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The colonial legacy of *Mooi Indië* and the captive mind in the environmental policy of Citarum Harum

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Abstract

Mooi Indië paintings represented the orientalist-colonial imagination of the picturesque Netherlands East Indies, with the obfuscation of the social realities on the ground and the silencing of the adverse effects of colonial capitalism. This article discusses the colonial legacy of *Mooi Indië* paintings on contemporary environmental policy in Indonesia, with a case study of the policy of the Citarum Harum Taskforce. This Taskforce was formed in 2018 and marked the national government's attempt to rehabilitate the Citarum after it was declared one of the most polluted rivers in the world. It provides an analysis of several *Mooi Indië* paintings which depict the Citarum River and were created by European painters (such as Antoine Payen and Isaäc Groneman), before looking at the contemporary effects of the Citarum Harum's beautification-oriented policy. The article also analyses some particular stereotypes of Netherlands East Indies natives as depicted in *Mooi Indië* paintings for comparison with the Taskforce's policy implementation on the residents along the Citarum River. Ultimately, such a comparison demonstrates a form of colonial captivity at work today. The ideas of the Citarum Harum Taskforce demonstrate a captive mind, which continues to hide the socio-environmental problems which persist. This to the exploitation of the environment and people in the wake of the contemporary neoliberal system which dominates our worldview.

Keywords

Citarum Harum; *Mooi Indië* paintings; Orientalism; captive mind; colonial capitalism; environmental policy.

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Introduction: the need for scientific advancement in the colony

In the early nineteenth century, art was a significant part in the policies of the Dutch empire which were focused on the advancement of modern science in the Netherlands East Indies. Marie-Odette Scalliet has argued that this move was motivated by Thomas Stamford Raffless' achievements as the Lieutenant-General of the Netherlands East Indies under British Imperial rule from 1811-1815 (Scalliet 1999: 41-45). As the head of government, he did something the Dutch empire had not, namely he initiated scientific expeditions in the colony. Prompted by his own fascination with the history of Java, he collected Javanese antiquities and compiled several reports about the indigenous peoples of Java during his tenure as lieutenant-general. In addition, he ordered his subordinates to investigate a monumental ruin which was identified as the Borobudur *stupa* in 1814.

His findings about Borobudur were published in Volume 1 of his two-volume publication entitled *The history of Java* (1817). In this volume, the socio-cultural artefacts he encountered in Java, ranging from garments to weapons, were depicted in beautifully crafted hand-coloured aquatints created by the prominent English landscape painter William Daniell under the direction of Raffles. With *The history of Java*, Raffles introduced Java to Europe (Scalliet 1999: 41-45).

Beyond the Dutch Empire's new policy, after *The history of Java*, a competition grew among the imperial countries which was rooted in the desire to explore as much of the colonies natural resources as possible with the goal of knowledge production (Scalliet 1999: 44-46). After the Napoleonic Wars, the restoration of Dutch colonial power began with the advancement of science by the appointment of a Prussian-born Dutch botanist, Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt, as the Director of Agricultural Affairs, Sciences, and Arts in the Netherlands East Indies in 1816. As Scalliet notes, throughout the world, this journey of discovery became essential as was the promotion of scientific knowledge which reflected a European vision of foreign cultures and natural phenomena (Scalliet 1999: 44-46).

Antoine Payen: a government-appointed landscape painter

Just as Raffles had employed draftsmen and lithographers to compile *The history of Java*, the Dutch colonial government also employed draftsmen from the Netherlands and other European countries to support scientific expeditions in Java and the surrounding islands. Previously, under the rule of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) rule from the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century, draftsmen were employed for mapping in order to convert technical information such as altitude, vegetation types, and terrain characteristics into visuals which were used as military tools for conquest and trade competition with other imperialists (Susie Protschky 2011: 24-28).

The first draftsman to accompany Reinwardt was Adrianus Johannes Bik. Rather than an artist, Jan Bik was a horticulturalist. After Jan Bik, his younger brother, Jannes Theodorus (Theodoor) Bik, was employed by

Reinwardt to accompany him on scientific expeditions in Java and other islands (Scalliet 1999: 43). The Dutch colonial government then employed a professional painter, namely Antoine Auguste Joseph Payen,[1] from Belgium in 1816 (Protschky 2011). Payen was the first professional painter to be officially assigned by the government. From 1817 to 1820, he travelled across Java as a member of the scientific expedition led by Reinwardt. Koos van Brakel states that Payen's task was "to provide as accurate and faithful a picture of the Javanese landscape as possible" (Van Brakel 2009: 50). In 1819 Payen and the Bik brothers explored all of of the Priangan including Bogor, Sukabumi, Bandung, and Tasikmalaya. They investigated the forests, rivers, and mountainous areas of West Java (Scalliet 1999).

Antoine Payen's studies and sketches of the Citarum River, part of the Priangan expedition

Payen created hundreds of sketches and studies using pencils, watercolours, and oils. On his return to Europe, he reworked many of these into oil paintings. Scalliet, in her book entitled *Antoine Payen: Peintre des Indes orientales, vie et écrits d'un artiste du XIXe siècle (1792-1853)* (Antoine Payen: the painter from the East Indies, life and writings of a nineteenth-century artist 1792-1853) includes all of Payen's daily journals. These journals document his expeditions in the Netherlands East Indies (Scalliet 1995).

