southeast Moluccan material culture through his fieldwork as cultural anthropologist and his involvement in *Vergeten Eilanden*, he applied the same foci on religion and ancestor statues of that exhibition to the subsequent two he curated. Moreover, the exhibitions discussed and problematised

the colonial context of the objects insufficiently. In *Vergeten Eilanden* and *Molukken* colonial history was barely discussed and where it was it remained insufficiently critical and detailed. *Indonesia* structured the display of its objects around their colonial collectors, but did not sufficiently discuss the problematic aspect of those colonial collecting activities. Lastly, Moluccan perspectives were included in the exhibitions and their curation by means of differing degrees of community inclusion. *Vergeten Eilanden* included the Moluccan community rather elaborately, broadly and directly in the curation process. *Indonesia*, on the other hand, did not engage with community inclusion whatsoever. The current permanent Moluccas exhibition was influenced by Moluccan individuals and institutions only indirectly, through their involvement in *Vergeten Eilanden* which formed a main inspiration and source for this exhibition.

This thesis has shown how the Moluccan world has been represented by the National Museum of Ethnology in the past 28 years. Moreover, it has shown to what degree the Moluccas exhibitions have engaged with their colonial histories. Lastly, this thesis has shown to what degree the exhibitions have included the community itself in their representation. In this manner this thesis has shone a light on how one of the main Dutch ethnology museums has related itself to one of the smallest minority communities in The Netherlands, the Moluccan community. How the museum considered the community's valuation of their representation and their move for emancipation has become apparent from its application of community inclusion as a form of the community's agency and from the image it has chosen to present of the Moluccan world. Moreover, this thesis has indicated the scope and manner of this renowned museum's efforts to decolonise its exhibitions on this Dutch minority community over the past 28 years. It has shown that decolonising the Moluccas exhibitions has not been high on its agenda. Lastly, it has shown that museological efforts to decolonise collections do not necessarily succeed in terms of sufficient critical reflection, analysis and problematising of the colonial (collecting) history of the objects, as became apparent from the analysis of *Indonesia, de ontdekking van het verleden*. In other words, this thesis has contributed to the existing scholarship by showing how one of the top ethnology museums in The Netherlands has engaged with matters of representation, decolonisation and inclusion of one of the smallest and lesser known Dutch minority communities in its exhibitions.

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Appendices

The identifications provided with the pictures in the appendices below are very basic. They generally only contain information about the type of object, its place of origin and sometimes its material. In special cases, i.e. when additional information is essential for understanding the function and significance of the object or how it deviates from others of its kind, its function, its decorations and in case of ancestor- and god statues its identity are also included. This makes the identifications in these appendices in most cases more basic than the ones in the catalogue and the exhibition. This choice was consciously made for two reasons. First of all, the objects depicted in the appendices only serve to paint a general picture of the variety of and differences between objects that were on display in the exhibition. For such a macro-overview the author feels that the most basic information suffices. Second of all, this author aimed to provide consistency in the identifications. One of the most problematic features of the identifications in the catalogue and exhibition is the high irregularity in the amount and type of information given by the object identifications. By largely including the same types and amount of information in all identifications below, this irregularity is partly undone. However, unfortunately the appendices were dependent on the information in the catalogue. Since the catalogue provides almost no information for some objects, the identifications for those specific objects are similarly meagre in the appendices below. Fortunately, these are exceptions. For each object in the appendices below, the page number on which it features in the catalogue is indicated. In this manner one can look up additional information about the object and inquire how the catalogue presents and explains the object.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Objects on Display

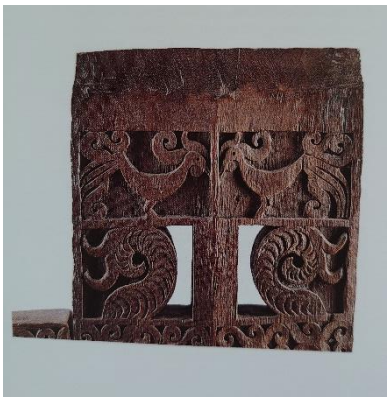
Chapter 2

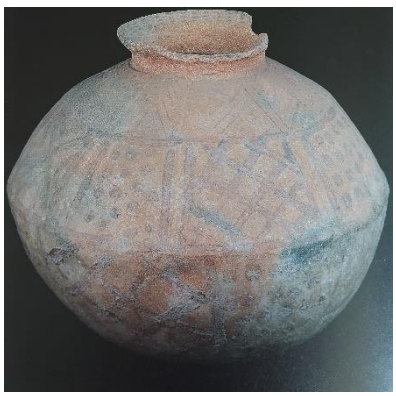
Utensils. Left: combs, from Babar (pp. 36)
Right: measuring tools, from Kisar (pp. 43)

