

'The Eurasian Question'

Historische Migratiestudies 6

Redactiecommissie:

Prof. dr. Leo Lucassen (Universiteit Leiden)

Dr. Peter Scholten (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam)

Dr. Saskia Bonjour (Universiteit Leiden)

Prof. dr. Marlou Schrover (Universiteit Leiden)

Eerder verschenen:

- 1 Tycho Walaardt, *Geruisloos inwilligen. Argumentatie en speelruimte in de Nederlandse asielpcedure, 1945-1994.*
- 2 Corrie van Eijl, *Tussenland. Illegaal in Nederland, 1945-2000.*
- 3 Nadia Bouras, *Het land van herkomst. Perspectieven op verbondenheid met Marokko, 1960-2010.*
- 4 Charlotte Laarman, *Oude onbekenden. Het politieke en publieke debat over postkoloniale migranten in Nederland, 1945-2005.*
- 5 Chris Quispel, *Anti-Joodse beeldvorming en Jodenhaat. De geschiedenis van het antisemitisme in West-Europa.*

‘The Eurasian Question’

The colonial position and postcolonial options of colonial mixed ancestry groups from British India, Dutch East Indies and French Indochina compared.

door

LIESBETH ROSEN JACOBSON



Hilversum
Verloren
2018

Published with financial support of: NWO (de Nederlands Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek) via N.W. Posthumus Instituut. Research school for economic and social history.

Cover illustrations: Front cover: Portrait of a group of Indo-Europeans with a car on their way from Tandjong Priok to Tjilintjing, 1932, Collectie Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (Collection Foundation National Museum of Worldcultures), Coll.nr. TM-60031708. Back cover: 'Indo-Europeans pose at a telescope in front of a house at the Marinelaan in Weltevreden, Batavia, Collectie Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (Collection Foundation National Museum of Worldcultures), Coll.nr. TM-60039021; 'Couvent des Oiseaux today', picture taken by the author in June 2016.

ISBN 978-90-8704-731-3
Dissertation University of Leiden

© 2018 Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson & Uitgeverij Verloren bv
Torenlaan 25, 1211 JA Hilversum
www.verloren.nl

Cover: Robert Koopman, Hilversum
Typography: Rombus, Hilversum

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments	9
1 Introduction	11
1.1 Introduction	11
1.2 Main question	11
1.3 'Mixing'	13
1.4 'Mixed' relationships	16
1.5 'Mixing' in the colonies	17
1.6 'Eurasians'	19
1.7 The emancipation paradox	23
1.8 The numbers	24
1.9 Working hypotheses	24
1.10 Historiography	27
1.11 Method	30
1.12 Material	31
1.13 Structure	35
2 Historical context	36
2.1 Introduction	36
2.2 British India: From Company rule, via Sepoy Mutiny to Crown Raj <i>'Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, opinions, morality and intellect'</i>	36
<i>'It was like moving into a different world'</i>	37
2.3 Dutch East Indies: <i>Cultuurstelsel</i> , <i>Ethische Politiek</i> and Bersiap <i>'The Eurasians helped to make colonial rule more powerful in the Dutch East Indies'</i>	44
<i>'This Indo-Dutch society currently needs to disappear'</i>	46
<i>'You will face a very hard time'</i>	47
2.4 French Indochina: A young colonial patchwork of regions and ethnicities <i>'We must respect the blood of France'</i>	51
<i>'One word, I repeat ... one word: independence'</i>	54
2.5 Comparison and conclusion: Large changes to come	57

