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# 東京外国語大学 国際日本学研究所 報告Ⅷ

## アヤ・エザワ (ライデン大学)

### Aya Ezawa (Leiden University) at TUFS, 2018



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## Children of WWII: Indo-Europeans born during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies in search for their Japanese fathers

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“I don’t know who my parents are. So I don’t know what my identity is.”

“Few of us grew up in a warm nest. To begin with, we didn’t have a father, and we also had practically no mother.”

“People understand that children, teenagers in puberty will look for their unknown father or mother. But not with an adult. And absolutely not if this person has a family and successful career.”

“I want to be at peace with myself. I would like to have a photo [of my father].”

(van der Werff, 1991)

In this talk, I examine the experiences and identities of Indo-European (hereafter Indisch) – Japanese children born of war, who were born to Indo-European mothers and Japanese fathers during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies (1942–1945). To be of mixed-race, and partially Japanese descent is a topic which attracts increasing attention in academic and public debates nowadays, often focusing on experiences of exclusion within contemporary Japanese society (e.g. Murphy–Shigematsu 2008; Iwabuchi 2014). To be of partially Japanese descent, however takes on a very different meaning in the context of war and occupation. For a child of the former ‘enemy’ who grew up within a community which suffered pain and loss during the Japanese occupation, being of Japanese descent is also associated with the atrocities committed by the country of their fathers, and a sense of culpability for the pain and suffering inflicted unto their community and family. As the above quotes show, the circumstances of their conception and lack of knowledge and a relationship with their biological father had a profound impact on the upbringing of Indisch–Japanese children born of war, deeply affecting their sense of self and identity in the long term. Their search for their fathers however appears to not just be a matter of completing their family tree, but also closely tied to very existential questions about their identity. Many have spent years searching for their fathers, and trying to connect with Japan. What exactly is it that they are looking for in searching for their fathers? What would a photograph of their father actually provide them with? And why would you feel that your life is incomplete without looking for a father you never knew, at age 70? And what, if anything, will be achieved if you find your Japanese family?

In this talk, I explore these questions based on archival research as well as oral history interviews in conducted with Indisch–Japanese residing in the Netherlands. Most of my interviewees belong to one of two organizations of Indisch–Japanese, Vereniging JIN, and the Sakura Foundation, who have both been

active in bringing Indisch–Japanese together and supporting their search for their fathers. To protect the privacy of my interviewees, I will use pseudonyms throughout my talk, except where their name of the interviewee and their story has already been openly published.

### *Who are Indisch-Japanese?*

Born between 1943 and 1946, Indisch–Japanese were conceived between Indo–European women and Japanese men, who were members of the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. Most mothers identified as Indo–European; they were born and raised in the Dutch East Indies and had in most cases both Dutch and Indonesian family. There were also a considerable number of children born to Indonesian mothers, but as they were less likely to move to the Netherlands after Indonesian independence, they are not the focus of my research.

The fathers of Indisch–Japanese were men who belonged to the Japanese occupation forces, and often appeared to be men of higher rank. A number of fathers were known to have been members of the Kempeitai, but the majority served in civilian functions, and worked in transport, distribution, and came to encounter local women as part of their daily activities for their work (Torikai 1952). Since the Japanese occupation forces also included Korean recruits, there are also some examples of Korean fathers who were deployed in the Indies.

Very few of these couples were able to remain together after Japan’s capitulation, and in most cases, children stayed with their mothers or their mothers’ families, and resettled to the Netherlands in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Only about 100 couples are known to have repatriated together to Japan in 1946. In most cases, Indisch–Japanese did not know the identity of their fathers when they were young, and only came to discover that their fathers were Japanese as adults, or even when they reached themselves retirement age. There are no hard figures regarding the actual number of Indisch–Japanese children, but it has been estimated to be between a thousand and several thousand, and only about 100 have come forward and joined a community of Indisch–Japanese in the Netherlands (Gieske 2016).

### *History, memory, and identity*

One of the key issues I would like to explore in this talk is how the life stories of Indisch–Japanese are related to the history and memory of the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. While it seems obvious that children born of war feel the impact of the occupation in their lives, one has to remember that they were born between 1943 and 1946, and therefore did not consciously experience the Japanese occupation. Instead, it is their community’s memory of the occupation which has played a central role in the shaping their understanding of the occupation, and their identity as Indisch–Japanese.

As Benedict Anderson (1994), and Ernest Renan (1996 [1882]) before him have argued, history and memory plays a central role in forming national communities. All communities, real or imagined, rely on collective memory not only to narrate their past, but also to define their present: who they are, where they come from, and what makes them a national community. In so doing, nations not only define their history and boundaries, but also provide the context within which the identities of members of the national community form.

A key challenge faced by children born of war is that their existence is at odds with the wartime memory of the community they grew up in; they are, so to say, the enemy against which their own community defines itself. In the case of Indisch–Japanese, their community’s memory of the Japanese occupation

came with a specific image of Japan and the Japanese at war, which also defined the meaning of being of Japanese descent. Having grown up within the Indo–European community, they had to wrestle with the cruel and sadistic image of the Japanese at war, and often found it difficult to imagine themselves outside of this image. As children of a Japanese man, many felt culpable of the war crimes committed by Japanese forces, and unjustified in their existence.

What is at stake for Indisch–Japanese in search for their fathers, therefore, is not just the bare facts of the circumstances of their birth, or the identity of their fathers. Rather, their search to connect with Japan and their Japanese family is part of a process, which seeks to reconcile the wartime history with their existence as Indisch–Japanese. Their ability to come to terms with their existence as children with Japanese roots in the Indo–European community, is not only a personal journey. Rather, it is closely tied to their acceptance as Japanese within their families, and the reconciliation of their families and community with the former occupier.

### *Indo-Europeans and the Japanese occupation*

There are several reasons why the memories of the Japanese occupation remain deeply traumatic for many of those who experienced it. One of the specific aspects of the Japanese occupation was that when Japanese forces occupied the Dutch East Indies in 1942, they did not occupy a sovereign nation, but a Dutch colony. Japanese occupying forces not only occupied the territory of the Dutch East Indies and took over its administration but also ended the Dutch colonial control over the local Indonesian population. As a consequence, Japanese forces not only took members of the Dutch colonial army as prisoners of war, but also subjected the Dutch civilian population, including women and children to internment, where they endured three years of deprivation and loss under harsh living conditions (de Jong 2002). While all occupations leave scars and bitter memories, the trauma's of the Japanese occupation remain very broadly felt within the Indo–European community because the occupation was not only experienced by soldiers at the front, but also left a deep imprint in the lives of the civilian population who faced hunger, illness, and loss during the three years of the occupation.

To make matters even more complex, the Japanese occupation was followed by Indonesia's independence struggle, which ended the Dutch presence in Indonesia, and forced large parts of the Dutch colonial community to leave for the Netherlands. Japan's capitulation, therefore, was not followed by a period of rebuilding, but a violent struggle that led to the end of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia. In addition to the deep traumas suffered by civilians POWs during internment, the end of the Dutch East Indies, and resettlement to the Netherlands, and lack of formal representation at the government level made it all the more difficult for the community to engage in a process of reconciliation with Japan.