One such expedition is Payen's journey along the Citarum River with the Bik brothers. More specifically, it covers the initial period of the scientific expedition led by Reinwardt in Java from April to June 1819. Today this river flows through several regions including the Regencies of Bandung, West Bandung, and the city of Bandung. Payen's reveals how these scientific expeditions were organized, undertaking tasks such as the collection of butterfly, moths, birds, and plant specimens. This journal also records the biodiversity of the Priangan Area through Payen's eyes. For example, he notes that he encountered bird species he had never seen before in Europe as well as traces of Javan rhinoceroses and tigers (Scalliet 1995: 295-297), which were believed to be extinct. In his notes, Payen expresses his wonder at the natural scenery of Priangan. For example, he writes that, because the landscape was so beautiful, he feared that he would not be able to depict its true beauty, comparing himself to a colleague in Belgium, Henri van Assche (Scalliet 1995: 300). In his

[1] A painter, architect, and naturalist, Antoine Auguste Joseph Payen (1792-1853) was a Belgian painter who inherited his artistic talent from his father, Auguste Payen, an architect. Payen was an artist who was first employed by the Dutch Empire to take part in a scientific expedition project in the Netherlands East Indies in 1817. Trained as a landscape painter, Payen won several awards at Salon events in Paris and Brussels. When he first landed in the Netherlands East Indies, Payen lived in Bogor, from where he accompanied scientific expeditions in Priangan (West Java), for instance, from Sukabumi in the west to Tasikmalaya in the east in 1819. This expedition was followed by others to all parts of Java for the next six years. After that, until 1824, Payen spent four years participating in explorations to Maluku and Sulawesi. These explorations were sufficient for Payen to create picturesque paintings of mountains, wildlife, iindigenous activities, and temple ruins. Payen was Raden Saleh's first painting mentor.

testimony, Payen also notes that the native inhabitants living around Citarum still followed a hunting and gathering way of life (Scalliet 1995: 300-301).

From May to June 1819, Payen and his colleagues camped at Sanghyang Tikoro, a site on a section of the Citarum River in the Regency of West Bandung. As described in Payen's journal, Sanghyang Tikoro is comprised of caves nestled in the limestone mountains (Scalliet 1995: 297). Currently this site is part of the Saguling Hydroelectric Power Plant Area. It is composed of large limestone rocks with a unique texture and colour making rapids which, Payen notes, could be heard from a mile away (Scalliet 1995: 298). Payen captures the atmosphere of Sanghyang Tikoro in several oil studies, one of which is part of the National Gallery of Singapore's collection. Although this study is not dated, Scalliet believes that Payen created this work when he was exploring Priangan in 1819 (Scalliet 2017: 64).

Entitled *The River Citarum, Priangan (West Java), with figures on a tree-trunk raft* (1819), this painting depicts an idealized vision of Sanghyang Tikoro; a placidly flowing river with large rocks scattered in it (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Antoine Auguste Joseph Payen (1819), *The River Citarum, Priangan (West Java), with figures on a tree trunk-raft,* Oil on paper laid down on panel, 24 x 29.5 cm, undated. (Courtesy of National Gallery Singapore).

The painting represents the viewer's elevated point of view, as indicated by the inclusion of two small people riding a raft in the painting's lower right. In addition, a massive limestone rock towers over these figures, appearing approximately three times their size. This painting demonstrates Payen's skill

as a landscape painter. The result of his framing is a balanced composition between three areas: rocky river, hosts of trees, and sky. A row of rocks at the painting's vanishing point reveals a group of dense leafy trees, each a different shade of green and red. Above this, the sky scattered with thin clouds completes the scene.

Payen had a superb talent for capturing realistic natural impressions in his paintings. The clarity of the river's water is depicted from afar by the reflection on the rocks in the riverbed. The surface qualities of these stones are readily visible and support the accentuation of the whole painting. Furthermore, the depiction of the sky is also dynamic. The thin clouds which shift from blue to red indicate it is either early morning or dusk. Through his mastery of the techniques of impression, Payen captures the light which falls and illuminates the surfaces of the leaves, rocks, and river's placidly flowing water. This painting would have been impossible to create without a careful observation of the atmosphere of the site. Payen's technical skills in depicting Sanghyang Tikoro produces a tranquil scene which reflects the European vision of the tropics. The vision is referred to by C. Greppi (2005: 1) as "on the spot" observation of a landscape by a person or a subject in order to acquire "true knowledge of the natural world [...]". Specifically Greppi (2005: 1) denotes European artists travelling in the Tropics in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, who were employed by colonial rulers and whose subsequent works constructed authoritative knowledge of distant places. Greppi (2005: 1) continues that the long journey to the tropical worlds created a sort of colonial painters' new enthusiasm for observation which led to "a new way of seeing and knowing".

The authoritative knowledge of distant and foreign natural world proves the Edward W. Said's idea of demarcation between West and East (Said 2003: 39-40):

> The absolute demarcation between East and West [...] had been years, even centuries, in the making. There were of course innumerable voyages of discovery; there were contacts through trade and war. But more than this, since the middle of the eighteenth century there had been two principal elements in the relation between East and West. One was a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination. There is no way of putting this euphemistically.

The notion of domination inevitably indicates Orientalism which refers to a western perspective in understanding the East or the Orient. Regarding the definition of Orientalism, Said states (Said 2003: 3):

> Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western-style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.

ORIENTALIST ART

According to J.M. MacKenzie (1995: 43), Orientalist Art relates "to the paintings of a specific group of nineteenth-century and mainly French artists who took North Africa and the Middle East as their subject matter".

Compared to other imperialist countries, France contributed the most significant number of painters to this art movement. It makes sense since many famous French painters such as Jean-Leon Gérôme (1824-1904) and Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) were a part of the French empire's scientific and cultural projects in North African and Middle Eastern countries during the colonial era. Besides working for the colonial regime, these painters also had their own interests in the ancient civilizatons of the Orient. This is evidenced by Delacroix's painting *The death of Sardanapalus,* created in 1827, five years before Delacroix left for North Africa in 1832 (Nochlin 1991). Many other French painters never ever visited these regions. Furthermore, most of the painters who did visit these two regions did not create Orientalist paintings while they were there. As Thompson (James Thompson and David W.T.H. Scott 1988: 18) states, the East was a major preoccupation of nineteenth-century painting, an East which was, "imagined, experienced, remembered".

Apart from taking inspiration from stories of ancient Middle Eastern and North African civilizations, Orientalist paintings depict other subjects including (1) human activities in uncanny, erotic, backward, indigenous, and humiliating frames; (2) human commercial activities in markets or prayer in mosques executed with perfect ethnographic depiction of traditional motifs and antique objects; (3) people praying in vibrant and atmospheric settings; (4) hunting scenes in the desert portraying the submission and defeat of wild animals (primarily lions) by hunters who ride domesticated horses; and (5) scenes of disturbing violence (Nochlin 1991: 112-150).