3	Legal position	62
3.1	Introduction	62
3.2	British India: Disapproval and legal definition of Eurasians/Anglo-Indians <i>'Not handicapped by excessive pigmentation'</i>	62 64
3.3	Dutch East Indies: Equation with Dutch people and mixed marriages act	66
3.4	French Indochina: status of the <i>métis</i> and possibilities for naturalisation <i>'To save all who belong to our race'</i>	67 69
3.5	Comparison and conclusion: From <i>Ius soli</i> to <i>Ius sanguinis</i>	71
4	Socio-economic position of Eurasians until 1900	73
4.1	Introduction	73
4.2	British India: 'Half-caste' image of Anglo-Indians and pauperism committee <i>'Living in scarcely conceivable state of misery and degradation'</i>	73 74
4.3	Dutch East Indies: Social layers in the Indo-European group	76
4.4	French Indochina: <i>Métis</i> as French people of the 'seconde zone'?	77
4.5	Comparison and conclusion: From 'encouragement' to an 'unhappy lot'	79
5	Changes in the discourse on Eurasians around 1900	81
5.1	Introduction	81
5.2	British India: Set apart as a separate group and acting as one	81
5.3	Dutch East Indies: <i>Eereschuld</i> and educational opportunities for the colonised	82
5.4	French Indochina: A rejected, isolated and socially unstable category	83
5.5	Comparison and conclusion: A similar process of Europeanisation	84
6	Socio-economic position Eurasians from 1900 onwards	86
6.1	Introduction	86
6.2	British India: Anglo-Indian culture in railway colonies <i>'It isn't sunburn that makes us brown, is it?'</i>	86 88
6.3	Dutch East Indies: Mimicry of the European ideal <i>'A half-hearted and half-powerfull in-between race'</i>	93 100
6.4	French Indochina: Studying the Dutch East Indies and Jules Brevié <i>'The poor woman wishes to give her daughter to the French state'</i> <i>'In a deplorable state of dirtiness'</i>	101 103 106
6.5	Comparison and conclusion: Protecting and raising Eurasian children	109
7	Eurasian emancipation and the foundation of Eurasian interest organisations	112
7.1	Introduction	112
7.2	British India: The All-India Anglo-Indian Association and discord <i>'India is in his blood, in the colour of his skin, in his habits'</i>	112 114
7.3	Dutch East Indies: Foundation of several organisations and newspapers <i>'What they have to complain about [...] is therefore difficult to see'</i>	115 115
7.4	French Indochina: <i>Métis</i> organisations linked with Eurafricans	118

	<i>'Owing to their own privileged position, covering two races'</i>	120
7.5	Comparison and conclusion: United 'out of self-defence'	121
8	Chaos and options in the decolonisation period	123
8.1	Introduction	123
8.2	British India: A relatively smooth transition	123
8.3	Dutch East Indies: Occupation, war and uncertainty <i>'Within the borders of these isles shall remain a race one calls Indo'</i>	125 127
8.4	French Indochina: From colonial war to international war	129
8.5	Comparison and conclusion: Prelude to thorough change	130
9	Formal political decolonisation and the 'pull' of the mother country	132
9.1	Introduction	132
9.2	India: Generous constitutional safeguards and British betrayal <i>Invisible immigrants</i>	132 135
9.3	Indonesia: Choosing Indonesian citizenship? <i>To a country in ruins</i>	136 141
9.4	Vietnam: Ceasefire and <i>Convention sur la nationalité</i> <i>From camps to camps</i>	142 145
9.5	Comparison and conclusion: 'It was the end of our world'	146
10	Socio-economic circumstances for Eurasians after decolonisation	149
10.1	Introduction	149
10.2	India: Bureaucratic obstacles and status decline	149
10.3	Indonesia: The Westerling affair and New Guinea as an alternative destination <i>'We Eurasians should have a home of our own'</i>	151 153
10.4	Vietnam: William Bazé and the continued activities of the <i>FOEFI</i>	157
10.5	Comparison and conclusion: <i>Rapatriés</i> , returning home or <i>Warga Negara</i> ?	160
11	The postcolonial years	162
11.1	Introduction	162
11.2	India: Less rights, more incentives to leave	162
11.3	Indonesia: Increasing hostility and second chances for Indo-Europeans	164
11.4	Vietnam: Becoming 'real' French capitalists or Vietnamese communists	166
11.5	Comparison and conclusion: The geopolitical context	168
12	Special policies for Eurasians and the Eurasian reactions	170
12.1	Introduction	170
12.2	India: No special British provisions and new Anglo-Indian schools	170
12.3	Indonesia: Spijtoptanten and the fate of the 'Steurtjes'	171
12.4	Vietnam: Large-scale repatriation and positive French image of Dutch policies	175
12.5	Comparison and conclusion: Regretting and postponing decisions	177

13	Those who stayed (after 1960)	179
13.1	Introduction	179
13.2	India: Too poor or too old to leave	179
	<i>'It's their fluency in English that makes it easy for them'</i>	180
13.3	Indonesia: Help for the Indo-Europeans who stayed behind	182
	<i>'I chose to stay with my mother in Indonesia'</i>	183
13.4	Vietnam: Transition from French to American control	184
	<i>'French paternity is rather easily established'</i>	186
	<i>Heritage tours and the wish to return</i>	187
13.5	Comparison and conclusion: The 'honey-milk coloured' skin in postcolonial times	188
14	Discussion and conclusion	190
14.1	Introduction	190
14.2	The comparative perspective	190
14.3	The heuristic framework revisited	191
	<i>The historical context</i>	192
	<i>The legal position</i>	193
	<i>The socio-economic position, changes in the discourse and saving the children</i>	194
	<i>Eurasian emancipation</i>	195
	<i>Chaos, decolonisation and the 'pull' of the mother country</i>	196
	<i>The position of the Eurasians after independence</i>	198
14.4	The emancipation paradox	198
	Appendices	200
	Notes	203
	List of abbreviations	239
	Archives	240
	Bibliography	241
	Dutch summary	260
	Index	263
	Curriculum Vitae	268