### *Encounters*

To make matters even more complicated, the internment policies of the Japanese occupying forces led to contrasting experiences of the occupation within families and the former colonial community. Dutch colonial society consisted not only of native–born Dutch, but also a sizeable community of Indo–Europeans, who were Dutch citizens born and raised in the Indies, and in most cases (but not always), had both Dutch or European, and Indonesian family roots. Japanese occupying forces saw Indo–Europeans with Indonesian roots, and therefore initially as 'Asian' and exempted them from internment. Eventually, however, most Indo–European men were interned along with the white Dutch population, leaving Indo–European

women and children to largely fend for themselves during the three years of occupation (Meijer 2004).

Whereas their fathers, brothers and spouses were subjected to forced labor in Japanese internment camps, therefore, young women lived among Japanese occupying forces, and dependent on a cordial relationship with Japanese forces in order to find employment, and support themselves and their children. While they were not confined to camps, without a breadwinner or other incomes, the women who were exempted from internment also faced considerable difficulties in supporting themselves and their children. It is under these circumstances that most mothers of Indisch–Japanese met their children’s fathers. Many encountered their children’s fathers at their workplace or in everyday life, as they took up employment to support their families.

One important point to note here is that the mothers of Indisch–Japanese were not part of the so-called Comfort Women system (Yoshimi 2000). There is no doubt that the system existed also in the Dutch East Indies, but the relationships I describe here are not part of this system; they were not recruited into ‘comfort’ stations but lived at home with their mothers and had a relationship with a single man, which in some cases lasted for several years and are therefore different in nature.

Together, the Japanese occupation therefore had important gender as well as racial dimensions. While Dutch and Indo–European men experienced the occupation as POWs, and the Dutch–born white population was subject to internment, Indo–European women of mixed heritage were often exempted from internment, and lived and worked among Japanese outside of the camps, leading to contrasting experiences and memories of the Japanese occupation.

### *Postwar childhoods*

But the impact of the occupation was not limited to the personal trauma’s and losses experienced during the war; it also had wide-ranging implications for the family life and upbringing of Indisch–Japanese children. First of all, since their fathers had to quickly repatriate to Japan after the capitulation, most Indisch–Japanese children grew up without their Japanese father. In addition, mothers’ own families had also suffered considerable losses during the war; many had brothers and fathers who had fought against the Japanese advance and had experienced internment. Many of them had been subjected to forced labor at the notorious Thai–Burma railway, or in Japanese shipyards and coalmines. Although many grandmothers were supportive of their daughters, the presence of a Japanese child clearly introduced tensions into their family life.

The majority of mothers quickly married as soon as men returned from the war, in the majority of cases to Indo–European men who had just been released from a Japanese POW camp. While marriage offered some economic security, children’s relationship with their stepfathers was often difficult, because many stepfathers were severely traumatized by their experience of Japanese internment camps. While some stepfathers offered a warm home, in a significant number of cases Japanese children were subjected to severe physical and psychological abuse, which had long-term repercussions for their well-being. Mothers were also often not in the position to protect their children, which meant that children had often fragile relationships with their mothers. A number of mothers also chose to leave their children in orphanages, with foster parents, or their own grandparents, fearful of the repercussions and difficulties they would face as the mother of a Japanese child. Those mothers who did not remarry and kept their children with them, in turn, faced considerable difficulties in making ends meet, as discrimination and rejection in employment and housing as the mother of a Japanese child appeared common at the time.

The circumstances of their birth, and identity of their fathers, therefore, had a significant impact on children's upbringing. While mothers tried to provide them with a father by getting married, children's relationship with their stepfathers, as well as mothers was often severely strained by the tensions surrounding their Japanese origins.

### *Japanese Roots*

Let me now turn to the story of Indisch–Japanese and how they have engaged with the question of their origins and the meaning of their existence in the postwar Netherlands.

Indisch–Japanese first made an appearance in the public when two Indisch–Japanese women, Cherie Landegent and Hideko Ehrentreich Gieske placed an advertisement in two national newspapers in 1984, that they wished to get in touch with others who shared their background. Nestled between an advertisement for how to build your own tile oven and an advertisement for a meditation course, the advertisement read: “We are seeking to contact people who are, like us, of Indisch–Japanese descent,” followed by a Postbox address. While it makes perfect sense to look for people who shared their background and experience, this was also a bold and unusual move. Both Cherie and Hideko were aware of the fact that having a Japanese background remained a taboo, and that anti–Japanese sentiments remained common within the Indo–European community.

Yet, they were both unusual individuals, because they were both raised in full knowledge of their background, and felt confident in talking about their Japanese roots. Cherie had moved to Japan with her family in 1946, and lived in Japan until she was 10, and Hideko's mother had always been open about her background, encouraged her to embrace Japanese culture, dressed her in kimono's at public events as a child, and facilitated a letter exchange with her father, whom she met as an adult. Curious about the experiences of others, they had decided to look for other Indo–Europeans with a Japanese father, in order to 1) break the taboo, and share their experiences, 2) engage in cultural events related to Japan, as well as 3) possibly look for their fathers.

Their call to find others who shared their background, coincided, by pure chance, with the publication of a collection about the camp experiences of women, entitled ‘A Wire of Fear’ (van Reede and Onderdenwijngaard 1984) which also included the story of a Indisch–Japanese man and his mother. The publication, and public discussion that followed, for the first time brought attention to the existence of Indisch–Japanese children but also brought into view the specific discourse, which had made the existence of Indisch–Japanese children a taboo subject.

One of the key issues which were raised in the personal accounts presented in *A Wire of Fear* was the topic of relationships between Dutch women and Japanese men during the occupation. One of the contributors spoke with much anguish about women whom she saw as having ‘volunteered’ to provide sexual services to Japanese officers. Nicknamed as ‘roses’ she were described them, with much apprehension, as women who were opportunists, disloyal to their country, and who traded sexual services for better treatment and food. Where other women suffered under significant lack of food, women who engaged with Japanese officers were thought to have lived in luxury and as benefitting from the suffering of other countrymen and women.

The story of Henk's Schuman's mother (which used a pseudonym to protect the author's identity), which was featured in the same collection, further visualized the human impact of such view of a

mothers' relationship with a Japanese man. Although Henk's mother claimed to have had a consensual relationship with his father, she felt such intense sense of guilt for her actions, and felt so ostracized within her community, that she felt incapable of talking about her encounter with Henk's father until her death. He wrote about his mother: "She was very nervous and anxious. She did not get over it until her death. She couldn't talk to anyone about it. When we tried, she burst out in tears... She must have felt guilt, heavy as lead, until her death" (Schuman in van Reede and Onderdenwijngaard 1984).

Her experience was not unique; also other children acutely felt that their mothers were held in contempt within their families during their childhood. Ellen (pseudonym) for instance, felt that her step-father not only picked on her because she was the child of a Japanese man, but also used the fact that her mother had had a relationship with a Japanese man as a way to humiliate her mother, and accuse her of having prostituted herself. She says:

According to my [step] father, I was fat, stupid, and everything you could add to that, that was wrong... Whenever I had done something wrong, he would say: 'Even if your mother is a whore, even then...'...Why was he saying that? All I want is the truth and to say: 'You had a Japanese father and it was this person'... It would allow me to rehabilitate her...I want to provide the story of what actually happened.