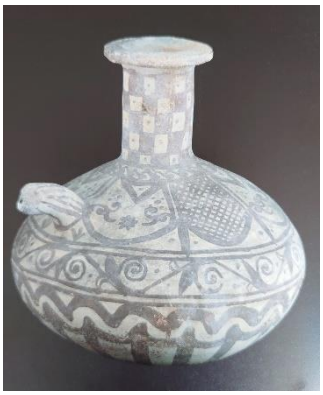
God statues. Left: heaven god Lamiaha, from Emroing on Babar (pp. 3)
Right: heaven god, from Lakor (pp. 64)

House ornaments.
Left: panel, from Dawelor (pp. 38)
Right: girders, from Aru (pp. 77)

Altars.
Top: tavu, from Tanimbar island Selaru (pp. 94)
Bottom: top of a tavu, from Tanimbar island Selaru (pp. 74)







Earthenware. Left: Jar, from Aru (pp. 144)
Right: Bandanese style pitcher, from Kei (pp. 140)

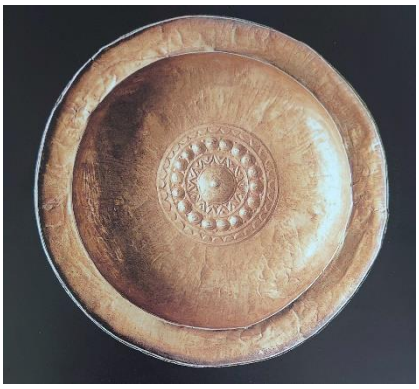
Ceremonial objects. Left: (dancing-) mask, usually used for porka ritual, from Leti (pp. 48)
Right: animal figurines, used to be attached to a comb worn during war dance of porka ritual, from Babar island Dawera (pp. 67)

Woven clothing. Left: sarong, from Kisar (pp. 126)
Right: loincloth, from Babar (pp. 135)

Boat ornaments. Left: canoe sterns, from Damer (pp. 39)
Right: prow, from Tanimbar (pp. 70)

Ancestor statues.
Left: pillar statue of house founder and pillar statue, from Leti (pp. 58)
Right: Werwat, presumably wife of village founder, from Gelanit on Small-Kei (pp. 96)

Wickerwork.
Left: seating mats, from Aru (pp. 150)
Right: sirih bag, from Kisar (pp. 148)

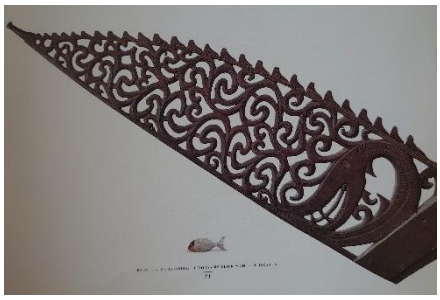


Golden jewellery and decorations.
Left: golden plate, origin unknown (pp. 111)
Right: golden kmwene- earrings, from Tanimbar (pp. 108)

Appendix 2: Focus on Aestheticism
Chapter 2

A small selection of the aesthetically striking objects

House panel, from Kei (pp. 68)

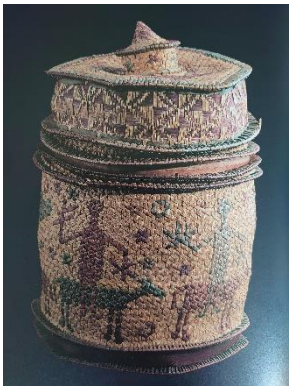


Prow, from Tanimbar (pp. 71)

Golden mase (pendant), from Tanimbar (imported) (pp. (pp. 116)

Golden snake, from Kisar region (imported) (pp. 117)

Wicker household basket, from Kisar (pp. 152)



Loincloth, from Tanimbar (pp. 134)

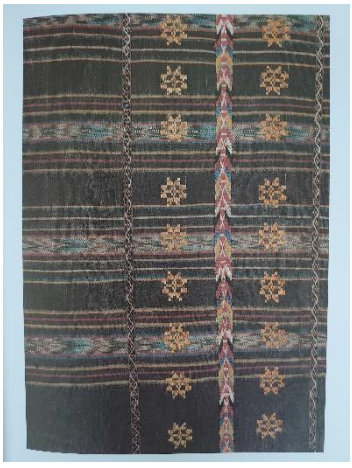
Golden head attire, from Sermata (presumably imported) (pp. 112)

(Dancing-) mask, usually used for porka ritual, from Leti (pp. 48)

