

# **COLONIAL SPECTACLES**

**The Netherlands and the  
Dutch East Indies at the  
World Exhibitions,  
1880–1931**

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## *Chapter 3*

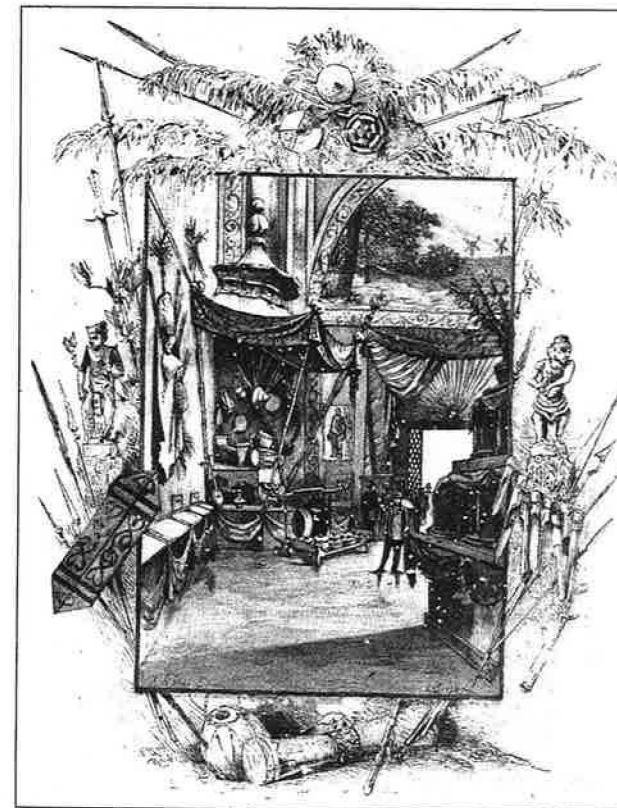
### Popular Anthropology and a Private Colonial Success: Paris 1889

Without doubt, of all expositions that have been held, that of 1889 was most thoroughly anthropological.

Otis T. Mason (1890): 34

"Our colonial pavilion" was a rather grand designation for the little corner set aside in the great palace of industry at Paris's *exposition universelle* in 1889. The palace of industry itself, the exhibition's main building, was in contrast lavishly impressive, contained as it was in a great iron dome-like structure on the Champs de Mars. Inside, the Dutch had a space for domestic industry and a separate space for their colonies. Johan de Meester, a reporter for the illustrated periodical *Eigen Haard*, wrote that he seldom saw anyone there. Even so, "our colonial pavilion [...] which is grave, and as solemnly silent as a museum" was to his mind the glorious centrepiece of the Dutch entries. One French visitor had indeed been at a loss which to admire more, "the objects on display, the work of the natives, or the talent for colonisation possessed by this small nation, which has contrived to shape and preserve such a vast colonial empire". This led to the inevitable lesson that De Meester's readers were invited to draw from that serene and grand colonial corner: "no Dutch visitor will spend a moment there without [...] sinking into a reverie on what the Netherlands once was, what it is, and what it yet could be".<sup>1</sup>

De Meester's comments referred to only one part of the Netherlands' colonial exhibit in Paris. The other part, "our Javanese kampong" on the Esplanade des Invalides, attracted far more visible public interest and admiration.<sup>2</sup> This area had largely been reserved for France's own colonial section, which was designed to teach the French public about their colonies and protectorates. The Dutch were the only foreigners allocated space there; though it is unclear whether they appreciated the significance of this exception. They decided to erect an Indonesian village along the lines of 1883. In an L-shaped cane enclosure at a corner of the Esplanade, various types of bamboo houses from the different regions

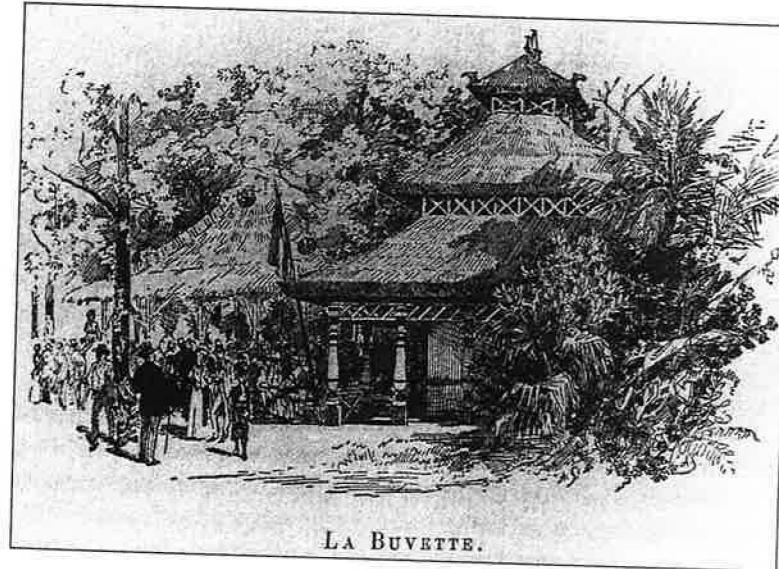


3.1 "Our little colonial corner", Paris 1889  
[*Eigen Haard*, 1889]

of the Dutch East Indies were placed in clusters and enlivened with sixty genuine inhabitants of Java and Sumatra. In this kampong, they displayed their arts and crafts along with Javanese music and dance. This *village Javanais* (thus called although it was not in fact exclusively Javanese) was one of the major attractions of the *exposition universelle*. Thousands of visitors paid their 50 centimes to see it every day.<sup>3</sup>

Thus in 1889 the Netherlands showed its two faces: the learned and elegant little colonial corner was Dutch, but so was the lively kampong. This chapter will focus on the nature and significance of these colonial exhibits and the way in which they came about. The underlying ideas and the inevitable game of persuasion and compromise reveal just how greatly the end result was determined by chance, and how limited the support for the colonial cause. Since this world exhibition was held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution, the governments of most European countries, including the Netherlands, refused to take part officially. This meant that the Dutch organisers relied almost entirely on the support of private companies and individuals for the presentation of their exhibits in 1889. This small private venture proved remarkably successful, thanks to the popularity of the Javanese kampong. This success was all the more noteworthy given the Netherlands' dwindling importance in the European balance of power: it counted for little, either as a modern industrialised nation, or in the imperialist struggle for Africa and Asia. This was very clear at the Berlin conference of 1884–5 at which the most powerful states — Britain, France and the new stronghold of Germany — carved up Africa. The kampong demonstrated that there was one way, at least, in which the Netherlands could compete with the modern great nations of Europe.