Discussing the depictions of indigenous people in uncanny frames, Nochlin underlines the absence of history in Orientalist painting (Nochlin 1991: 117). For example, she discusses Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Snake Charmer*:

> Gérôme suggests that this oriental world is a world without change, a world of timeless, atemporal customs and rituals, untouched by the historical processes that were "afflicting" or improving but, at any rate, drastically altering Western power – technological, military, economic, cultural – and specifically by the very French presence Gérôme so scrupulously avoid.

In his painting, Gérôme demonstrates a patronizing view and a desire to show what he perceived to be the barbarism of the Orient. This composition, which focuses primarily on the naked boy, demonstrates the Western

perspective on the Orient. Nochlin adds that Orientalist paintings rarely depict European people (Nochlin 1991: 119):

> There are never any Europeans in "picturesque" views of the Orient like these. Indeed, it might be said that one of the defining features of Orientalist painting is its dependence for its very existence on a presence that is always an absence: the western colonial or touristic presence.

Nochlin concludes that "the very notion of Orientalism itself in the visual arts is simply a category of obfuscation, masking important distinction under the rubric of the picturesque, supported by the illusion of the real " (Nochlin 1991: 158).

Landscape paintings in the Netherlands East Indies after Antoine Payen

After returning to Belgium, Payen completed many of his paintings which depict the landscapes of Java (Scalliet 1999: 57). This completion legitimizes Payen's landscape paintings as Orientalist depictions. Although Sanghyang Tikoro and other sketches were created between 1817 and 1819, most of his paintings which depict these sites were created years later. Although Payen experienced and later imagined and remembered the landscapes of the Netherlands East Indies, he did not show the effects of colonial intervention. For example, many of the sites in Priangan which Payen sketched in the early eigtheenth century had changed significantly by the time his paintings were created. Intentionally or not, Payen's paintings are therefore not an accurate depiction of the colony. Rather, the colony appears static, as Nochlin has emphasized.

It is also useful to discuss other paintings which depict the landscapes of the Netherlands East Indies which were created after Payen's stay in the colony. For example, Jan Daniël Beynon's *An extensive Indonesian landscape with young cowherds* (1874) (see Figure 6). Beynon finished this painting more than fifty years after Payen left the Netherlands East Indies in 1826. This painting depicts a herdsman chatting with two children sitting on a rock. In the distance on the left, there is an area of grassland on which livestock (although very small) appear to be grazing.

This painting makes it seem as if the Netherlands East Indies had been untouched by colonial (read modern western) intervention since the early nineteenth century. After Reinwardt's scientific expedition ended, the Diponegoro War (1825-1830) drastically changed the Javanese landscape. This change was marked by the emergence of monoculture plantations which were instigated under the the Forced Cultivation (*Cultuurstelsel*) programme. This was a policy imposed by the colonial government in the mid-nineteenth century involving compulsory cultivation of certain crops using forced labour (Syeid Hussein Alatas 1977: 63).

Protschky has argued that landscape painters did not depict the effects of human exploitation on the land (Protschky 2011: 73, 82). Protchsky claims that, instead, they portrayed wild landscapes which appeared untouched by western intervention or modernity (Protschky 2011: 73, 82). Consequently,

plantations had no place in their work (Protschky 2011: 83-87). Instead, native farm workers were depicted not at work but resting or relaxing while grazing animals created idyllic pastoral scenes.[2] This is exemplified by Beynon's painting in which herdsmen are depicted lying down, chatting, and relaxing.

While it was generally the case that these paintings obfuscated the practice of monoculture plantations, the post-Payen Netherlands East Indies landscape paintings did include depictions of rice-fields. The depiction of rice-fields, in which farmers might be hoeing or harvesting,[3] effectively perpetuated a traditional image of the colony. In the colonial frame, rice-fields represented indigenous and traditional life. They were the contrast to plantations which represented modern life (Protschky 2011: 93). Depicting rice-fields perpetuated an image of the colony which romanticized the indigenous populations.

Mooi Indië: landscape paintings of the Netherlands East Indies in support of colonial capitalism

Thanks to the production of sketches which depict the landscapes of Java created by various draftsmen and painters, the Dutch colonial government laid its hands on comprehensive and faithful documentation of the colony's natural resources. Scalliet argues that the result of this was that Duch colonial exploits, "especially those in the Southern Pacific, conducted in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, were published and led to an exchange of information in learned circles. It definitely contributed to the sense that the renewed opportunity to explore the East Indies as a field of research should be exploited" (Scalliet 1999: 43). In other words, these government-appointed painters and the documentation they created in the form of sketches and paintings facilitated the exploitation of the colony (Protschky 2011: 29).

As Andreas Weber adds, another function of these depictions was to support Batavia's position as a competitive and technically advanced trading port (Weber 2014: 298). In order to make Batavia a vital centre of capital accumulation, it was important to identify the natural and human resources in Batavia and its environs which had not been previously exploited. Weber continues that, "The results of his [Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt] survey had to be submitted in the form of a collection of specimens (plants, animals, industrial products, ethnographic items, et cetera) and a long statistical report" (Weber 2014: 298).

In general, pictures and paintings which reproduce the Javanese landscapes demonstrate how artists and their works helped to exploit the colony during the colonial era. Nevertheless, Protchsky hastens to explain that the government-appointed painters did have their own interests in drawing Indonesian landscapes (Protschky 2011: 101). Ultimately they were free to describe Indonesia's natural landscapes and to document knowledge

[2] Protschky dissects two paintings by Abraham Salm, an amateur painter who actually a Java-based tobacco-planter.

[3] In these paintings the farmer is depicted at a distance to avoid any realistic portrayal of overtaxed muscles.

and highlight the beauty and tranquility of the Netherlands East Indies. However, Protschky adds that this artistic freedom was not more significant than the emphasis on maintaining the colony's stability (Protschky 2011: 101-102). To maintain this, in their works these painters avoided certain subjects, even though their depictions were basically realistic. It should be noted that landscape painting with this style dominated the Netherlans East Indies, at least until the early twentieth century (Jim Supangkat 1997: 16).