Although she saw her mother as a strong and proud woman, the fact that she had had a relationship with a Japanese man, seemed to have robbed her of any possibility for recourse within her marital relationship. Ellen therefore not only felt targeted as the child of a Japanese man, but also felt that she was a perpetual reminder of her mother's wrong-doing. This meant that she not only felt guilty for the deeds committed by the country of her father, but also considered herself as a burden for her mother. Her desire to find out 'what really' happened, one may argue, is then not only an attempt to straighten out the facts, but rather, to find a way to think and talk about her mother's deeds, as well as her own existence, in a new and more positive way. In light of the contempt with which both mothers and children were viewed, few dared to contact Hideko and Cherie, and it was however not until 1991, that the activities of Japanese roots in form of a newly formed organization called JIN, began to take off.

The year 1991 constitutes an important turning point for Indisch-Japanese in the Netherlands, as it broke with the established discourse on Japan and the war, and set the beginning of the emergence of an active group of Indisch-Japanese who came to actively search for their roots and define their place within the history and memory of the Japanese occupation in new ways.

Three events coincided in this year: the launch of JIN — the acronym for Japanese — Indisch-descendants organization, the visit of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands to Japan, and the highly publicized encounter of Freda Rijnders, a woman of Indisch-Japanese descent, with her Japanese father. Queen Beatrix' visit to Japan was no casual visit. It followed a planned visit in 1987, which was cancelled, due to strong resistance within the Netherlands. When the Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu visited in 1991 and laid a wreath at the Dam, a memorial for the war dead, protesters threw his flower wreath in an adjacent pond in anger, thereby rejecting his attempt to express regret for Japan's wartime actions. Queen Beatrix' visit to Japan was therefore a symbolic step to engage in a dialogue about this period and in her speech to the emperor, she took the necessary time to address the suffering of Dutch nationals due to Japanese internment.

Anticipating publicity regarding the Netherlands in Japan at the occasion of the Queen's visit, members of JIN approached Japanese newspapers to make their existence known. Coinciding with her visit, a lengthy article about Indisch–Japanese was published in *Shukan Asahi*, presenting to the Japanese public the existence of the group, as well as their urge to find their fathers.

In the end, the strategy to seek public attention during the Queen's visit by far exceeded everyone's expectations. The story of Japanese–Indisch children was intently read by a man in Osaka, who was himself in search for his Indisch–Japanese daughter. He reached out to JIN and within weeks, was in touch with his daughter, and, a few weeks later, visited a daughter he had not seen in more than 40 years in the Netherlands.

The event of a long–lost father meeting his daughter for the first time, needless to say, attracted significant media attention in the Netherlands, producing both sensational and heart–warming stories about their encounter. Their first encounter at Schiphol airport was captured by tv crews, followed by interviews for both regional and national newspapers. Over night, Freda, who had been shy and reserved, and had never talked about her identity as the child of a Japanese, had become front page news.

She reflected on her experience as follows: “My father said himself: is that ok [to have this all over the media]? I said, ‘so what’? I felt: I have found him. I am half–Japanese, and the whole world can know it. I was so happy...it was as if doors are opening. I had always locked things away, I wasn't able to be who I am. And now, all of the sudden I could say: Boom! Here I am!...I know the man, I feel more free. I am not ashamed of being Japanese anymore because I know everything now. ...I didn't just do it for myself... I thought I would do it for the other children, because they are in the same shoes as me. I will see *that it becomes possible, finally, to talk about it*, for the outside world, I did it for that.”

Freda's thoughts capture the importance of not only ‘meeting the man, and knowing her father’ but the ability to support an alternative story of the encounters of their parents, as well as the meaning of having a Japanese father. The image of Freda's elderly father, in his baret and gentle smile, not only put a face to the father she never knew, but allowed her to replace the image of the savage and cruel occupier with that of a peaceful elderly man, who cares about his daughter.

Encouraged by her story, many more Indisch–Japanese came forward, joined JIN and began to actively search for their fathers. The activities of the JIN also resulted in collaborations with Japanese war veterans, among them the father of Freda, as well as the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare in the search for fathers. Indisch–Japanese were also given the opportunity by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to visit Japan as part of the Japanese Peace Exchange program which was originally established to offer former Dutch POWs an opportunity to reconcile with Japan. Thanks to these efforts, a considerable number of children of Japanese fathers have been able to find their fathers, while others, even thirty years later, are continuing their search.

### *Father searches*

To explore the meanings and motivations behind father searches more specifically, let me now turn to the story of one man who is still searching for his family, and whose experiences and perspectives, in my view captures a number of the key issues which inform the search for Japanese fathers even 70 years after the end of the Japanese occupation. Ton (pseudonym) is a retired professional, and even at age 73, extremely engaged with the question of his Japanese origins. Ton's mother was of Indo–European background, and encountered his father during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. They were acquaintances,

not lovers, but one night, his father visited his mother's house, clearly drunk, and raped her. His mother's story was therefore not a love story, even though those existed as well.

Ton's mother saw the encounter as a black page in her life. It was however not just the act of violence committed against her, that seemed to weigh heavily on her mind. What appeared to weigh even more heavily, in her case, is that though she had been taken against her will, her future husband and her community apparently did not believe her story. In other words, she might have felt seen and treated as a woman who had voluntarily engaged in a relationship, and to have prostituted herself during the Japanese occupation.

Ton spent the first few years of his life with his grandparents, as his mother went on to study at university, and it was only when he was an elementary school student, that he came to live with his biological mother and stepfather. His life thus started out without a strong feeling relationship to his care takers. Compared to others, he was however fortunate to have been given the opportunity to obtain a higher education, and went on to pursue a successful career in management.

Like many others, he finally confronted his mother about the identity of his father during a moment of crisis aged 45, shortly after his first marriage had fallen apart. He describes the moment his mother finally told him the story about his conception as follows:

It was an essential moment in my life as a whole. Essential in that I landed in an identity crisis. As if I was hit in the face. My parents, and in particular my mother had lied to me regarding my descent. It's a terrible experience to realize as a child that you can not trust your parents. Second, the fact that she was taken against her will. That tells me that: "Actually, you were an unwanted child." And third, ... you are the child of the enemy.

His statement about the impact of learning that his mother had been raped, and that his father was Japanese, and, that his stepfather was not his biological father offers a nuanced understanding of the complexity of the issues he and many other Indisch-Japanese come to face when they finally learn that their father was Japanese.

Ton had already had a fragile relationship with his mother and stepfather, and had always felt that he was treated differently, and treated as the scapegoat of the family. But the moment he learned that his stepfather was actually not his biological father dealt a further blow to this already fragile relationship. The fact that his own mother had kept this information from him irreparably broke his trust in the family he had grown up in.

That he was born as a result of rape, and beyond that, the child of a Japanese man, moreover, pushed him further to the edge: even though his suspicions that his stepfather was not his biological father were confirmed, it did not offer him an alternative family or identity to hold on to. How could he embrace the fact that he was the result of rape, and thus, essentially unwanted? How could he accept being Japanese in light of the war crimes committed by Japan against his community? He further explains:

At that moment, I didn't know anymore who was I was. My anchor, the foundation of my existence, that you assume to have: 'I belong to this family, I come from this place,' ... you ask yourself: Who am I? I was unwanted, what do I do here? Whom shall I believe?