The appeal of the *village javanais* requires an explanation. Why was this village so popular with Western visitors? The many surviving pictures and descriptions of it may help to pin down the fascination it aroused, and possibly provide insight into the visitors' "anthropological sensation". To what extent did this correspond to the wider intentions of the *exposition universelle*? What was the relationship between anthropological instruction and delight? What did popular anthropology involve? These questions will be dealt with at length in the final part of this chapter. But the discussion will start with an overview of the *exposition universelle*, to clarify its general aims and to define the place that the two Dutch colonial spectacles occupied in this overall scheme.



3.2 "La buvette" in the Javanese kampong, Paris 1889  
[Monod, 1889]

It will then turn to the organisational background of the Dutch exhibits. Does their chance success say something about the Dutch colonial consciousness in this period?

### 1. The *Exposition Universelle* of 1889: A Republican Phoenix

However internationally it may have been set up, the *exposition universelle* of 1889 was first and foremost a national event. With this exhibition, France was officially commemorating the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. This created a problem (or pseudo-problem) for the European monarchies, which saw participation as unacceptable. The French organisers had emphasised in their invitations, however, that countries could be represented by private committees. They were clearly driven by one of the unspoken maxims of world exhibitions: the more foreign participants, the greater the national glory of the host country. Thanks to the flexible interpretation that the French put upon the concept of "national representation", the Dutch delegation could build on its own private exhibition tradition.

The French, unlike the Dutch, took it for granted that organising a world exhibition was the responsibility of central government. The plans to organise the third world exhibition in Paris in 1889 had first been launched in the summer of 1884, by the French trade minister, Anne-Charles Hérison. His proposal provoked a fierce debate in the national daily press. Besides the usual financial objections, the main bone of contention was that the exhibition would coincide with the grand commemoration of the French Revolution that had already been planned for that year. For this reason, some suggested having only a national exhibition in 1889, and postponing the world exhibition until 1900. In the autumn of 1884, however, the government decided to mount a universal world fair, the biggest and most lavish ever held, to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution. Ostensibly there was a desire to uphold the tradition of organising such festive events every 11 years.<sup>4</sup> But the government was probably also hoping to exploit international glory to stifle the mood of resentment at home, while at the same time strengthening the country's republican foundations.

The French Third Republic had been founded on the country's painful defeat by Germany in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1). It had little reason for celebration in the 1880s. French society was characterised by social tension and sharp political divisions. The violent suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871 demonstrated the strength of the conservative climate in which the Republic would have to be formed. Government coalitions succeeded each other rapidly, polarised around republicans on the one hand and monarchists and Bonapartists on the other, culminating in 1877 in a constitutional crisis. The following year the republicans acquired a conclusive majority in Parliament, but this did not guarantee political stability. In the 1880s the consequences of the international economic crisis became tangible in France, fanning the flames of existing social and political unrest. After another period characterised by rapid changes of government, President Jules Ferry (1883–5) was toppled along with his predecessors. Finally, an ominous sign on the republican front was the rising star of General Georges Boulanger, who, having been removed from office after serving briefly as a minister in 1886, became a hugely popular national figure. Successful election campaigns throughout the country assured him of support among opposition conservative parties as well as radical and socialist groups. On the eve of the *exposition universelle* this "Boulangism" swelled to a near-hysterical popular movement that

essentially embodied the widespread dissatisfaction with the leaders of the Third Republic. True, Boulanger's star faded as abruptly as it had appeared in the firmament, but his name continued to reverberate during the world exhibition. One of the inhabitants of the Javanese kampong even learned to amuse visitors by shouting "Vive Boulanger!"<sup>5</sup>

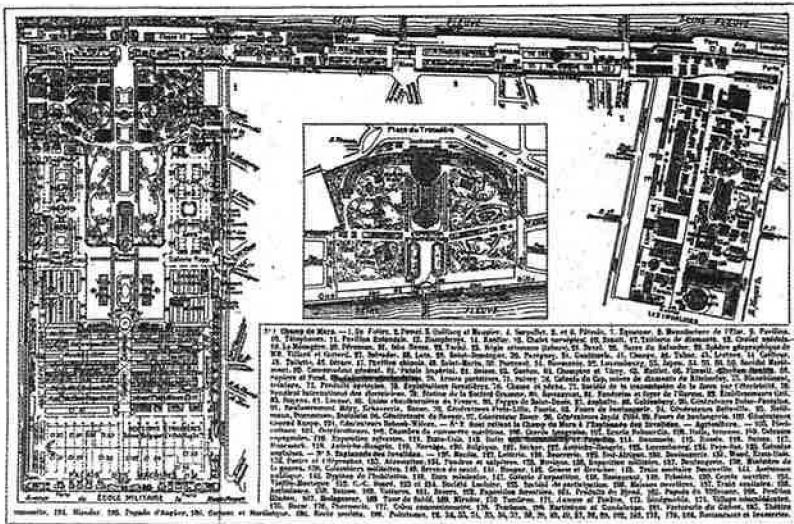
### *Triumph of French Ingenuity*

Raised as a monument to a bygone age, the Paris exhibition [...] is in truth the point of departure for a new order, and maps out the lines along which the civilisation we are now entering will progress.<sup>6</sup>

The primary aim of the *exposition universelle* that opened on 6 May 1889 was to bring the French nation together. But like the previous world fairs, it was also a lesson writ large about the path of progress followed by human civilisation. Comparative material and entertaining displays set out to teach the public that science, labour and technology were the driving forces behind the progress of humanity. This idea found its clearest expression in the exhibition's soaring iron pinnacle, the Eiffel Tower. To its admirers, this controversial colossus embodied modern Western construction technology, which, "as a symbol of our *Zeitgeist*, heralded the triumph of human ingenuity over crude materials".<sup>7</sup>

Visitors who ascended the Eiffel Tower on foot or in the lift were rewarded at the top by a view of the entire exhibition area, which stretched out along the left bank of the river Seine opposite the Trocadéro (the site of the 1878 world exhibition) and was divided into two separate sections. These represented two different chapters of the lesson on industrial progress. On the Champs de Mars arose the palaces of the liberal and fine arts, the central hall of modern industry, and the impressive machinery hall. Fifteen minutes away on foot was the Esplanade des Invalides, where the French colonies and protectorates were represented, flanked by expositions of the war ministry and the ministries of hygiene and social peace (*Economie Sociale*).