While these landscape paintings which idealized the beautiful and natural rural landscapes served as propaganda to promote a sense of harmony between the colonial government, the economic system, the natural environment, and the indigenous people – this was in fact far from reality. In their conception of such depictions the artists formed the landscape. Hence, their work represented the hallmark of the Orientalist style of thinking, namely "the discourse of Orientalism is defined by the Orientalist's interest and motivation" (Azhar Ibrahim 2017: 52). This motivation was none other than to promote colonial expansion. Colonial expansion in the Netherlands East Indies in the early nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century was the defining period of colonial capitalism, as mentioned by Alatas (1977: 2).

S. Sudjojono, an indigenous painter in the Netherlands East Indies, realized that landscape painting was closely related to colonial capitalism. He cynically referred to this landscape painting "Mooi Indië" or merely a representation of the illusory "beautiful Indies". In his writing entitled *Seni lukis di Indonesia, sekarang dan yang akan datang* (Paintings in Indonesia, now and to come) (Sudjojono 1946a: 5), he characterizes *Mooi Indië* as nothing more than a prop for tourism which placed new economic demands on the natural world in the Netherlands East Indies. For example, Sudjojono (1946a: 5) states:

> Everything is beautiful and romantic, heavenly; everything is enjoyable, calm and peaceful. These paintings contain only one message: Mooi Indië.
>
> Certainly Mooi Indië for foreigners who have never seen coconut palms and rice-fields. Absolutely Mooi Indië for tourists whose eyes are weary of gazing at their skyscrapers and are looking for visions new and fresh scenery; get a breath of fresh air, they said, to exhale their money-fevered thoughts.[4]

Tourism, along with plantations, was a sign that the system of colonial capitalism was beginning to open up the Netherlands East Indies to international and private investment. Returning to plantations, Sudjojono also reflected on the impacts of the forced cultivation system imposed by the colonial government which led to the lack of empathy among *Mooi Indië* painters. He states:

[4] Our translation. The original passage as follows: "*Semua serba bagus dan romantis bagai di surga, semua serba enak, tenang dan damai. Lukisan-lukisan tadi tidak lain hanya mengandung satu arti: Mooi Indië. Benar Mooi Indië bagi si asing, yang tak pernah melihat pohon kelapa dan sawah, benar Mooi Indië bagi si turis yang telah jemu melihat skycrapers mereka dan mencari hawa dan pemandangan baru, makan angin katanya, untuk menghembuskan isi pikiran mereka yang hanya bergambar mata uang sahaja*".

> We should not respect a painter who delights in drawing valleys and high mountains which reach the clouds and dreams of heaven on Earth, saying: "*O, romantisch Priangan*", but refuses to listen to those just behind him, where a farmer complains, moans, laments because his leg was struck by a hoe and is bleeding and badly injured. The picture might be good, but his heart is lacking in empathy; perhaps was hanging in the clouds and was pecked by an eagle or struck by lightning.[5] (Sudjojono 1946b: 25).

Sudjojono realized that *Mooi Indië* paintings erased the social realities on the ground and silenced the adverse effects of colonial capitalism like the suffering peasant highlighted in Sudjojono's statement. Forced Cultivation required indigenous farmers to plant export commodity crops including coffee, tea, rubber, indigo, and tobacco in order to help account for the financial losses of the colonial government. This system allowed the Dutch colonial government to recoup its financial losses, allowing the metropole to prosper. However, this landscape that had drastically changed from wilderness to a plantation area was absent from the work of landscape painters after Payen.

As Alatas explains, the colonial rulers who controlled the capital justified this system of forced labour and deliveries by propagating the myth that the indigenous population was lazy (Alatas 1977: 67). This image of lazy natives who could not be bothered to strive for their own development was exacerabted by the internalization of an inferiority complex among the indigenous population. This can be seen in relation to Frantz Fanon's theory of colonial inferiority, as Alatas states, "Similarly, the degradation of the native population could be considered as a historical necessity. Once their country was taken, they had to accept a subordinate place in the scheme of things. They had to be degraded and made to feel inferior and subservient for otherwise, they would cast off the foreign yoke" (Alatas 1977: 67).

The depiction of rice-fields, the obfuscation of monocultural farming and the overall dominance of pastoral scenes was another means by which the native population was degraded through the *Mooi Indië* paintings. These paintings create the impression that native farmers were still tied to pre-modern traditions. Furthermore, they are depicted as docile – resting, relaxing, and lazing about, relying largely on the benign climate and fertile soil. This depiction denies the reality of forced labour, namely farmers exhausted from having to work beyond their physical capability.

These depictions were critical to the interests of colonial capitalism. They supported the construction and perpetuation of the stereotype that those native to the Indies did not seek progress because of the benificent effects of their tropical climate and the fertile soils. In contrast, the Europeans believed

[5] Our translation. The original passage as follows: "*Kita harus tidak bisa hormat kepada seorang seniman pelukis yang enak-enak saja menggambar lembah-lembah dan gunung-gunung tinggi mencapai awan dan mimpi surga dunia berkata: 'O, romantisch Priangan' tetapi tak mau mendengarkan di belakang dekat dia pak tani mengeluh, merintih, menangis, sebab kakinya kena pacul, berdarah, luka parah. Gambarnya tadi barangkali bagus, tetapi hati kemanusiaannya tak ada, barangkali tergantung di awan, sudah habis dipatuk elang atau dihantam petir melayang*".

they were more disciplined because they had been raised in a harsh climate. Consequently, they had the ability to provide supervision in order to advance the Indies by the exercise of discipline and modern values (Alatas 1977: 2, 7, 8, 14). In line with this, the landscape paintings, especially those created under the Cultivation System period, disguised the negative impacts of plantations on the indigenous population. The effects of the Cultivation System were exacerbated by the fact that during this time, only a mimimum of rice was planted. The result was that the indigenous population in Java starved (Garrett Kamm 1999: 26). Nevertheless, paintings continued to depict rice-fields. This in effect aided and abetted the cover-up of the cruelty of colonial powers which exploited the native population and used their land for profit, producing, and exporting commodity crops.