As a child of a Japanese man, it appears, he could not also be, at the same time, Indo-European, just as the oppressor can not at the same time belong to the victims. Having internalized the anti-Japanese sentiments harbored within his community, there seemed to be no space for an amicable relationship between Japan and the Netherlands as Japan constituted the enemy that his community defined himself against. To be identified as the enemy, and as unwanted, in essence, robbed him of any tangible way to define his existence. His ensuing search for more information about his father, therefore, was not just driven by curiosity about the identity of his father, but rather, an urgent quest to find meaning in his existence and find a place to trust and belong.

In an effort to explore alternative understandings of his own existence, Ton departed on a long process of reading about Japan, exploring competing understandings of the war. After many years, he also finally took the step to meet with other Indisch-Japanese, an encounter which, for the first time, offered him a place where he instantly felt at home – a sense of familiarity and trust he had always missed. One of the key moments which allowed him to gain confidence and finally feel settled with himself, moreover, was during his first trip to Japan, facilitated at the invitation of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The trip involves a tight schedule of visiting wartime memorial sites together with other Indisch-Japanese, a visit to an elementary school, as well as some sightseeing, along with various official receptions. Ton called this visit to Japan “the journey of his life” – an unusual statement for someone who rarely shows his emotions, and always appears both restrained and rational in presenting his views. Ton was not the only one who returned from Japan as a changed man, suddenly confident and assured about himself, after an intensive ten day long trip. What is it that makes these trips so special?

When I asked him to describe what made his trip to Japan have such an impact, he recalled a reception where he had the opportunity to share his personal story with members of the Japanese public. In front of a completely unknown audience, he and his fellow travelers took the opportunity to share their personal story, often telling their story with a level of detail and emotion they had never experienced before. Ton was both shocked as well as moved by the fact that a man in the audience wept in hearing his story. He explains:

I was touched deeply, that someone, from 20.000 km away, in a completely unknown environment, was touched by our story, it moved me deeply, and suddenly I felt a connection...We belonged there, they understood us, they understood our emotions. It gave me the feeling: Yeah, I feel at home here....Recognition, empathy, connection. ...I got the feeling that I belonged, because I was treated...like a Japanese.”

There are several things which are significant about this statement. The mere act of sharing his story, with members of the Japanese public, and feeling listened to, and empathized with allowed him for the first time to connect with his Japanese roots, even though in form of an audience of strangers. Whereas he had felt rejected and ostracized within his family and community in the Netherlands, this event provided him with the opportunity to for the first time speak openly about his Japanese roots in a safe space: after all, and this is of course obvious, he did not have to worry about anti-Japanese sentiments while in Japan, or feel ashamed and fearful for having Japanese roots. Even more significant is the fact that he confidently, and proudly describes himself here, as a ‘Japanese’. In other words, he was, for the first time, able to embrace the idea of being Japanese in a positive sense.

This ability to positively identify with Japan had a tremendous impact on how he viewed himself, but also, how he approached his relationship to his community in the Netherlands. Feeling, for the first time, positive and confident about his Japanese roots, he was finally able to overcome the shame and fear he had for so long associated with being himself. He explains:

I am no longer ashamed....I am no longer afraid to talk about who I am...[it was a fear that] others will react negatively. That they will look negatively at you and say things about you, and toward others. You have to consciously work on your ability to remove yourself from [negative] views and opinions, by engaging with the material.

### *Final thoughts*

The search for fathers and an alternative story of the origins of Indisch–Japanese, however, is not just an individual endeavor. During the 30 years since Indisch–Japanese first made their appearance in public debate, they have not only pursued their personal searches for their fathers in Japan, but also begun to actively engage in a dialogue about their place in the history and memory of the Japanese occupation.

What are Indisch–Japanese children looking for in searching for their fathers – and what can they gain from finding their family in Japan? As I hope has become clear throughout this talk, the urge to find their Japanese fathers and family, appears to reflect both, an eagerness to move beyond wartime images of Japan and Japanese as the defining feature of their identity, as well as a longing for a place, and family to belong to.

Their focus on Japan can of course, be interpreted in terms of the primacy they may ascribe to fathers in defining a child’s identity – but it can also be seen a reflection of their uprootedness and rejection by the families and communities they grew up in. Feeling out of place in the families of their upbringing, they may hope to find their ‘real’ family in searching for their father in Japan. In a situation where information about the circumstances surrounding their birth is highly contested, and at best uncertain, the ability to identify and connect with Japanese family also appears to offer a unique means to ascertain their existence, something to hold on to after their trust in the families of their upbringing had been broken.

For children born across enemy lines, it may not only be the absence of a father, but the lack of a legitimate place within their community and its history which has robbed them of an opportunity to develop a sense of home and belonging. As a consequence, for Indisch–Japanese to ‘come home,’ may not only require the identification of their biological family, but also for their community and family to recognize the legitimacy of their existence, and the deep impact of the contentious history of the Japanese occupation on their lives to date.

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# オランダ領東インドから来日した戦争花嫁たち

## Indo-European war brides in Japan

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In this talk, I examine the experiences of Indo-European women who entered a private relationship with a Japanese man during the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies (1942–1945), and the challenges they faced in supporting themselves and their children in the aftermath of Japan's capitulation. Surrounded by a community which had suffered harsh living conditions and personal losses in internment camps under the Japanese occupation, and accused of collaboration with the enemy, Indo-European mothers and their children were faced with much adversity in the immediate aftermath of Japan's surrender. Fearing repercussions from their families and their communities, a small group of mothers pursued the possibility of leaving for Japan together with their partner and children. The ensuing debates among Dutch and Japanese authorities about the future of these couples, from the legality of their marriages, the nationality of mothers, to their right for support provide a window on the complex relationship between women and the nation. As I will show in this talk, concerns among public officials about the rights and responsibilities over women their children underscore the symbolic importance of reasserting patronage over the nation's women and children in reconstituting a war-torn nation.

Based on Japanese documentation and Dutch archival sources from the National Archives in the Netherlands, my goal is reconstruct the debates about the rights and responsibilities over mothers' and children's welfare, as well as mothers' own considerations in safeguarding the well-being of their children and raising a family in the borderlands of two nations at war.

### *The Netherlands East Indies under the Japanese Occupation*

During the Pacific War, Japan occupied a wide territory in East and Southeast Asia; sexual contact between troops and local women, particularly in form of the notorious Comfort Women System, was not a mere side-effect of the conflict, but is known to have been a central element of wartime strategy. The Netherlands East Indies are no exception in this respect: occupied between 1942 and 1945, the Japanese military also established Comfort Stations in the Netherlands East Indies (Ars 2000; Poelgeest 1995). Distinctive about the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies however is that the occupation also resulted in a large number of private relationships between individual members of the Japanese military of high rank, Japanese civilians enlisted in the military and Indo-European women, whose number is estimated to range between 1,000 and 3,000. The existence of these relationships is no mere coincidence or result of pure individual agency, but must be understood in the context of the racial and gendered character of Japanese occupation policies.