The official categories of the world exhibition reflected the French organisers' priorities. There were twelve primary groups, subdivided into a total of 83 classes.<sup>8</sup> The first category was that of the fine arts. This was essentially an all-French affair, France's regular winning card at successive world exhibitions. Other noteworthy groups included "Education and upbringing" and "Industry" (subdivided into different groups)<sup>9</sup> which came after group I, and the 11th group, "social



### *3.3 Ground plan of the Exhibition, Paris 1889*

“science”. These three thematic areas — education, industry, and science — were regarded, in the positivistic intellectual climate of the age, as the primary driving forces of social progress. They placed the colonial displays of France and the Netherlands in a wider perspective.<sup>10</sup>

## *The Colonial Section: Imitation and Rivalries*

This was the first French world exhibition to have a separate colonial display dedicated to the French colonies and protectorates, the aim being to educate the masses about them.<sup>11</sup> This major innovation, devised by the French Colonial Secretariat, was not just an attempt to win support for French colonial expansion, but probably also served to distract attention from the painful loss of Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>12</sup> The indifference of French society to the concept of a French colonial project had visibly changed since the 1870s, not just ideologically but more notably in terms of action. After 1870, France took a more conspicuous part in European expansion in Africa and Asia. The French invasion of Tunisia in 1880 was followed in 1885 by the conquest of Tonkin, which was merged with Annam, Cochinchina and Cambodia in 1887 to form French Indochina. This

French imperialism served partly to restore the country's dented national prestige. But the criticism of the Tonkin affair in 1885, which toppled President Ferry, demonstrates that France's colonial expansion was still highly controversial at home.<sup>13</sup>

The colonial entrenchment occupied the eastern half of the Esplanade des Invalides. Exhibits from overseas territories were arranged in the manner of a general survey in the main colonial building, surrounded by a number of smaller pavilions erected in the quasi-typical architecture of the country concerned. Behind this was a large encampment of tents and villages where the public could gaze at live inhabitants of these territories in a quasi-authentic reproduction of their normal surroundings.



### *3.4 French colonial soldiers outside the colonial palace at the exhibition, Paris 1889*

Covering an expanse of 2,000 square metres, the colonial palace was unquestionably the largest of all colonial pavilions. This "permanent exposition of the colonies" was arranged by territory into thirteen sections. The final two sections were dedicated to works of Western civilisation — the colonial mission and education — concluding with the colonial library. Behind this main building rose the pavilion of Guadeloupe, the house of French Guyana, the palace of French Indochina, the pagoda of Annam-Tonkin, the pagoda "des dieux d'Hanoï", the pagoda of Angkor, the pavilion of Madagascar, and the colonial greenhouse. And beyond these beckoned a range of private establishments providing food and drink: the Annamitic theatre and restaurant, a Creole restaurant, a variety of bars and cafés, and finally the *villages indigènes*: villages representing Senegal, Luango (in Congo), Huahui (in French Polynesia), Kanaky (New Caledonia) and Tonkin (in present-day Vietnam). According to one official report, over 300 people from the French colonies lived in these temporary camps, and to this total must be added another hundred indigenous soldiers. The organisers of the colonial section set up a special medical service to watch over the health of these exhibited guests.<sup>14</sup>

It appears that the Dutch colonial exhibit, greenhouse, and Javanese kampong of 1883 served as the sources of inspiration for France's main colonial building and the greenhouse on the Esplanade des Invalides in 1889. This is not improbable, since imitation and rivalry were all part of the game where world exhibitions were concerned. The central exhibition organisers in France had commissioned detailed reports of the Amsterdam exhibition at the time, including an admiring study of "Les colonies Néerlandaises des Indes Orientales" by M. Aubert, who based his observations on the Dutch colonial exhibit.<sup>15</sup>

On 17 March 1887 the French organisers dispatched formal invitations to all countries it was hoping would take part. Disappointingly — though predictably — only Greece, Switzerland, Norway and Serbia had accepted by January 1888. In the course of the year they were joined by the United States, the republics of South and Central America, Japan, and Morocco. Europe's leading states refrained from sending official entries. That did not mean that they were entirely absent from Paris, however. Private committees were set up in almost all countries to prepare exhibits, some of which received government support. Only Germany, Montenegro, Sweden and Turkey had no committees, and even these

(with the exception of Montenegro) had individual representatives. On the day of the prize-giving ceremony in September 1889, only the German flag was conspicuous by its absence.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Glory of Anthropology*

The labour of the nineteenth century [...] has erected a commemorative column at the Champs de Mars, to denote a halt and to reflect progress in its onward march through the life of humanity.<sup>17</sup>

The French colonial section at the Esplanade des Invalides was intended to educate the masses about the French overseas territories. But in the primary anthropological framework of the *exposition universelle*, the exotic ways of life and the products of traditional craftsmanship on show there also illustrated a stage in the history of the progress of civilisations. The decision to base the exhibition on anthropological principles reflected a growing recognition of the human sciences by France's academic community and by French society as a whole. This was also expressed, for instance, by the 120 conferences held in connection with the exhibition. "All of these had some reference to man and his works, and a few were purely anthropological", comments the American anthropologist Otis T. Mason, who euphorically hailed the *exposition universelle* as "the crowning glory of anthropology", and went on to say, "If the anthropologists did not organise the Great Exposition they at least furnished the presiding genius."<sup>18</sup>