Mooi Indië: Representation of Stagnant Art Development in the Netherlands East Indies

The constant representation of the Netherlands East Indies in *Mooi Indië* paintings as rural, beautiful with a tendency to portray the indigenous population as backward continued into the twentieth century. The perpetuation of this style was supported by the Netherlands East Indies art world, its institutions or galleries and art criticism. `

Sudjojono's critique of *Mooi Indië* painting points to what he saw as the stunted development of art in the Netherlands East Indies (Sudjojono 1946a: 5).

> The mountain, the coconut palm, and the rice field are the holy trinity in the scenes, of these painters [...] and so public, so artist, [...] And should a painter dare to paint something different than this trinity [...] the art dealer will tell him. "Dat is niet voor ons, meneer" (This is not for us, sir). What he really means is, "This is not for the tourists or the pensioned Hollander, sir".[6]

Here we can see that Sudjojono saw *Mooi Indië* paintings as a reflection of the imitative and uncritical attitude that characterized the Netherlands East Indies art world. Galleries refused to show or sell anything but *Mooi Indië* paintings because only these types of paintings were to the European taste. Hence painters, including those native to the Indies, simply imitated the work of other artists and failed to take the initiative to create something new.

Sudjojono's concern indicates just how popular *Mooi Indië* paintings were. However, such works only ended up on the walls of the homes of Europeans living in the colony or as souvenirs for those retirees living in the Netherlands. The taste in art of colonial society focused solely on *Mooi Indië* paintings. As Van Brakel states, other styles failed to win popularity because "In the

[6] Claire Holt's translation (Holt 1967: 195-197). The original passage as follows: "*Gunung, pohon kelapa dan sawah menjadi trimurti bagi tabel pelukis-pelukis tadi* [...] *Begitu publik, begitu pelukis*. [...] *Dan kalau ada seorang pelukis berani melukis hal-hal lain dari trimurti tabel tadi*, [...] *maka kata si pedagang*: '*Dat is niet voor ons, meneer*.' (*ini bukan untuk kami, tuan). Maksud dia*: '*Dat is niet voor de toeristen of de gepensioneerde Hollanders, meneer*.' (*Ini bukanlah bagi para wisatawan atau orang Belanda yang sudah purna tugas, tuan*)".

Indies, circumstances had effectively created an element of countable barrier obstructing the origin of any new painting genres unique to this country" (Van Brakel 1999: 128). On the whole, artists in the Netherlands East Indies "[...] preferred to remain loyal to their old love (Mooi Indië paintings), even though have explored here and there" (Van Brakel 1999: 128).

In Sudjojono's eyes, *Mooi Indië* paintings posed a threat to local artists. He believed that art contained an emancipatory power for the native community. Although *Mooi Indië* paintings might have been "technically sophisticated", they were "soulless" and "did not speak the truth" (Sudjojono 2000a). Furthermore, *Mooi Indië* paintings had neither market nor an audience among the native population in the Netherlands East Indies. In these paintings the native population was reduced to an object to be exploited just like their natural environment. Most detrimentally, the knowledge produced by these paintings did not benefit the native population but, if anybody, the European community.

The small numbers of native painters such as Sudjojono had very little opportunity in comparison to the European painters who were active in the Netherlands East Indies. The climate of the art world during the late-colonial era reflected the inequality which existed between the races under colonialism. European painters were the most privileged.

For European or mixed-race painters who were born in the Netherlands East Indies like Ernest Dezentje as well as certain native painters, including Abdullah Suriosubroto and R.M. Pirngadie who came from an aristocratic background, it was possible to enroll in colonial (that is, Dutch) schools. However, the work of these painters suggests that they were just as captivated by the Orientalist way of thinking as they primarily produced *Mooi Indië* paintings. In contrast, S. Sudjojono, who we know was highly critical of the *Mooi Indië* style, was not educated in colonial schools but at the Taman Siswa. This school was established by the progressive intellectual, Ki Hajar Dewantara and was representative of local or native interests in education. Claire Holt states that Taman Siswa mixed the concepts of the Montessori and Dalton systems as well as being slightly influenced by the anthroposophical teaching of Rudolf Steiner and the ethical-aestheticism of Rabindranath Tagore (Holt 1967: 195).

Van Brakel states that the art criticism in art publications in the Netherlands East Indies were "certainly not on a par with European ones. At best, they were informative or descriptive, especially the exhibition pieces. Nevertheless, to imagine they could have been influential in the development of an independent painting genre would be erroneous" (Van Brakel 1999: 128). Van Brakel continues that "the country offered no formal artistic training and its conservative colonial society only appreciated the traditional art forms. Ultimately neither the critics nor the artist of the Indies formulated new theory" (Van Brakel 2009: 128).

From the early-nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century, the visual representation of the Netherlands East Indies in landscape paintings shows

how the Dutch colonial government dealt with the Netherlands East Indies as a place for colonial expansion. Therefore, the colonial government never produced any official policy to advance art in the colony and this resulted in average – if not sluggish – art productions in the colony. This again confirms the characteristics of colonial capitalism as noted by Alatas who says that, "capitalism in the colonies did not promote the spread of modern science and technology" (Alatas 1977: 19). In its dealing with the arts in the Netherlands East Indies, the colonial government deliberately refrained from encouraging them because this policy would not have supported the interests of colonial capitalism.

Disguising the stink: Citarum Harum

> The mountain should not be destroyed / the valley should not be damaged / prohibitions should not be violated / rules should not be changed / what is long one should not be cut / what is short one should not be extended / any distinction should remain distinct / what has been forbidden should stay forbidden / what has been allowed should remain permissible.[7] (Sundanese proverb).