One of the distinctive aspects of the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies is that the Indies were a Dutch colony when Japan attacked and subsequently occupied the Indies in 1942. The occupation not only took control of the territory and removed the Colonial administration, but, in addition to

taking members of the colonial military as prisoners of war, also subjected the civilian Colonial population, including women and children, to three years of internment. The Japanese occupation effectively removed large parts of colonial society, that is, approximately 99,000 (Indo-) Europeans from public life, and placed them in internment camps, where they endured three years of harsh discipline, material deprivation and personal loss (Bosma, Raben, and Willems 2006). In so doing, the Japanese military not only occupied the Indies, but upset the existing social order, in reversing the colonial and racial hierarchy. That is, during the Japanese occupation the white Dutch colonial population was subjected to the control of Japanese forces. Indonesians, who had been subordinated to the Dutch, meanwhile, walked freely and took over many of their administrative positions. The deep sense of anger and humiliation associated with the Japanese occupation is therefore not just a matter of the material deprivations and the hard labor demanded of prisoners of war, but was also amplified by the fact that both members of the military and civilians were subjected to the rule of a race they considered as inferior.

Race also featured in the occupation in other ways. Since the Dutch colonial population included a large Creole population of Indo-Europeans of Indonesian and Dutch or European parentage, internment policies faced the question of how to define and treat this large population of mixed Indo-European origins. The Netherlands East Indies, as compared to other European colonies in Asia stood out for the fact that interracial unions were significantly more common, and their offspring accepted as members of Colonial society. Unmarried men regardless of rank often lived in concubinage due to the fact that members of the military and traders for a long time were not permitted to bring their family or marry, leading to a steady growth of a community of Indo-Europeans of mixed heritage. To give you a sense of the scale of intermarriage, in 1925, 27.5% of all Europeans in Indonesia who married chose either native or mixed-blood spouses, a ratio that remained at 20% until 1940 (Gouda 1995). Moreover, in contrast to Eurasians in the British Empire, children of mixed origin who were recognized by their fathers were granted European status in the Netherlands East Indies (Ibid.), meaning that they were able to see themselves as part of Colonial society. Towards the twentieth century, locally born men of mixed heritage also began to play an important role in the colonial administration (Bosma and Raben 2008), granting them a certain possibility of a position and status mobility within Colonial society. In approaching WWII, many Indo-Europeans also joined the Colonial military (KNIL). While marginal within Colonial society, they were, as members of the Colonial military and administration, also complicit with the Colonial state.

Japanese internment policies initially primarily targeted full-blooded Dutch, meaning that Indo-Europeans of partial Asian heritage walked freely, and were encouraged to see themselves as part of the 'Asian brotherhood.' While this provided Indo-Europeans with personal freedom, their classification as Asians also deeply challenged their status within Dutch Colonial society, which was dependent on their loyalty and claim to their Dutch heritage, and denial of their Asian roots. Since a large number of Indo-European men had been recruited into the colonial army or worked as administrators in the colonial government, most of them were eventually interned during the occupation (Bosma, Raben, and Willems 2006).

But even with the sharpening of internment policy, a sizable part of the population, in particular Indo-European women and children, remained exempted from internment. An estimated 220,000 Indo-Europeans were not interned (Jong 2002). Life outside of the camps, however, came also with significant hardship. In the absence of fathers, husbands, and brothers, Indo-European women and their children lost their source of income, and had to live by selling their belongings, or find employment to make ends meet. Conditions were so dire that some women asked to be interned; at least they would then have food

and a roof over their head. By 1943, conditions became very dire, with an estimated 80% of the Indo-European population outside of camps being in need of support. For young people, in particular women who had often led a very sheltered life, the occupation could however also mean new freedoms and adventures. With the father interned, they had new responsibilities – boys often taking over the role of the father, and girls going out of the house to work – as well as adventure (Meijer 2004). It is under these circumstances that many Indo-European women encountered Japanese men – at their workplace or in form of a personal relationship that offered financial support and protection from arrest.

The disruption of the racial and gender order by the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies, therefore, constitutes an important backdrop to the formation of relationships between Indo-European women and Japanese men. With fathers and brothers interned, women not only shouldered the responsibility of supporting their families, but also were given considerable freedom in entering public life. As a consequence of the racial and gender distinctions of the internment policies, however, individual members of families and communities also experienced radically different circumstances during the occupation, resulting in much conflict and anger directed at women who became intimate with members of enemy forces during the internment of the Dutch community.

### *Encounters: Indo-European women and their Japanese partners*

One key point of debate surrounding these relationships has been whether or not they can be considered as part of the Comfort-Women system, in other words, whether they are the result of a military policy and state effort to facilitate sexual services for its troops by force. While it is beyond this paper to assess individual motivations and intentions of the men and women involved, there is evidence to suggest that even though these relationships arose out of specific structural circumstances, and therefore share certain common features, they were not part of the system of Comfort Stations.

To be sure, also during the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands East Indies, the Japanese military recruited women for sexual services, according to van Poelgeest, at first in form of individual services, that were later extended into a system of brothels, to service the sexual needs of the military. According to available records, most of the women recruited were Indonesian women, but about 65 women of European descent have been considered as having been forced to serve in the system, and a total of 200–300 European women are estimated to have ‘worked as prostitutes’ during the Japanese Occupation, some of them recruited from internment camps (Poelgeest 1995). The Comfort Women System in general was not only notorious for the sexual violence it inflicted on women, but also in its assumption that the sexual needs of soldiers needed to be served as part of the war effort in form of state-run sexual services (Lie 1997).

However, precisely because sexuality became a state-controlled territory, private relationships were not permitted for members of the military. Marriages between members of the military and local women was prohibited during the war, as soldiers should commit themselves to their duty and nation (Torikai 1952). Individual relationships therefore took place in secrecy, and men could be subject to punishment if they were found out. Yet, there was also a grey area here. It has been suggested, for instance, that Japanese officers stationed in remote areas (where presumably sexual services were not available) were allowed to take an Indonesian common law wife. This means that such informal relationships were tolerated under certain conditions, presumably under the assumption that sexual health was an important element of a soldier’s well-being, and under the condition that the relationship would be monogamous (to prevent the spread of venereal disease). As a consequence, also relationships between Indo-European

women and Japanese men during the Occupation have been viewed by some as an extension of the system of prostitution established by the Japanese military during this period (Poelgeest 1995).

There are, however, also reasons to doubt that relationships between Indo-European women and Japanese men were an explicit part of Japanese military policy. The main common denominator was that women who entered such relationships and bore a child, resided outside of internment camps, as they were born and grown up in the Indies and came from mixed, Indo-European families. Women who were single at the time of the war, to the most part also resided with their families (and not in brothels), and their encounters with a Japanese man were observed and known by siblings and family members but kept secret from other Japanese. Some women who were already married did live on their own, but only very few resided with their Japanese partner because co-residence was apparently not permitted by the Japanese military.