The human science interest in the *exposition universelle* largely coincided with the social question. The organisers of the *exposition universelle* sought to address the discontent of workers and the growing social unrest associated with industrialisation, which was becoming palpably more explosive in France. It was not for nothing that President S. Carnot's opening address included explicit praise for the unknown workers ("ouvriers inconnus"). The Social Peace pavilion on the Esplanade des Invalides was a major attempt to engage the workers. It displayed "medicines to curb social ills" in an overview of participation, productive societies, cooperation, saving banks, and the insurance business. Since this exposition did not have the support of the organised workers' movement or socialist groups, however, historians have tended to dismiss it as an empty gesture.<sup>19</sup> This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that two socialist conferences were convened in Paris in 1889, which (while admittedly exploiting the international

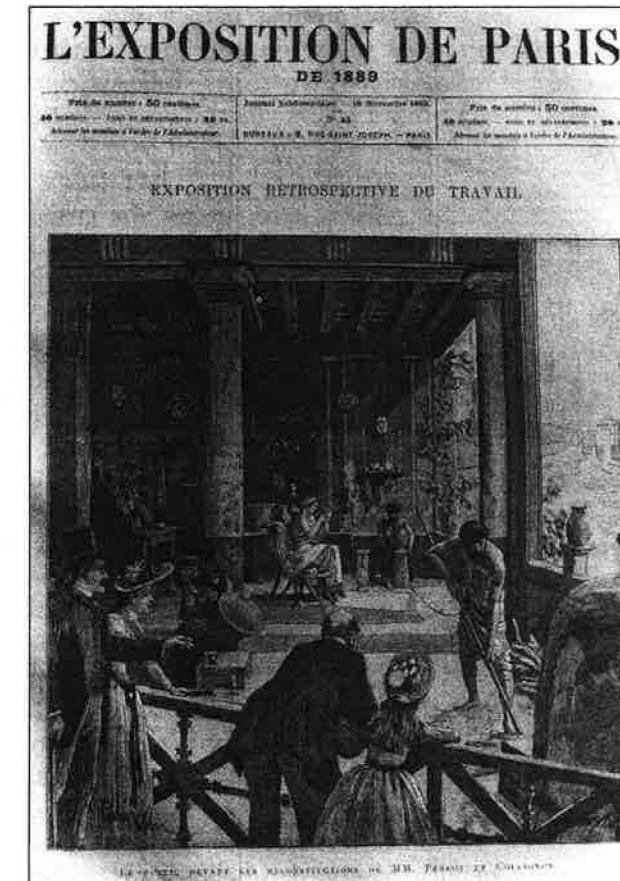
attention that the world exhibition was attracting) sought to define a distinct path to social peace and justice, quite separately from the event.<sup>20</sup> Still, the *exposition universelle* was in itself too important to be ignored by representatives of socialist groups in the Netherlands.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Dutch socialist leader Domela Nieuwenhuis asked parliament (unsuccessfully) to approve a government grant to enable workers to travel to the exhibition.<sup>22</sup>

To place the *exposition universelle* as a whole on firm scientific foundations, the French organisers had enlisted the help of anthropologists, ethnographers, archaeologists, and prehistorians. They helped, in special thematic and retrospective exhibitions, to chart existing knowledge regarding human nature and the age of humanity, and regarding humanity's physical features and states of civilisation, as these had developed over time in a variety of circumstances, according to prevailing ideas, and as allegedly still visible among the earth's diverse ethnic groups. Two thematic exhibitions on the Champs de Mars drew visitors' attention to the general idea of progress underlying the entire *exposition*: one showed the different dwellings in which human beings had lived their lives in the course of history, and the other was billed as a "retrospective exhibition of labour and the anthropological sciences". Situated rather strategically at the beginning of the *exposition*, they provided an anthropological conceptual framework for the rest.<sup>23</sup> They linked up with one of the main scientific and social questions of the age: how, and to what extent, do people's natural, social and industrial surroundings influence the development of civilisations, national character, or races?

For the retrospective exhibition of labour, the organisation had used the exposition of the *Histoire de travail* that councillor Frédéric Pierre Guillaume LePlay (1806–82), an engineer, had devised for the world exhibition in Paris back in 1867. The former Saint-Simonist LePlay wanted to give a systematic overview of the different human civilisations and their capacity for adjustment to the changes wrought by industrialisation. The thematic exhibition *L'Histoire du Travail* he devised was intended to clarify the genesis and development of human civilisation in its specific social, climatological and cultural historical circumstances.<sup>24</sup> The next world exhibition held in Paris (in 1878) built on this by adding an *Exposition historique de l'art ancien* and an *Exposition ethnographique* in the Palais de Trocadéro, where visitors could see not only the different stages that civilisations had passed

through in the course of history, but also how these civilisations were distributed around the world.

In 1889 the exhibition organisers incorporated the anthropological sciences into this concept, for the important task of demonstrating how human beings attended to their well-being and subsistence in their animal or natural phase, and how the different races developed after this stage. The person put in charge of this task was the well-known