Acknowledgments

As has been said by many PhD-candidates before me, writing a dissertation is fascinating and rewarding but often also a challenging and lonely task. While you could consider writing papers or an MA thesis in terms of ascending summits like the Matterhorn in the Alps, writing a PhD-thesis is more like climbing Mount Everest. You need a longer period to acclimatise, and regular breaks during which you can enjoy the views. Now and then you may need to descend to basecamp to recover. Similar to mountaineering in the Himalayas, writing a dissertation is not something that should be done alone. Fortunately, I had the support of many people, for which I am extremely grateful.

First of all, I would like to thank nwo for funding my research and the N.W. Posthumus Institute, the Dutch and Flemish research school for social and economic history for its support in applying for funding. In particular, I would like to thank its president at the time Jeroen Touwen for acquiring the grant for four PhDs under the auspices of the Posthumus Institute. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Institute for History and the Leiden University Fund, Van Walsem, for funding my research trips to Hanoi, Dalat and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, and Aix-en-Provence, as well as conference trips to Toronto, Paris, and Valencia.

I am very grateful to the Vietnamese historical researcher Pham van Thuy, who wrote a letter of recommendation that allowed me to enter the Vietnamese archives. Thuy defended his PhD in Leiden and I was one of his '*paranimfs*', which was a huge source of inspiration for writing my own PhD-thesis. Secondly, I would like to thank all the archivists whom I met on my archival trips. My research in Asian archives in Vietnam was a particularly enriching experience as I met various historians there from different parts of the world. One of the archivists in the Vietnamese National Archives no.1 deserves special mention – Hai Yen or Anna (her European name), who interviewed me about doing research as a foreigner in Vietnamese archives, was so kind to introduce me to the director of Vietnamese National Archives no.1. The director, Ha van Hue, introduced me to the directors of two other archival centres in Vietnam, namely archive no.4 in Dalat and archive no. 2 in Ho Chi Minh city. As a result I was able to carry out research in those places as well, rather unexpectedly, which yielded even more interesting material for my research.

Thirdly, I would like to thank all colleagues from the department of Economic and Social History at the institute for history at Leiden University, especially my supervisors Marlou Schrover and Irial Glynn, who were both always enthusiastic and inspiring about my research, but also my room colleagues Jaco, Evelien, David, Teuntje,

Girija and Anne. I would like to thank other colleagues and fellow PhDs at the Institute for History in Leiden, in particular the participants at the so-called 'small gathering'.

Fourthly, of course I would also like to thank my friends Esther, Vera, Denise, Chloë, Eefje for their mental support and very '*gezellige*' dinners, my volleyball team, my yoga friend Elisabeth, my swimming colleague of art history Laura, my mountain hiking friend Jacobine and other friends and acquaintances I may have forgot to mention, but have helped me in their own ways along the small path of PhD-research. Special thanks go to the charming beta guy I met in the last year of my PhD-project, who likes to be in the mountains as often as I do.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, my older sister Irene and other family members, who have always supported me and provided for calm weekend retreats with long walks in the woods and along the dunes at the coast now and then.

I Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter first introduces the main question. This is followed by several sections that clarify why this question is interesting and relevant, and which key concepts are used in this book. This includes an overview of debates on ‘mixing’ and mixed relationships, both of which are highly contested concepts. Furthermore, the group that takes central stage in this book – the Eurasians – are described and compared to similar groups, such as the Eurafricans. All this leads up to a heuristic framework and a set of working hypotheses, which structure this book. The section on historiography explains what this book adds to the literature. The chapter concludes with sections on method and material, and a brief outline of the rest of the book.