This proverb, originally in Sundanese, the language spoken in West Java, was eloquently translated in two lithographs produced by Isaäc Groneman which depict the Cikapundung River. These works are titled, *Tjioeroeg Tjikapoendoeng nabij Bandoeng* (Cikapundung Waterfall near Bandung) (1859-1861) (Figure 2) and *Goenong Malabar bij Bandoeng Toewa; Gezien van Dajeh Kolot aan den noordelijken oever van den Tjitaroem* (Malabar Mountain near Old Bandung; Seen from Dayeuh Kolot on the north bank of the Citarum) (1860) (Figure 3). These lithographs were published in his book entitled *De Preangen-Regentschappen op Java* (1876)[8] (J.G. Frederiks et al. 2003; David van Duuren 2009). In their visual qualities of these lithographs resemble Antoine Payen's idealized depiction of the Citarum in his painting-notes entitled *The River Citarum, Priangan (West Java), with figures on a tree trunk-raft* (1819). Here the Cikapundung River is a tributary of the Citarum River. Groneman's depiction answers to the proverb: a pristine river, not impinged on by modernity and not contaminated by heavy pollution. In addition to his depictions of the Cikapundung, Groneman produced other lithographs which depicted other parts of Priangan in a similar fashion. This collection was published by a state-owned publisher. They can be seen as a type of propaganda and advertisement for the Priangan region, proclaiming this area to be a tranquil and convenient retreat for Europeans.

[7] My translation. The original in Sunda language as follows: *Gugung teu meunang dilebur / lebak teu meunang diruksak / larangan teu meunang ditempak / buyut teu meunang dirobah / lojor teu meunang dipotong / pondok teu meunang disambung / nu lain kudu dilainkeun / nu ulah kudu diulahken / nu enya kudu dienyakeun*.

[8] Isaäc Groneman was born at Zutphen and was a physician and surgeon in Vorden but, in 1858, went to Indonesia, where he settled first in Bandung and then in Yogyakarta, where he was employed as the Sultan's personal physician. An amateur painter himself, his works were exhibited in Batavia (now Jakarta) and Amsterdam. His works are primarily collected by the KITLV in Leiden (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

Figure 2. Left: Isaäc Groneman, *Tjioeroeg Tjikapoendoeng nabij Bandoeng*, lithograph on paper, 1859-1861. (Retrieved from: http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:852404).

Figure 3. Right: Isaäc Groneman, *Goenong Malabar bij Bandoeng Toewa; Gezien van Dajeh Kolot aan den noordelijken oever van den Tji-taroem*, lithograph on paper, 1860. (Retrieved from: http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:852501).

The Citarum is one of the longest rivers in West Java. It rises on Mount Wayang in southern Bandung and flows towards the Java Sea through Karawang. The total length of the river is approximately 180 km and spans 13,000 square kilometers, with more than 28 million people living along its banks. Historically, this river has played an important role as a source of drinking-water as well as water for irrigation and waste disposal. Importantly, archaeological evidence confirms that this river has played an important role across different eras. In both the upstream and downstream areas of the Citarum River artefacts which date from the prehistoric,[9] the early centuries CE,[10] and to Hindu-Buddhist era[11] (Richadiana Kartakusuma 1991; Pierre-Yves Manguin and Agustijanto Indrajaya 2006; Agus Heryana 2010; Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia 2014; Rian Setiawan 2018). To this day, the

[9] The prehistoric artefacts, such obsidian flakes, axes, and earthenware vessels have been found across the tributaries of the Citarum River, in Cikalong, Ujungberung, Majalaya, Ciparay, Banjaran, Soreang, and Cililin. In the upstream of the Cikapundung, archaeologists have found a megalithic structure.

[10] In the downstream of Citarum (in Karawang), archaeologists found clay pot dating back to first five centuries CE.

[11] The excavation of artefacts and buildings from the Hindu-Buddhist and buildings era is finished, and still lags behind the finds in Central Java or East Java. The finds are scattered in both the upstream and downstream parts of the Citarum. In the downsteam are a temple complex and pre-historic compound, specifically located in Batujaya, Karawang. In the upstream area, the finds are an exception rather than the rule but there are hints that there there was also a flourishing Hindu-Buddhist culture. In the upper Cikapundung, residents have accidentally found inscriptions and statues. There are also few temples on the Citarik River, however those have proved difficult to excavate because of land conflicts.

Citarum River still holds a sacred position in traditional Sundanese belief[12] (Dedi Muhtadi and Jannes Eudes Wawa 2011).

In the modern era, the Citarum River has been rapidly transformed. Consequently, it is difficult to trace the places pertaining to ancient Sundanese beliefs today. In order to understand such connections, it is helpful to look at the idea of a "triumvirate," which is central to ancient Sunda belief. This triumvirate system was called "Tri Tangtu di Bumi" (The Earth's Three Rules). It views life as divided into three equal parts including: *rama* (the representation of God), *resi* (the representation of nature-the realm of negotiation between humans and God), and *ratu* (the representation of the human) (Heryana 2010). Today this principle has been translated into various forms of everyday life, ranging from the traditional government structure to the zoning designed for traditional settlements (*kampung adat*) (Heryana 2010; Elis Suryani Nani Sumarlina et al. 2020). However, during the colonial era, those principles were apparently abandoned, and modern cities were built across the Netherlands East Indies in response to the new requirements at that time. For example, Bandung, the city at which the tributaries of the Upper Citarum are predominantly located, was built to meet the needs of a city which would be convenient for European settlers and plantation owners (P.K.M. van Roosmalen 2006; Bagas Yusuf Kausan et al. 2019). These new European settlements slowly absorbed the existing villages. In time, the local inhabitants were forced to live on the increasingly narrow tracts of land which survived. This caused significant disparities and rising tensions between the European and local populations, leading to the conflicts which occurred between 1945-1949. The indigenous population generally lived in unregulated areas and made their living by informal means (Karto Wijaya et al. 2017). These conditions gave rise to Bandung's urban slums, known in Indonesian as *Kampung Kota* (Wijaya et al. 2017; Kausan et al. 2019).