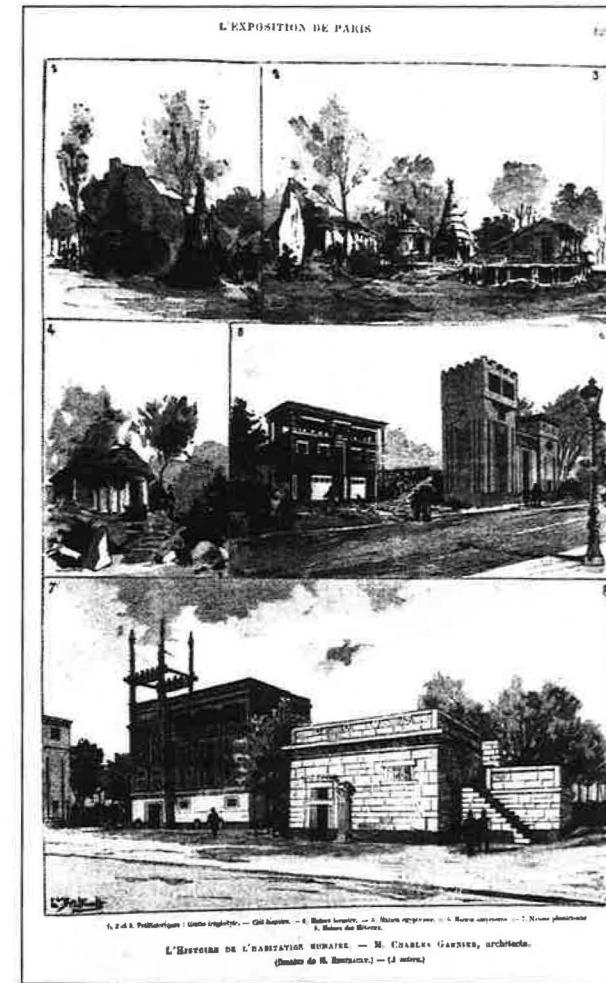


3.5 Retrospective exhibition of labour, Paris 1889  
[*Exposition de Paris de 1889*, 1889]

physical anthropologist Paul Topinard, Director of France's School of Anthropology. Under his leadership, a team of researchers devised an exhibition on the progress of human ingenuity. It consisted of a series of tableaux showing humans performing work from their origins in prehistoric times until early antiquity, including other cultures. On the basis of archaeological and ethnographic research, the team also incorporated into the exhibition the aspect of progress in tools, implements and industrial products.<sup>25</sup>

Another way in which the anthropological section of this latest exhibition differed from that of previous ones was in terms of the public it sought to attract. At the world exhibition of 1867, a large hall had been cleared to accommodate over 500 skulls and a number of mummies, appropriated in Egypt and brought to France by the famous Egyptologist Auguste Mariette. These had been accessible solely to "men of science". Only the ethnographic exhibition was open to the general public. In 1889 the organisers considered the general public mature enough to be acquainted with the study of human anatomy. Writing in the popular science periodical *La Nature*, Topinard carefully presented the most pressing questions. The anthropological exposition would show some of all this without adopting any particular position, Topinard maintained.<sup>26</sup> A popular little exhibition guide noted that the anthropological and ethnographic information had been presented in a manner determined more by popular appeal than by scientific fact, to avoid alienating visitors who were as yet ill-informed about such matters.<sup>27</sup> One tableau, for instance, juxtaposed the development of humans and that of primates, but according to Topinard this was done primarily to demonstrate the chasm separating the two species rather than the relationships between them. Various types of skulls and skeletons were exhibited, including prehistoric ones from France. One display case was dedicated to criminal anthropology; cards showed the development of the brain, there were measuring instruments and other aids for anthropological science, including a large photography section. It seems that the anthropology section was constantly thronged with visitors, so much so that the anthropologist Mason complained that it was difficult to do any serious research there. According to Eugène Melchior de Vogue, the idea of any relationship between humans and apes was left completely open. He himself was sceptical about the value of the anthropological exhibition and the conclusions that learned scholars attached to it.<sup>28</sup>

The gallery with the historical exhibition on dwellings was constructed by Charles Garnier, the architect of the Paris opera. He based his design on the concept of the *Rue des Nations* at the 1878 world exhibition, where participants had displayed typical national styles of architecture with reconstructed monuments and façades. But Garnier's



3.6 The history of human dwellings, Paris 1889

[*Exposition de Paris de 1889*, 1889]

plan revolved not so much around architectural style as around ways of living, which he believed to be characteristic of different nations (or races) and eras. He set out to depict for visitors, in a wide gallery of 49 different plastic tableaux, the history and progress of the human races in their living surroundings, from prehistoric times up to his own day.<sup>29</sup>

The thematic retrospective exhibitions described above suggested to visitors that ways of living and working were the key to progress and characterised the state of civilisation of the different historical and non-European peoples or races. Viewed in the wider perspective of the *exposition universelle*, these exhibitions acquired a sequel in the exhibition of the contemporary state of Western industry in the main building on the Champs de Mars, and in the live display of the way in which the people of the colonies lived on the Esplanade des Invalides. The exhibitions of the French war ministry and of the ministry of public hygiene showed resources that could promote development and progress in the civilisations of the colonised territories, the more primitive nature of which was taken for granted. Whether all visitors construed the lesson in this way, however, is open to question. Thus, one enthusiastic correspondent, writing in the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, expressed the constant astonishment that many must have felt at seeing representatives of so many different peoples in one city. He himself took great delight in the opportunity presented by the world exhibition to see and enter so many foreign and real worlds at the same time. The authenticity of the spectacle was well worth the price.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. The Dutch Colonial Representation: A Private Matter

In popular scientific and colonial accounts of the *exposition universelle*, with its underlying emphasis on the concept of progress, the Netherlands' colonial exhibit acquired a place of its own. The historical facts suggest that the exhibit had less deliberate design about it than the French organisers might have preferred. In fact the casual and almost reluctant organisation of the Dutch colonial exhibit in 1889 appears to exemplify the as yet lacklustre quality of the Netherlands' new liberal colonial policy. The picture painted in 1883 of a successful colonial venture had yet to become reality, and public confidence in the project was at a low ebb. Enthusiasm for economic exploits in the

archipelago had dwindled since the sugar crisis of 1884, and the surge in numbers of agricultural enterprises in the Dutch East Indies, and the boom in modern Dutch colonial trading companies (notably in Amsterdam) would not become visible until the turn of the century. What is more, people were disillusioned about the debacle in Aceh. Instead of the territory's subjection — which had supposedly been "imminent" in 1882 — there had been a long drawn-out war, which showed that territorial expansion had thus far been a history of enormous violence, expense, and bloodshed. Finally, the government had its own pragmatic reasons for withholding support from the Dutch exhibit, as will become clear below; the ministry of colonies was not in a position to take a different stand. And where private initiative was concerned, the Paris exhibition came too early for any attempt to advertise the colonies.