It is also notable that the majority of men who are known to have entered a relationship with an Indo-European woman were not professional soldiers, but men in civilian functions. Members of the military, according to estimates by officials involved with these couples at the time, constituted no more than 30% of known cases (Torikai 1952). Those who were members of the military in most cases held a high-ranking position, and had a certain freedom of movement and did not reside in the barracks of common soldiers. Whether part of the military or serving civilian functions, most also worked in positions which brought them into contact with the general population, as technicians or administrators, or had access to scarce resources, in particular food, clothing and fuel. There were also a number of men who were members of the *kempeitai* secret police, who could freely walk the streets in plain clothes uniforms and entered relationships with Indo-European women. Also in this case, however, relationships appear to have formed as a consequence of specific circumstances and opportunities, rather than a systematic effort of the military.

Another important element of these relationships is that they were far from anonymous, and often took the form of individual, long-term commitments and personal patronage. Most stories confirm that the Japanese fathers provided for the family in economically very dire times. The intimate involvement of a young daughter – often between sixteen and eighteen years of age supported also their mothers and other family members. Some Japanese men are also known to have protected family members from arrest and internment, or having played a role in the release of a family member from imprisonment.

While the length of relationships varied, they most often took the form of long-term and often committed relationships that formed between 1943 and 1945. Although the majority of children were born between 1945 and 1946, there were also a number of women who had two children with the same father, suggesting a relationship which lasted for several years. Women also knew the name of their partner, and often other personal details; some kept photos and memento's suggesting a serious relationship that went beyond a fleeting encounter. The birth of a child also often confirmed a couple's commitment. Fathers who witnessed their children's birth before capitulation, often gave them a Japanese name. Even after capitulation, some mothers named their children after their father.

In short, although there is evidence to suggest that there were women who were forcibly recruited into prostitution and sexual slavery, these individual relationships of patronage do not appear to have taken place as part of a systematic military effort. Instead, they may rather be considered as a result of a new gender order established by the Japanese occupation. Where women relied on marriage and male family members for their welfare in peace times, the main source of their economic welfare and social pro-

tection under the occupation became associated with a relationship patronage by a Japanese man.

Needless to say, the capitulation and surrender of Japan in August 1945 was an important turning point for Indo-European women and their Japanese partners. As a consequence of Japan's surrender, Japanese fathers had to leave quickly to regroup and repatriate, or were arrested if suspected of war crimes. Women were again left to their own devices, and were faced with much unpredictability and many questions within the tumultuous Indonesian independence struggle that followed. Whereas a relationship with a Japanese man had offered protection and security during the occupation, their allegiance with 'the enemy,' materialized in the presence of a child with a Japanese father, now became a liability and source of fierce reactions from their community. Many women themselves had lost fathers and brothers during the war, either in combat or as a consequence of forced labor camps at the notorious Thai-Burma railway or in Japanese mines, generating a conflicted family situation. Rumors were spreading that women who had a relationship with a Japanese man would be interned and punished, and put on a small island.<sup>1</sup> Some women also reported being denied food and clothing by their communities due to their relationship with a Japanese man (Tamura 1957). Where could women and children find safety? It is here, that the reactions and measures taken by the Japanese and Dutch authorities come in.

### *Repatriation: Japanese perspectives*

In the immediate aftermath of Japan's surrender, both Japanese and Dutch authorities were faced with the challenge of dealing with the presence of Dutch-Japanese couples in a period characterized by significant political uncertainty and unrest. In light of the traumatic experiences of Dutch POWs and civilians under the Japanese occupation, the well-being of mothers and children was a serious concern. Yet, the existence of Indisch-Japanese couples and their children in of themselves also touched on broader national issues. As has been widely argued, a nation is not just a political formation, but also, an imagined community (Anderson 1991) which relies on history, memory and symbolic representations to constitute its identity. Representations of war, moreover often deploy gendered imagery, with the nation represented by women and children, protected by male soldiers (McClintock 1996). Sexual contact across enemy lines, is thus not just a matter of individual encounters, but can also be read as the symbolic subordination of a nation, in form of its women's bodies, to the symbolic penetration by occupying forces. The attempts by Japanese and Dutch authorities to deal with the presence of Indisch-Japanese couples, therefore, were not just a matter of finding practical measures to support their well-being, but also to find ways to rectify the symbolic transgressions they represent after the end of hostilities.

Japanese military authorities were the first to react to the presence of Indisch-Japanese couples in the context of their own repatriation efforts. According to officials who were in charge of Indisch-Japanese couples after capitulation, the military was initially shocked by the sudden appearance of many members of the military with women and children in tow; so many men had disobeyed regulations and had had a relationship in secret (Tamura 1957). Yet, despite the fact that these private relationships infringed upon rules regarding personal conduct of members of the military, 'international marriages,' as they were called, military authorities took a number of steps to legalize their unions, and facilitate their swift repatriation to Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> See NA 02.05.116-396

In arguing for the need to support and safeguard the well-being of these 'international marriages,' officials not only highlighted their concerns about mothers' and children's welfare, but also the connection between their treatment of Dutch women, and the international standing of a surrendered nation. More concretely, Japanese military officials took the stance that in light of the recent capitulation, the consequences of their men's wartime actions had to be approached in a 'proper' manner. Japan had to take responsibility over its actions and men were called upon to fulfill their role as husbands and fathers and marry the women if they consented, and taking them with them to Japan (Tamura 1957). They argued that women and children had to be supported on 'humanitarian' grounds – they could face threats from their own community, and were surrounded by an unstable political environment (Ibid.). In light of the fact that fathers and heads of household were considered responsible for the well-being of women and children at the time, this role fell under the responsibility of Japanese husbands and fathers. Capitulation and surrender, therefore, came with an emphasis on a notion of men's patriarchal duty to ensure the welfare of women and children, in an effort to symbolically reconstitute the dignity and propriety of the surrendered nation.

To be sure, in practice, the possibility of the repatriation of the couples to Japan also drew some doubts, precisely because men were expected to provide adequate support for mothers and children. Doing so was however no easy task. War-torn Japan did not offer many rosy prospects, with widespread food shortages affecting the general population (Dower 1999). Such conditions would hardly constitute adequate living standards for European women who had grown up in Dutch colonial society. Moreover, many soldiers came from small villages and large families, where women worked hard in the fields, without servants, cooks, or drivers, quite unlike the lifestyle women grew up in during colonial times. And there were cultural differences to be considered, not to speak of the question whether a foreign bride would be welcomed by her husband's family (Torikai 1952). Officials therefore also had important class differences in living standards to consider: even if men were eager to support their families as breadwinners, their lifestyles in war-torn Japan could hardly live up to the expected living standards of women grown up in Dutch colonial society.

However, attempts to discourage women from repatriation to Japan, according to some officials, also generated resistance. As an official in charge of negotiating with couples the benefits of staying together and repatriating to Japan reported, the attempt to dissuade women from repatriation often only strengthened their resolve to join their husbands in Japan. They argued that they could not possibly let a partner suffer such difficult circumstances, after having been helped during the three difficult years of the Japanese Occupation. Some couples even threatened to commit suicide if they were not allowed to marry and go to Japan (Torikai 1952). While the risks were high, their reaction also reflects an urge to leave the Indies, in light of the threats and rejection some felt from their families and communities.