Another factor which played an instrumental role in the changing quality of the Citarum River was the growth of textile industries in Bandung, which began in the 1920s. In 1929, the first textile mill in Java was erected in Majalaya, southern Bandung (S.A. Handayani 2019). Although prior to this the goods produced on plantations had been in great demand, as the shadow of the great depression felt across the globe, textiles took over as a primary export commodity (Alfons van der Kraan 1996). Consequently, many farmers were forced to work in textile mills. By the end of 1938, there were already 1,700 factories in Majalaya run by the indigenous people of this region. However, this development came to an abrupt halt with the Japanese occupation and only began to grow again in the 1950s. In 1968, under the New Order, change would come again. In this year, the regime issued the Foreign Investment Law (UU Penanaman Modal Asing) no. 1. This law allowed foreign investors both to compete with local businesses and invest heavily in the nation's

[12] The source of the Citarum on Mount Wayang is sacred for Sundanese people. It is believed that Prabu Siliwangi, the best-known King of the Pajajaran Kingdom, used to make his ablutions there.

infrastructure. As a result, factories owned by the native population were bought up by Chinese conglomerates and became subsidiaries of larger companies. This in turn led to the shift in the significant growth of the textile industry from Majalaya to Rancaekek (Handayani 2019; Adi Renaldi 2020a). For the Citarum River this have dire consequences as the river has declined drastically in the last twenty-five years. Although the textile mills along this river play a major part in the river's current pollution, they are not the only factor. Other issues include the rapid increase in settlements along the river's upstream tributaries which have contributed to heavy sedimentation, pollution, flooding, and an overall decrease in water quality and quantity (A. Brotosusilo et al. 2019; Renaldi 2020b).

Various attempts, which have involved large sums of money, have been made to rehabilitate the quality of the Citarum River. In 2007, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) loaned Indonesia USD 500 million to implement a programme known as "Integrated Water Resources Management" (IWRM) which was intended to solve the "crisis" by "making decisions at the lowest appropriate level" (Jenna Cavelle 2013). However, this programme has not succeeded, succumbing to the lack of coordination between agencies and residents. In 2013, West Java's Provincial Government launched a programme known as Citarum Bestari which was intended to resolve the complex issues surrounding the quality of the Citarum River (Tasya Fildzah Shabrina et al. 2016). Dubbed one of the most polluted rivers in the world in 2018, after a viral Youtube sensation,[13] Joko Widodo launched a task-force team called Citarum Harum to replace Citarum Bestari. This programme made The Regional Miliary Command III / Siliwangi, the local army unit, the project's leader (Ajeng G. Anindita 2018; Gary Benchegbib and Sam Benchegbib 2017). Widodo also set a target of seven years to revitalize the quality of the Citarum River so that its water could be consumed (Malik Sadat Idris et al. 2019). The military command system was mobilized as the project leader because it was believed it would be most effective (Ronal Chandra et al. 2019; Malik Sadat Idris et al. 2019). It took a direct approach, sealing off industrial sewers which poured untreated waste into the river.

Despite the efforts, the problems still persist. Industries along the river continue to dump their waste in the river at dawn, when it is raining or when there is no patrol around (Renaldi 2020b). Furthermore, in the upper part of the river, heavy sedimentation is adding another concern. The culprits are the farmers and residents who live near the river who use certain types of fertilizer and plant certain types of plants. However, these farmers rarely own the land themselves. Instead, the land they farm is owned by big state-owned companies. As either a tenant or a farm labourer, they do not have any option

[13] G. Benchegebib and S. Benchegebib made an expedition across Citarum River in 2018. Uploaded on Youtube this expedition had gone viral. This video caught attention of the Indonesian Ministry of the Environment. This was followed up by a prompt response from Joko Widodo who was assembling Citarum Harum taskforce. Afterwards, Joko Widodo invited the two Frenchmen to attend the inaugural ceremony of the taskforce in Situ Cisanti, the upstream area of the Citarum River.

other than to follow the demands of the market. In addition to this, farmers and those who live along the river banks are rarely able to afford their own waste treatment systems. Therefore, these populations are seldom seen as important players in the efforts to invigorate the river. Instead, they are often seen as the problem (Renaldi 2020b).

The problems outlined above demonstrate that the Citarum River is a contentious space. However, this situation has not been well represented in the visual arts, specifically in the colonial paintings, which concentrated on depicting the Indonesian landscape as a serene, pristine ecosystem. For example, Isaäc Groneman's two lithographs depict the upstream and downstream areas of the Cikapundung River respectively. However, rather than exposing the realities of colonial exploitation, the river-bank is portrayed as a tranquil landscape, a sharp contrast to the reality of the contested site which it acutally was (J. Groneman 1876). Both locations were severely affected by modernization brought in the wake of colonization. In the upstream area of the Cikapundung there was a steady growth of settlements, specifically near the Dago Waterfall (Curug Dago). In contrast, the downstream areas were impacted by industrialization (Wijaya et al. 2017; Yushi Rahayu et al. 2018). Groneman's affection for particular spots in Bandung led to him conveying a certain impression of the city. This tendency persists in the documentation produced by the revitalization programme which has been mobilized by the Citarum Harum taskforce (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Documentation of Curug Malela. (Retrieved from: https://citarumharum.jabarprov.go.id/bingkai-citarum/).

Most of the photographs and videos reproduced on its website depict particular spots which convey an idealized view of the river and its dams. As a result, the socio-economic problems associated with this river at the grassroots are barely touched upon (Citarum Harum 2019). It is also a common belief that the primary strategy for transforming and beautifying this site is to make it a tourist destination (Meria Octavianti and Slamet Mulyana 2017). Again, this reduces the attention paid to the socio-economic situation of the Citarum. To make matters worse, the development of activities to support tourism have not been systematically planned or discussed widely.

Moreover, the photograph which taken by the Citarum Harum Taskforce (Figure 5) shows the Teras Cikapundung, Bandung, the highlighted midstream of the Cikapundung River. The site became important as it emerged as the ideal model of how the Taskforce was redesigning the riverbank of the Citarum River. The photograph shows the local people enjoying themselves alongside the Cikapundung River.