It was initially doubtful whether the Netherlands would be represented at all in 1889. Although a preparatory committee was formed at the beginning of 1887, consisting of representatives from most of the country's private trade and industry associations,<sup>31</sup> it had little government support. The commemoration of the French Revolution was a sensitive subject for the conservative government led by Jan Heemskerk. Moreover, the government wanted to steer clear of any embroilment in France's political wasps' nest. In October 1887 the Dutch Government announced that it had decided against an official entry.<sup>32</sup> This meant that both the appointment of a commissioner-general and jury members as well as the granting of a subsidy were "ruled out for the present". In November the government did express its willingness to assist Dutch people who wanted to take part by providing information, simplifying customs formalities, and where possible obtaining lower freight rates.

In short, the government adopted an ambivalent attitude to the world exhibition. With one eye on the international competition,<sup>33</sup> it did not go so far as to forbid Dutch industrialists from going to Paris. But it left them to get together and organise their entries to the exhibition without any especial assistance or funding. On 1 February 1888 a public meeting was held at the Krasnapolsky café, at which the official executive committee was elected, from among the various groups with a vested interest in the event, of the "Society for the Promotion of Dutch Interests at the Paris Exhibition", referred to below as the "Paris Society".<sup>34</sup>

### The Heart of the Matter: Colonial Trade and Ethnography

In retrospect, the colonial section figured quite prominently in the talks on the Dutch exhibits as a whole. But the executive committee of the Paris Society seems initially not to have accorded it priority in the preparatory work. In April 1888 it decided to co-opt a colonial specialist into its ranks, because, as the report concluded afterwards, a colonial power such as the Netherlands simply could not confine itself to exhibiting domestic products; it must also show some from the colonies.<sup>35</sup> J.F.R.S. van den Bossche, a former member of the Dutch East Indies Council, offered his services to chair a special sub-committee to promote the participation of traders and industrialists from the colonies.

There is some evidence to suggest that the Dutch colonial exhibitors received encouragement from the Paris organisers, who were particularly interested in ethnographic entries. Marquis de Ripert Monclou, France's consul-general in Amsterdam, put the French exhibition committee in contact with two private institutions in Amsterdam: the Dutch Colonial Society (DCS) and the royal zoological society Natura Artis Magistra (Artis). The relationship between these two institutions was embodied by P.J. Westerman, the director of Artis, and the Amsterdam merchant J.R. Wüste, one of the founding members of the DCS and its president, who was also a member of the board of Artis. The French consul-general had good reason to expect these two gentlemen to be enthusiastic about the Dutch submitting a colonial ethnographic entry to the world exhibition. Both were already actively involved in disseminating ethnographic knowledge of the Dutch East Indies in the Netherlands.

As noted in the previous chapter, the DCS had been built on the foundations of the Amsterdam exhibition, where Wüste and other enterprising men, in August 1883, had conceived the idea of creating a more permanent structure to pursue the colonial exhibition's objectives, and of kindling and sustaining interest in the colonies among people in the provinces and the "less well educated burgher class".<sup>36</sup> But by 1887 little had come of the DCS's plans: it had wanted to open a colonial museum with its own library, to publish an international colonial review, and to organise lectures and conferences on colonial themes. In 1885, the DCS had given the collection of ethnographic objects it had acquired from the Amsterdam exhibition to Artis, which would preserve and exhibit it. Wüste had personally sealed this transfer with a gift of f40,000 for an ethnographic museum within the zoological gardens.

Westerman had long believed that the zoo should also accommodate a permanent exhibition on "the human race" and its physical and cultural characteristics. To this end he had already built up a collection of skeletons, skulls, physiological and anatomical objects, and artefacts of cultural history for use in the study of geography and ethnography. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Artis, this unfinished museum was partly opened to the public on 1 May 1887. This event was part of a trend in which Artis — initially an elitist, closed society, with paying members who had exclusive access to its collection — became more of a public institution.

In spite of their efforts to popularise colonial ethnography in the Netherlands, when the French consul-general suggested they go one step further at the *exposition universelle*, Wüste and Westerman expressed only cautious interest.<sup>37</sup> And when it became clear that the Dutch colonial exhibit envisaged by the French would have to pay for itself, they declined to take part. Besides the financial objections, they added that Artis did not want to withhold its most important ethnographic objects from its members so soon after its museum had opened.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, at the beginning of February 1888, the French consul-general invited Wüste to attend the election meeting referred to above at the Krasnapolsky café, to discuss setting up a colonial committee. Later that month it was rumoured that Wüste would accept the position of commissioner of the colonial section. Yet Wüste himself was "not a little surprised to read of [his] appointment in yesterday's evening newspaper", as he wrote to Westerman, who must have been equally surprised. It went without saying that he would decline the post. It was not until a full twelve months later, when urged by the Dutch colonial committee that had by then been formed, and with the assurance that the position would bring national, institutional and personal honour, did the two gentlemen revise their positions.<sup>39</sup>

In the Dutch East Indies too, steps were taken early on, with the encouragement of the French organisers, to ensure the submission of products from the Dutch East Indies. On behalf of the French consul in Batavia (E. de Fulgence), W.P. Groeneveldt, director of the department of education, religious worship and industry, explored the scope for granting a government subsidy of f7,500 for the appointment of a sub-committee in Batavia, to collect objects for the Paris exhibition. But the Council of the Indies would not depart from the mother country's position. Whether this decision was based on principle may again be

disputed. If a committee was in fact formed, "of its own initiative and with official encouragement", the Council was willing to give it "moral support". This meant, for instance, that Groeneveldt received authorisation on 13 March 1888 to publish the general rules of the exhibition and the general information about it in the *Javasche courant* and to make 2,000 separate copies of these texts for distribution in the Dutch East Indies — at the colonial government's expense, despite its initial position.<sup>40</sup>

### *The Kampong: A Crucial Factor*

The definitive formation of the colonial committee — and thus the decision to create a Dutch colonial exhibit — took place after it had become known, in April 1888, that the Dutch organisers were to be the only foreign participants on the Esplanade des Invalides, and that they would be assigned ample space for an exposition of the Dutch colonies — right next to the exposition of the indigenous villages in the French colonies. The kampong at the colonial exhibition in Amsterdam had impressed the French government rapporteurs, who saw it as having educational value in the fields of anthropology and colonial administration.<sup>41</sup>