1.2 Main question

The migration of Europeans to the colonies was part of the process of colonisation. Many of these migrants entered into – what were labelled – racially mixed relationships, which were mostly between colonising men and colonised women.¹ When in the mid-twentieth century the European colonial empires in Asia – namely, British India, the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina – fell apart, the populations of mixed ancestry had to choose whether to stay in or leave the former colonies. Both the colonial authorities and the rulers of the newly independent countries viewed these mixed ancestry groups as a problem. This led to large debates before and after decolonisation on what was called, at the time, ‘The Eurasian Problem’, ‘The Eurasian Question’ and ‘The Eurasian Dilemma’.² In the late nineteenth century, this ‘Eurasian Question’ only preoccupied the British middle class living in British India.³ In the following decades there were, however, extensive debates about this issue in all three colonial contexts.⁴ When independence was discussed, the colonisers and the future rulers of the soon to be independent countries developed policies for the Eurasians, which was a challenge as the Eurasians did not form a legal category nor a well-defined or fixed group. There was no consensus on who was to be considered Eurasian, and as a result it was also difficult to establish how many Eurasians there were, or which colonial and postcolonial policies would best deal with them. Once the colonies became independent, the problem became urgent because the Eurasians had to choose between staying in or leaving the former colony.

In this book, I use the terms ‘Anglo-Indians’, ‘Indo-Europeans’, and ‘*Métis*’ for the mixed ancestry groups in, respectively, British India, the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina, while I use the term ‘Eurasian’ to refer to the group as a whole. The labelling and categorisation of the mixed population, currently and at the time, have been highly debated and contested issues, with some people strongly opposing certain labels while advocating others.⁵ I discuss this point at length below. Notwithstanding the debates, I use the term ‘Eurasians’ throughout this study since that *was* the prevalent term in use at the time.⁶ Categories may be linguistic constructions from a Foucauldian perspective, but their use, especially by policy makers and other state authorities, has concrete societal consequences, because states have the authority to decide who belongs to which group and divide rights accordingly.⁷ Rather than attempting to avoid or abandon particular labels, or to introduce new ones, the way forward, in my view, is to identify how colonial authorities and others (including the Eurasians themselves) categorised people and to explain why this changed over time. I am aware that the term ‘Eurasian’ may not meet the approval of all readers. Yet, in the absence of another collective term and because scholars continue to use the term in the related historiography, I felt that this was the most appropriate term to consider Anglo-Indians, Indo-Europeans and *Métis* together (see below for a further discussion of the term).

This book deals with the position of Eurasians before and after decolonisation in three colonial settings. Although some of the phenomena I describe happened before 1900, I focus on the period between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1960s. This study is about the position of Eurasians in colonial society, how, when and why their position changed, and to what extent this affected the margins within which they made their choices. The main question is: Which factors determined the margins within which the Eurasians made their choices to stay in or leave the former colony, and why did these factors differ between the three colonies? Sub-questions are: How did state citizenship policies and the Eurasians’ sense of belonging affect their decisions to stay or leave? What was the dominant discourse in media and government circles of the Eurasian dilemma? How did this influence state policies?

Debates ran their course through a complicated interplay between Eurasians and their interest organisations, former colonial governments and the governments of the newly independent nations. These discussions revealed a great deal about the form of colonial rule and the categorisations of people. Governments set criteria for acquiring or losing citizenship and rights to stay in the former colony, or to leave for the mother country. In this book, I use the term ‘mother country’ instead of ‘metropolis’ or ‘metropole’ because ‘mother country’ is the word that is generally used in the literature on colonialism, post-colonialism and decolonisation. The words ‘metropolis’ or ‘metropole’ are less suitable given their general meaning of a ‘large city’.

I chose British India, the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina as case studies because they were located in the same region. Furthermore, they all were exploitation colonies (with the colonisers exploiting natural resources and labour) rather than settler colonies (such as New Zealand and Australia).⁸ Lastly, these were the most prestigious Asian colonies of the Dutch, British and French empires and they played an important role in the imagination of these empires. They were portrayed in similar

terms as respectively 'Gordel van Smaragd' (Emerald Belt, Dutch East Indies), the 'Jewel in the Crown' (British India) and 'la Perle d'Extrême-Orient' (the Pearl of the Far East, Indochina).⁹ These were the key colonies on which the Eurasian debate focused. I could, for instance, also have included British Malaya, but it did not have the same status as British India in the British Empire and its Eurasian population was not that large.¹⁰

The choice between leaving and staying was not taken at one point in time. Decision-making was a process in which Eurasians pondered the idea of staying or leaving. Little is known about the context or the margins partly resulting from state policies, in which people made their choices and the reasons for making them. It was a process that for some Eurasians took years because conditions, for example criteria for citizenship, changed. Part of the dilemma – staying or leaving – sprang from the 'in-between' position of the Eurasians. I elaborate on this point in the sections below. Debates about the position of Eurasians were intense after 1945, when British India, the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina became independent. However, I also look at the period prior to decolonisation (from around 1900 onwards) because, as I will show, the colonial legacy had an influence on the options Eurasians had and the choices they made. In short, in this book I describe the position of the Eurasians before, during and after decolonisation, and I explain the context in which they made their choices. The Eurasian people themselves and authorities in all three former empires were confronted with a dilemma: what would or should happen to a people sometimes labelled the 'colonial remnants' by European authorities? The goal of this book is to go beyond the conventional national perspective in (post)colonial studies by providing an overarching perspective of the experiences of Eurasians in the period before, during and after decolonisation in Asia. This enables me to highlight unexpected common features and connections between the cases as well as unique national specificities of each single case.