Figure 5. Left: Documentation of Teras Cikapundung. (Retrieved from: https://citarumharum.jabarprov.go.id/bingkai-citarum/).

Figure 6. Right: Jan Daniël Beynon, *An extensive Indonesian landscape with young cowherds*. Oil on canvas, 57 cm x 45 cm, 1874 (Retrieved from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Jan_Dani%C3%ABl_Beynon_-_An_extensive_Indonesian_landscape_(1874).jpg).

At first glance, this photograph in Figure 5 demonstrates how tourists indulging in activities as if they welcomed the changes in the Cikapundung River. The irony lies in the process of re-landscaping the Cikapundung River which was far from smooth. It was overshadowed by harsh clashes between the people and the state apparatus because, to implement to be paid to to relocated people, the quashing of their basic rights to land and water as former inhabitants along the banks of the river (Muhammad Alif Prayuta et al. 2016; Ramdhani 2016; Frans Adi Prasetyo 2019). This conflict, which has cast a long shadow over this well-designed park and amphitheatre, reveals the priority

of the Citarum Harum Taskforce. The priority was to beautify the river at the cost of peoples' wellbeing.

This underlines its resemblance to Jan Daniel Beynon's *An extensive Indonesian landscape with young cowherds* (1874) (Figure 6), which depicts local people having a good time relaxing in the beautiful tropical landscape. The depicted pastoral situation idyll embeds the idea that the colonialism in colonial Indonesia was not the product of an implacable state. The depiction by Beynon shows a colonial Indonesia untouchable by colonial capitalism manifested in monoculture plantations, the visible face of the Cultivation System and the exhausted peasants the victims of forced labor. The painting and photograph taken by by the Taskforce's documentation team illustrates how the rulers beguiled themselves into thinking that people could become prosperous and happy as they embraced this imposition.

Although created almost a century and a half apart, we can see parallels between Groneman's lithograph (see the left picture in Figure 7 or Figure 2) and the Taskforce's depictions of the Cikapundung River (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Left: Isaäc Groneman, *Tjioeroeg Tjikapoendoeng nabij Bandoeng*; Right: Documentation of Teras Cikapundung. (Retrieved from: https://citarumharum.jabarprov.go.id/bingkai-citarum/).

Each concentrates on the serenity of the river-bank, avoiding the inclusion of those that live alongside it. Although the photograph do betray a hint of the existence of a dense population, it is relatively well covered by big trees. As the result, this photo embodies the harmonious green city of Bandung of which the Cikapundung River is the integral part. The Taskforce seems to be repeating the failed attempts of the IWRM approach. In its third year, one critique already apparent is the lack of communication with residents. In view of the short-term actions implemented by the Taskforce, it remains to be seen how relocations will impact on the quality of the Citarum River itself and how beneficial it will be for all parties involved. In conclusion, the Citarum Harum Taskforce suffers from a captive mind. As a concept, the captive mind is uncritical and imitative, dominated by external sources, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective (Alatas 2004: 84). The orientalist-

colonial imagination conveyed in the picturesque *Mooi Indië* paintings seems to have captured the Taskforce's vision, leading it to overlook the real socio-environmental problem in Citarum Harum.

CONCLUSION: THE COLONIAL LEGACY IN CITARUM HARUM

This article has argued that there is a connection between the picturesque landscapes of the Netherlands East Indies represented in *Mooi Indië* paintings and the environmental policy of the present-day Citarum Harum Taskforce. *Mooi Indië* paintings framed the Netherlands East Indies as untouched, obscuring monoculture plantations by depicting idyllic pastoral scenes. *Mooi Indië* paintings disguised and denied what were in fact horrible consequences of colonialism rooted in the exploitation of both the people and their land.

Mooi Indië paintings also contributed to the development of the stereotype that the population native to the Netherlands East Indies was primitive, traditional, backward, and lazy. This was deftly accomplished by depicting individuals amid rice-fields or "lazing about", in reality recuperating from arduous labour. In turn, these depictions portraying the inferiority of the indigenous population were used to justify forced labour part of the capitalist agenda of the colonial powers. In this case, the Dutch.

The Citarum Harum Taskforce also shown that it has espoused the orientalist-colonial image of the picturesque Netherlands East Indies in *Mooi Indië* paintings in its dealing with the socio-environmental problems besetting the Citarum River. The Taskforce has taken a narrow-minded, a historic view of the Citarum River. The environmental policies which have been put in place are focused more on beautifying this site in order to produce a pristine and tranquil Citarum River as this would attract tourism. The visual materials or propaganda bearing this message published by the Citarum Harum Taskforce perpetuate an image of the Citarum River not unlike those characteristic of *Mooi Indië* paintings. As a result, the actual socio-environmental problems are neglected and both nature and the inhabitants of this area continue to be exploited. This type of propaganda and these representations work to cover up what are in fact misleading policies which grant industries dispensations to continue to pollute the river.

The Citarum Harum Taskforce is still held in the thrall of colonial captivity. It does not look at the Citarum River as an ecosystem which has to accommodate various lifeforms, including humans. Instead, the Taskforce looks at the residents who live along the Citarum River as a problem, not as a potential partner in finding solutions to environmental problems. Consequently, the policy holders perpetuate the backward stereotype of the residents. In the colonial period, the colonizers developed backward and lazy stereotypes of native people to support the agenda of colonial capitalism. In the contemporary era, the Citarum Harum Taskforce has recusitated the backward myth to dodge misleading policies. Mirroring colonial capitalism which abused the native population, the neoliberal system mishandles the residents living along the Citarum River. They are considered the primary

culprits of all its woes because of what is perceived to be their unhealthy way of life which pollutes the river.

The environmental damage to the Citarum River is ironic since the Dutch Empire sent scientific expeditions to the Priangan. This project to improve science development and material advancement should have worked autonomously. It should have been able to raise the real and relevant problems affecting the specific socio-environmental locus and circumstances. However, the development of science in the Netherlands East Indies turned out to be an instrument driven by the interests of the alien colonial power and used to exploit the environment and humans.

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