In May 1888, Van den Bossche appointed the members of the Dutch colonial sub-committee. It consisted primarily of traders and representatives of the Hague colonial elite, together with a few members from Amsterdam.<sup>42</sup> At its first meeting, on 27 May 1888, this committee decided it would exhibit indigenous crafts in progress as well as colonial products. It wanted to focus on Oriental decorative and luxury products, which were becoming fashionable in Europe (especially in Paris); there would be demonstrations of the braiding of straw hats and cigar cases made of peacock feathers, the production of batiks and filigree silverwork. Indigenous craftsmen would be brought over from the Dutch East Indies especially to demonstrate these crafts in a "native village or kampong". Following the ideas of Daniël Veth (who had died in 1884 during an exploratory expedition in Angola) it decided to import dwellings as well as people to live in them. To enhance the enjoyment of visitors to the kampong, it added "a gamelan with dancing girls [...] on a larger scale than had been seen at exhibitions thus far". To recuperate the expenses, the French authorities consented to the Dutch colonial committee charging a

small entrance fee, on the condition that this would entitle visitors to a refreshment.<sup>43</sup>

Thus many of the exhibition-makers' ideas stemmed from Veth's initiative in 1883. But while the East Indies village of 1883 had primarily been intended to show something of the customs and traditions of the inhabitants of the Dutch colonies, in 1889 the main aim appeared to be to entertain the public. Accordingly, while the 1883 plan had been given financial support by the East Indies government, in 1889 the kampong was a private venture, the price of whose freedom was the necessity to make a profit.

### *Neither Enthusiasm nor Funds*

It would soon become clear that the conviction voiced by the treasurer A.C. Wertheim (a well-known Amsterdam banker) that the colonial committee would be able to raise the funds it needed was unduly optimistic. The people and bodies that might have been expected to cooperate initially provided little support. This rather dampened enthusiasm for taking part in the event within the organisation itself. Some members resigned, a few because of the death of the chairman, Van den Bossche, at the end of 1888.<sup>44</sup> He was replaced by M. Hijmans van Wadenoyen, a member of the provincial council in The Hague.

Artis had already proved unwilling to cooperate, and then even the institution of which the committee had had the highest hopes, the Colonial Museum in Haarlem — the brainchild of the Society for the Promotion of Industry — declined to lend its support. While the Society's directors were willing to provide objects on loan, F.W. van Eeden, Director of the Colonial Museum, was less forthcoming. He did not see the point of loaning objects to be displayed in a foreign land, and feared that they would be damaged or lost. "The museum is intended for the Dutch public; it is an integral whole that has been built up carefully over many years and from which nothing can be removed without detracting from its goal."<sup>45</sup> The committee met with another rejection when it asked the Minister of the Interior to provide the "numerous duplicates" from the National Museum of Ethnography on loan for the exhibition. As a state institution, this museum naturally had to follow the government line regarding the Paris exhibition. Given the fanatical zeal for collecting pursued so successfully by its director, Lindon Serrurier, and the lack of space with which his museum was

afflicted, however, the refusal to provide exhibits on loan also reflects a certain lack of good will — all the more so given the very large number of objects that this museum owed to the Netherlands' participation in world exhibitions, especially the colonial exhibition in Amsterdam.<sup>46</sup>

But when Serrurier's refusal is viewed in the context of his ideas on ethnography as a science, it becomes wholly understandable. As noted in the previous chapter, he saw the study of everyday objects and their decorations, and their classification according to ethnic group and type, as a means of gaining insight into the moral development of peoples. He believed that for each people, a certain linear development could be traced, on the basis of the changing nature and form of similar objects. From this vantage point, the concept of "duplicates" is actually meaningless; every object is indispensable. Thus while the negotiations with Serrurier raised the issue of national prestige, they also exposed the tension between scientific principles and popular instruction.<sup>47</sup>

### *Rescuing Our Village*

For the living ethnographic part of the Dutch colonial exhibit, the colonial committee had enlisted the help of N.P. van den Berg, president of the Javasche Bank in Batavia, who had chaired the committee that had promoted the private entries submitted to the international colonial exhibition in Amsterdam in 1882. Hijnmans van Wadenoyen sent him the detailed plans for the kampong, asking him to find a suitable person who would be willing to take on the project and bear the financial risk. To pay for "our village" (as it is called several times in the official report or *Verslag* of the exhibition), the committee disseminated a circular in October among persons with colonial relations — 400 in the Netherlands and 50 in the East Indies — inviting subscriptions for shares at f250 apiece. The response was poor, and at the end of October it issued a second circular containing more details about the kampong and offering the possibility of purchasing half shares. The result remained distinctly unpromising: only twelve of those approached displayed any confidence in this curious enterprise, subscribing to the tune of 18 shares in total.<sup>48</sup>

Salvation came, by way of the executive committee, from the Amsterdam front. The Amsterdam committee members W. van der Vliet (the chairman) and Wertheim put the colonial committee in contact with Martin Wolff, a progressive entrepreneur from Amsterdam. Wolff

(1854–1907) was the director, and one of the founding members, of several modern companies that helped give the city its cosmopolitan air — including the Amsterdam Kiosk Company, founded in 1878 (which sought to emulate the *colonnes d'affiches* on the Parisian boulevards), and the first society set up to promote tourism in Amsterdam (1885). He was also a delegate board member of the Dutch *panopticum* (waxworks), the opening of which in 1883 had been timed to coincide with the Amsterdam exhibition.<sup>49</sup> Wolff was willing to take on the kampong's management, provided the committee itself supplied the "East Indies village" on the Esplanade des Invalides, including materials, craftsmen and dancers. This was not an easy condition for the committee to fulfil, first and foremost because it had far too little money, and second because it shrank from bearing financial responsibility for something that had to be set up in the East Indies.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, Van der Vliet and J. Freiwald, the delegate committee member in Paris, agreed to stand surety for the venture. In November 1888 Wolff's latest enterprise could be launched: the kampong would be set up after all, but only just in time.