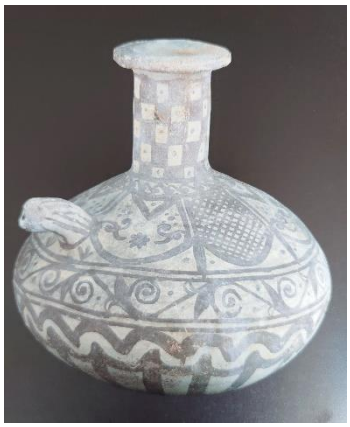
Golden kmwene- earrings, from Tanimbar (pp. 108)

Pillar ancestor statue of house founder and pillar ancestor statue, from Leti (pp. 58)

Sirih bag, from Kisar (pp. 148)



Sarong in ikat style, from Babar (pp. 131)



Bandanese style pitcher, from Kei (pp. 140)

Two ancestor statues, from Luang; two ancestor statues, from Leti; two Christianity-influenced ancestor statues, from Damer (pp. 51)

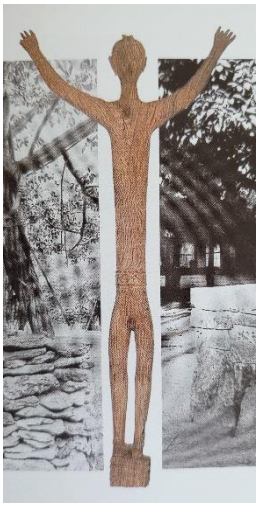
The objects below form the only objects in the entire catalogue that were significantly less eye-catching, decorated and detailed

Left: stone ancestor statue of male fieldguard, from Amtufu on Tanimbar island East-Yamdena (pp. 103)
Right: stone ancestor statue of female fieldguard, from Alusi Karwain on Tanimbar (pp. 102)

House panel, from Dawelor (pp. 35)

Ancestor statue of a smith, from Letsiara on Babar (pp. 52)

Ancestor statue of the slave of Inkélu, sister of Atuf, from Olilit on Tanimbar (pp. 92)



Ancestor statue, presumably from Northeastern Babar (pp. 61)

Left: Dodaat Leer ancestor statue , from Alusi Karwain on Tanimbar island East-Yamdena
Right: ancestor statue, from eastern Maluku Tenggara (pp.

Torch standards, from villages on the east coast of Babar (pp. 66)

Appendix 3: Variety Ancestor Statues
Chapter 2

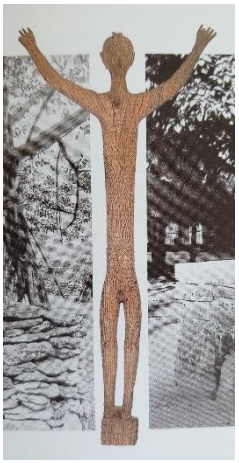
Ancestor statues, presumably mother with child, from Babar (pp. 1)

Ancestor statue, from Sermata (pp. 49)

Ancestor statues, used as warrior amulets, from western Maluku Tenggara (pp. 53)

Two ancestor statues, from Luang; two ancestor statues, from Leti; two Christianity-influenced ancestor statues, from Damer (pp. 51)

Pillar ancestor statue of house founder and pillar ancestor statue, from Leti (pp. 58)



Ancestor statue, presumably from Northeastern Babar (pp. 61)

Luli-statues (type of ancestor statue), from Lakor (pp. 54)

Female ancestor statues made of bone, from Tanimbar (pp. 82)

Left: female ancestor board statue, from Damer
Right: male ancestor board statue, from Damer (pp. 63)

Ancestor statues of village guard Sumaka (right) and his wife Bora (left), from Olilit on Tanimbar (pp. 89)

Ancestor statue, from Leti (pp. 4)

Werwat, presumably wife of village founder, from Gelanit on Small-Kei (pp. 96)

Ancestor statues made of bone, from Tanimbar (pp. 83)

Left: Dodaat Leer ancestor statue , from Alusi Karwain on Tanimbar island East-Yamdena
Right: ancestor statue, from eastern Maluku Tenggara (pp. 100)

Ancestor statue of the slave of Inkélu, sister of Atuf, from Olilit on Tanimbar (pp. 92)

Appendix 4: Aesthetic Collection
Chapter 3

Necklace, from Wetar (pp. 175)

Mas bulan (golden board), from Leti (pp. 176)

Mas piring (golden plate), from Leti (pp. 176)

Ancestor statue, or *Sedeu* (Werwat), from Kai (pp. 192)

Ancestor statue (Werwat's daughter), from Kai (pp. 192)

Replica ancestor statue, from Kai (pp. 178)

Ancestor statue, from Leti (pp. 179)