To facilitate repatriation to Japan, the Japanese authorities took a number of steps. To offer material support and protection, Japanese authorities established a protection camp for women and children with Japanese partners in Kampong Makkassar in Batavia, which housed 30 couples before their repatriation to Japan.<sup>2</sup> Officials also set up procedures to make their unions official in form of a marriage certificate.<sup>3</sup> After the arrival of the Allied forces, a British major with the name of Haining, acting under the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> NA 2.06.116, Takenaka Kin'ichi interrogation with Pennink August 23, 1946.

authority of the Japanese Chief of Staff, formalized the weddings together with the Catholic Priest Koide, in form of Roman–Catholic weddings (Tamura 1953). Although the officials involved confirmed the limited legality of the marriage certificates, the certificates were accepted as sufficient for allowing mothers to exit the Netherlands East Indies with their husbands (based on British approval), and facilitate the boarding of a repatriation ship to Japan.<sup>4</sup>

Between June and August 1946, three ships left for Japan, carrying 95 women of Dutch nationality, their children, and in most cases, their partners. Arrived safely in Japan, however, couples faced new challenges. Many men had married without the knowledge or consent of their parents, which meant that returning to their parental home was in a number of cases not an option (Inoue 2000). Some men were also faced by the fact that they already had a wife and children, with whom they had to negotiate further steps.<sup>5</sup> To support such cases, Japanese officials arranged for temporary housing for such families in the city of Tsuchiura in form of a collective housing unit or dormitory.<sup>6</sup> Located in commuting distance from Tokyo, it became the long-term home of a number of families, which established an independent life without the support of husbands' parents after arrival.

From the perspective of Japanese authorities, then, one of the primary tasks in dealing with Indisch–Japanese couples was to bow to the responsibilities faced by a surrendered nation in taking care of its own matters 'properly,' which in this case became symbolized by a breadwinner's role in taking care of his wife and children. But even if presented as a response to international demands to take responsibility for its wartime actions, this approach also ran counter Dutch interpretations of the needs and welfare of Dutch women and their children.

### *Dutch perspectives: international marriage and nationality laws*

Like Japanese authorities, also the Netherlands Mission in Japan was concerned with the whereabouts and well-being of Dutch women with Japanese partners, yet had a very different take on their situation in the immediate aftermath of the Japanese capitulation. The news that 95 Dutch women had arrived in Japan in August 1946 was received with great consternation by the Netherlands Mission in Japan. The main official involved in the issue, the Mission's political adviser J. Pennink, was outraged by the fact that Dutch authorities had been bypassed, and strongly objected against Dutch women's presence in Japan and their relationship with 'the enemy.'<sup>7</sup> That is, where Japanese officials saw the welfare of women and children as a responsibility of their Japanese husbands, Dutch authorities saw this as an infringement on Dutch women's freedom. The ensuing debate about the legality of the marriages and women's passage to Japan provides a window not only on the complexity of legislation in wartime, but also how national interests came to intersect with the debate surrounding the future of Indisch–Japanese international marriages.

To begin with, Dutch authorities questioned the legality of women's marriages and their subsequent repatriation to Japan. Marriage certificates had been issued without the apparent knowledge or confirmation by the Dutch authorities and took the form of an awkward legal construction. The marriage certificates were issued by a British official, Major Haining (as it later turned out, under the authority of

4 NA 2.05.116-396, J. Pennink, interrogation Hideo Koide, 13 September 1946.

5 NA 2.05.116-396 Memorandum J. Pennink, 2 August 1947, see also Inoue. 2000. "Tanabeko hikiage no kaiso: Genchi no fushijo wo hirtsu shite." *Kuchikumano*:18-23.

6 Ibid.

7 NA 2.05.116-396 Memorandum voor Luit. Kol. H.L. Hoorweg, 16 January 1947.

the Japanese military) in the Netherlands East Indies and were recognized by Japanese authorities for the purpose of repatriation to Japan as the spouse of a Japanese national. In recognizing the validity of the certificates, Japanese authorities relied on a memorandum issued by the British Major Falkland Cary of April 3, 1946, which stated that “The N.E.I. Government will raise no objection to any of their subjects whether native, Eurasian or white who are legally married to Japanese law and custom, being evacuated to Japan.”<sup>8</sup> Pennink however questioned the legality of the certificates, suggesting that the fact that the marriages were approved by a British major (whom he believed to work under British command), did not mean the marriages were legal according to Japanese law, and hence, that they were declared as invalid. This also meant that from a Dutch perspective, the women had not lost their Dutch citizenship with marriage, and that by questioning the legal premises of these marriages, the Dutch authorities were able to protect women’s rights as Dutch citizens.

Pennink’s objections and the ensuing debate among diplomatic officials about the status of these marriages however were not merely motivated by procedural concerns, but also a belief that women should better return to their homeland in the Netherlands East Indies. In a memorandum from January 1947, Pennink explained his reasons why women who had come to Japan should repatriate as soon as possible. He observed that women reported differences in climate, diet, and language, as well as rejection by their Japanese families and the patriarchal attitude of men towards women in Japan as central concerns and reason for seeking out the help of Dutch authorities. Pennink’s report also did not hide his objections against the relationships, and deep suspicions of Japanese motivations. Based on interrogations with Japanese officials, who had been in charge of marriages who had accompanied one of the groups of women to Japan, he concluded that the marriages were forced, and the repatriation of Dutch women to Japan constituted a ‘trafficking in women’ (*vrouwenhandel*). He suspected officials of forcing women to marry, asserted that some of the marriages were ‘paper marriages’ (*schijnhuwelijken*) against women’s will, and accused Japanese men of maltreating Dutch women, in demanding their submission to their husbands and family.<sup>9</sup> To support women’s plight, Pennink facilitated winter clothing and food parcels, and the opportunity to repatriate to the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>10</sup> Until then, the Mission ensured that women could keep their citizenship and support for their return to their homeland. Similar to Japanese authorities, they thus offered protection from a presumably hostile environment.

Yet although Pennink showed himself as sympathetic, his attitude vis-à-vis women shifted when it became clear that some women decided to stay in Japan and legalize their marriages despite his warnings. Pennink chastised those resistant to repatriation for their unpatriotic actions (*onvaderlandslievende daad* in Dutch), calling on them to accept their wrong doing. That is, while he recognized that women had left the Netherlands East Indies because of a strong feeling of social rejection, and ostracism from their communities, he felt that women should face up to the ‘unpopularity of their actions,’ return to the Netherlands East Indies and prove themselves to be a ‘better person’ there.<sup>11</sup> That is, while he was willing to see them as victims of human trafficking, women who considered their relationships and marriages as consensual,

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8 Ibid.

9 NA 2.05.116-396 Rapport: Repatriatie van Nederlandsche onderdanen uit Japan, 18 September 1946, J. Pennink.

10 NA 2.05.116-405; The last possible opportunity to repatriate to the Netherlands East Indies without cost was August 12, 1947. See NA 2.05 115 396 Repatriation of Netherlands subjects now in Japan, Central Liaison Office Tokyo, 4 September 1946.

11 NA 2.05.116-396 Memorandum voor Luit. Kol. H.L. Hoorweg, 16 January 1947.

and were critical of their reception within the Netherlands East Indies were considered disloyal and undeserving of Dutch assistance.