1.3 'Mixing'

European colonialism in Asia – which started well before the nineteenth century – created a population which was regarded as being of mixed ancestry. The issue of mixing led to widespread and long-lasting debates among policy makers, journalists, the Eurasians themselves and others. These debates showed continuity over time. In 1949, the Bishop of Birmingham gave his Galton Lecture to the Eugenics Society in London on the subject of 'Mixed Marriage'. According to the Bishop, mixed marriages generally led to decay, but there was some hope. Under good conditions – and the Bishop specifically mentioned the Eurasians at this point in his speech – mixed races could attain a certain measure of stability, with good qualities of their own.¹¹ The Bishop's speech illustrates the way of thinking about mixing at that time, and in the decades before.

In current academic literature, the concept 'mixed' is contested because it suggests that there *are* 'races' that can be 'mixed'.¹² The notion of 'mixed' draws on the idea that 'races' are real entities, an idea to which the Bishop quoted above, adhered.¹³ 'Race'

is however not a reality, but a social construction. ‘Race’ is not something, but its use *does* something.¹⁴ It is a fluid, shifting, situational and relational category of power, similar to and intersecting with gender, class, sexuality and religion.¹⁵ Some authors have addressed this intersection. Ann Laura Stoler and Bart Luttikhuis, for instance, discussed whether race or class was more important in the attempts of mixed people to climb the social ladder in colonial societies.¹⁶ In my view, and as this book will show, class had more prominence in the Dutch East Indies case, while race was more important in the British Indian case. Indochina took the middle road as a young colony. Gender, class, sexuality and religion are not only categories of power, but also of identity. People – in this case Eurasians – use these categories for their self-definition.

All these categories of power and identity work to include and exclude people via discourses and practices (including laws).¹⁷ Categorisation is the key element of governmentality in the Foucauldian sense. According to Foucault, discourse is about the way knowledge is created by power strategies that are hidden in various kinds of texts.¹⁸ The stereotypes that were used in the colonial discourse not only reflected colonial and postcolonial ideas, but also reinforced those stereotypes as a performative power.¹⁹ Categorisations are used to legitimise differences within policies and between groups of people.²⁰ According to Foucault, categorisation does not describe social order but rather shapes and reshapes power relations.²¹ Within the Foucauldian perspective, race, like gender, sexuality, class and religion, are regulatory ideals that were created to discipline and govern.

Part of the literature on ‘race’ is rather us-oriented and ignores the influence of race on colonisation and genocides around the world. Conceptualisations of race formed the basis for colonialism, genocide and slavery. Europeans ranked themselves as the most advanced race in an invented racial hierarchy and believed this gave them the right to enslave, kill, exploit or educate those whom they ranked lower on the racial ladder. To avoid confusion, it is important to note that the us literature commonly uses the term ‘race’, while the European literature favours the term ‘ethnicity’. There is in essence little difference between the use of these concepts. Both have evolved along the same lines: both were originally perceived as static and real, and over time both were increasingly recognised as social constructions.²²

Debates about race or ethnicity are connected to debates about whiteness.²³ Whiteness is also a construction, along gendered lines, and is created as much by culture, education, class, religion, occupation, and geography as by phenotype.²⁴ In the words of Fanon in his study *The Wretched of the Earth*: ‘you are rich because you are white: you are white, because you are rich.’²⁵ In the late colonial period, ‘modernity’, ‘westernisation’, and ‘whiteness’ were interlocking concepts with none of these three having predominance.²⁶ Whiteness was not only about skin colour, some Eurasians could ‘pass’ themselves off as white if they were well-educated, upper class and Christian. Bhabha uses the word ‘mimicry’ to describe this imitation of whites. For example, Eurasians mimicked Europeans by wearing European clothes and speaking the coloniser’s language perfectly.²⁷

‘Race’ was used to define some people as inferior and within that perspective, ‘mixing’ was constructed as a threat.²⁸ Authorities in many countries introduced anti-miscegenation laws to prohibit relationships and marriages that were defined as mixed.²⁹