This stance became more concrete after the last opportunity to return to the Netherlands East Indies with government support had passed in August 1947. Couples applying for a visa to enter Japan as a married couple were subjected to considerable scrutiny, and were required to provide extensive documentation, including a marriage certificate, proof of approval of their marriage from their parents, proof of sufficient financial means, and above all, a declaration by Dutch women that they understood that marriage would mean the loss of citizenship, and that they would not be entitled to Dutch support after that, even in the event of divorce. Marriage with a Japanese national, viewed in these terms, constituted a choice between Dutch citizenship and rights, and a life with a Japanese national, with an uncertain future in Japan.

What can we conclude about the Dutch and Japanese approach to the couples based on these developments? Even if the Dutch authorities appeared as much more critical of these relationships on the surface, in both cases, the authorities' view on women's future was closely intertwined with their own national interests. Japanese authorities called upon men's responsibilities as husbands and fathers and thereby attempted to reconstitute the dignity and respect of the surrendered Japanese nation, symbolized by a husband and father who takes care of his wife and children. Dutch authorities in turn, considered women's repatriation to Japan as an invasive act, that only extended the indignities suffered by the Dutch population during the Japanese occupation. If women's relationships and the birth of children symbolized Japan's invasion of the sovereignty of the Dutch colony, repatriation to Japan added insult to injury in taking further control, rather than relinquishing their authority over Dutch women and children. Also for Dutch authorities, therefore, a reassertion of the gender order disrupted by the Japanese occupation, in form of Dutch patronage of women and children, was an important element of the symbolic recuperation of the formerly occupied nation.

### *Women's voices*

Having mapped Dutch and Japanese perspectives on international marriages, I would now like to turn to the story of women themselves. What were women's own considerations about their children's welfare in the aftermath of Japanese surrender?

Available documentation on couples who repatriated to Japan with their children highlights their children's well-being, and their responsibility as parents over their welfare as a central concern. Some couples who had not planned to stay together in the long term, for instance, decided to stay together for the sake of the children. Ms. L.'s story illustrates this view. She had stayed with a Japanese man during the occupation, but when he was moved to another city due to his work duties, they went their separate ways. Upon finding that she was pregnant after Japanese surrender, however, she visited him to discuss their options. She reports: "He told me that he wanted to marry me as soon as there was an opportunity to do so, and that I had to try to come to Japan. He gave me the address of his parents, and this is where we were supposed to meet. The main issue for both of us was that the child should stay with its father." The prospective birth of a child, in other words, sealed their relationship and called on their responsibilities as parents.

While this was a common trope that led at least some couples to stay together and go to Japan, the uncertain outlook on the actual trip, and what life in Japan would look like also raised some doubts.

Another couple, Ms. V. and Mr. K., for instance, similarly decided to stay together after learning of Ms. V.'s pregnancy. Yet Ms. V. was skeptical about taking the two children, who were infants at the time, on a long boat trip to a place she had no familiarity with. As a consequence, she initially planned to go on her own, to check out the situation, before risking a trip with two small children. Eventually, however, the couple decided to repatriate as a family, and ultimately stayed in Japan permanently.

The concerns about life in Japan were not unfounded; illness and malnutrition were real issues facing small children at the time. Repatriation came with a boat trip of minimally two weeks, which in some cases took as long as five weeks in real terms. Although nurses were on board, they were trained to serve the needs of soldiers at the front, and not pregnant women and children. As a consequence, the delivery of a child on board of one of the repatriation ships was supported by the captain, who appeared to have more experience with childbirth than the nurses on board (Inoue 2000). Also after arrival in Japan, illness could take its toll. The son of Ms. L., according to her report, did not tolerate the climate and was taken to an American hospital shortly after her arrival. Unable to afford the medical bills, the mother had to find work, which in turn, did not sit well with the in-laws. Eventually, Ms. L. returned to the Netherlands East Indies, in consideration of her son's health.

Life for Dutch women in Japan also came with other challenges. Besides the language barrier, differences in diet and customs, everyday life differed sharply from the Netherlands East Indies. There were no servants, and women often had to get up early to cook rice on a wooden fire. Winters were cold, and new arrivals had few if any winter clothes (Torikai 1952). Relationships with the family were also often difficult. Some women felt rejected by their partners' families and found their partners withdrawn and intimidated after arrival in Japan.<sup>12</sup> Since they had married without the approval of the head of the family, also their partners found themselves in a difficult position.

Some women therefore looked for other options. While some divorced and returned to the Netherlands East Indies immediately, others stayed with their partner through thick and thin (Torikai 1952). Since repatriation to the Netherlands East Indies no longer received Dutch government support after 1947, women separating from their husbands after 1947 had very limited options. Some found themselves jobs in foreign companies in Japan, to save up for their return ticket. This however also meant that children were then often left in orphanages, separating mothers and children. Others, according to the observations of the embassy, engaged with American GIs, which were considered as being in the position to provide support and help along procedures regarding repatriation and other matters.<sup>13</sup>

## *Conclusion*

As the stories of women who repatriated to Japan show, a personal relationship with a Japanese man during the Japanese Occupation of the Netherlands East Indies was far from a private matter but deeply intertwined with political circumstances of the post-surrender period. A relationship with a Japanese man during the occupation of the Netherlands East Indies could provide valuable access to scarce resources, as well as protection in a period characterized by serious material deprivation for the Dutch population. The change in the political and social context after capitulation however also altered the meaning of such relationship. Women could face criticism and backlash from their families and communities for having had

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<sup>12</sup> NA 2.05.116-396

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., NA 2.05.116-396

a relationship with a Japanese man, and a relationship often became a liability rather than a resource. With the involvement of Japanese and Dutch authorities, a relationship took on yet other dimensions: it could facilitate an escape from the Netherlands East Indies and safe passage to Japan. Yet at the same time, this could also result in the questioning of their loyalty to the Netherlands, and for those who decided to stay in Japan, lead to a loss of citizenship and government assistance.

Women's supposedly private relationships in such way, provide a window on the symbolic significance of women's actions on a national level. As debates surrounding their welfare show, national prerogatives closely impacted the way in which women's and children's future was dealt with, and the extent to which help and assistance was provided. Yet, while women presumably put themselves at risk by entering a controversial relationship with the 'enemy,' their stories also make clear that making it on your own, particularly with small children to take care of, was difficult and risky. It highlights women's heavy dependence on marriage as a means for material protection of their well-being in a period characterized by social and political upheaval. Above all, it underscores women's marginal position within their nation, as debates on their marriages concerned themselves with patriarchal rights and responsibilities over their welfare, but paid little attention to their actual well-being and independence.

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## 編集後記

アヤ・エザワ（ライデン大学：社会学）

<教育活動> 東京外国語大学へ特別招へい教授として以下を担当した（2018年4月1日～2018年7月13日）

2018年春学期 Identity and difference: Japan in global context

<研究活動> 特別講演会として以下を開いた

2018年5月29日 Children of WWII: Indo-Europeans born during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies in search for their Japanese fathers

2018年7月9日 オランダ領東インドから来日した花嫁たち  
Indo-European war brides in Japan

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