To assemble the necessary dwellings and their inhabitants, W. Cores de Vries was sent to the East Indies. He was a member of the family firm of the same name that had run steamship lines in the Dutch East Indies from 1850 to 1863, and sat on the delegated committee in Paris. It was not until after the telegram announcing his arrival reached Batavia (in December 1888) that the official colonial committee was appointed there, chaired by Van den Berg.<sup>51</sup>

The kampong was to be built on the grounds of Tandjong Priok (Batavia's harbour) by 50 construction workers hired specially for the purpose, ironically enough under the supervision of two Dutch engineers. The kampong was certainly not purely Javanese; it contained different types of houses, besides which it was an Amsterdam enterprise, and a product of the colonial economic elite. When it came to populating the kampong, the East Indies family network turned out to be useful. Cores de Vries, who had arrived in Batavia in January 1889, and with his travel escort H.P. Cowan (a philologist and the secretary of the East Indies committee) were the first to visit the tea plantations Sinagar and Parakan Salak in the Preanger regencies. In charge of these plantations were two men, E.J. Kerkhoven and G.C.F.W. Mundt, who were related (as cousin and brother-in-law respectively) to the Holle brothers, and therefore

to Van den Berg, who was married to one of the Holle tea-growers' sisters. They saw the plan as a perfect opportunity to advertise Javanese tea in Paris. After all, admission tickets would entitle the bearers to a refreshment. Mundt and Kerkhoven made forty of their workers — men and women — available, besides which they had a tea kiosk built for the kampong on the Esplanade des Invalides. Finally, Mundt loaned the exhibition some wayang puppets and one of the gamelans from Parakan Salak, called Sari Oneng, which was superior to the one that had played in Amsterdam in 1883.<sup>52</sup> At the last minute, C.J. van Houten and Son, a firm that was already running cocoa tasting booths in various parts of the exhibition site in Paris, also had a *warong* (food stall) built in Batavia to be erected in the village, where customers would be served by "three beautiful girls".<sup>53</sup> This was the beginning of the "Sumatra house", which was to become a tradition at world exhibitions.

In Solo, Cores de Vries and Cowan obtained the cooperation of the resident, A.J. Spaan, who acted as intermediary in the negotiations with the crown prince — the later Prince Mangkunegara V — in the prince's palace.<sup>54</sup> In his report, Cores de Vries emphasised the importance of Spaan's help, without which he could never have obtained so many excellent loans for the exhibition from the palace of Mangkunegara. Cores de Vries said not a word about the crown prince himself. The loans he had secured from the prince's retinue were very generous indeed. Members of the prince's royal household who accompanied him to the Paris exhibition later produced a lengthy summary of these entries in a special court report.<sup>55</sup> Cores de Vries described the loans summarily as "a splendid set of dancing costumes and photographs" and "certain leading members of his corps de ballet". The ballet stars were the result of later negotiations between Spaan and the prince, after the committee in Batavia had tried in vain to recruit *ronggengs* (dancing girls) from West Java. Finally, in Surabaya and Jogyakarta, Cores de Vries and Cowan found the men and women who would demonstrate batik, weaving and the armourer's craft in the kampong.

On 24 February the first section of the bamboo village was loaded into one of the ships of Lloyd's of Rotterdam to sail for Marseille, and the second section followed on 10 March. Two weeks later Cores de Vries himself set sail for France, together with the dancers and a little monkey from Solo.

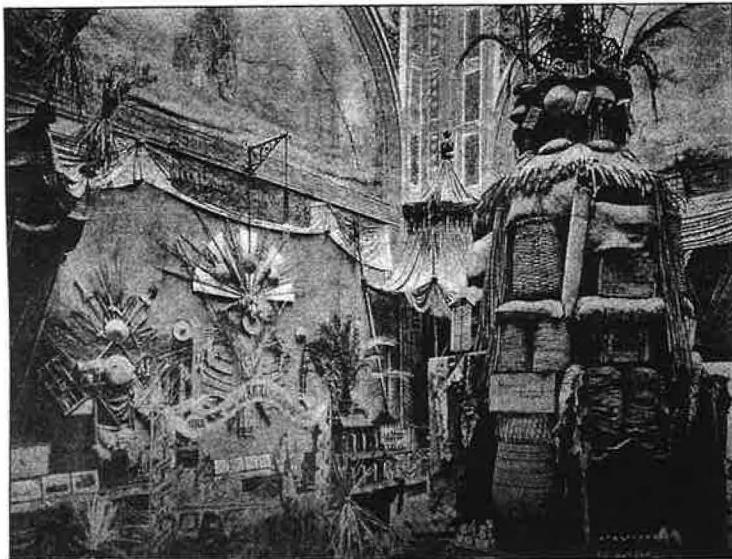
### The Colonial Pavilion

The colonial pavilion had been allocated space in the front of the main building on the Champs de Mars. To finance this superbly located visiting card for the Netherlands, the committee decided to appeal yet again to countrymen with some interest in the colonies (450 in total). But like the lobby for the kampong, this new circular too elicited a meagre response. By the end of January the colonial committee had managed to scrape together the grand total of f15,000.<sup>56</sup> It had just ten weeks left in which to fill the colonial pavilion in Paris, and set about finding city councils, individuals and institutions with relevant collections, whether of ethnographic or industrial interest. The most important contribution in the ethnographic sphere, which became the salvation of the colonial pavilion, again came from Amsterdam. Wüste, who had previously been reluctant to cooperate, agreed after all to loan out the colonial ethnographic collection, which was curated by the ethnographic museum of Artis. Westerman, the director of Artis, also pledged his support. This meant that the colonial committee eventually had not only a large collection of objects "relating to the land and the people, as well as numerous specimens and products", but also obtained the services of the curator of Artis' ethnographic museum, C.M. Pleyte, who agreed to help set up and decorate the colonial pavilion and kampong in Paris.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to the rather uncooperative attitude of most of the Dutch ethnographic museums, those in Paris were evidently quite happy to supply objects on loan for the Dutch colonial pavilion. Antonin Proust ("Inspector of Fine Arts") lent out several items from the museums under his control, including a gamelan from the Conservatoire du Musique and various objects from the Musée de Trocadéro, the building and ethnographic collection of which dated from the Paris world exhibition of 1878. Some of Hijmans van Wadenoyen's friends lent out their collections of weaponry and matting to hang on the pavilion walls, and the assistant resident D.P. Jentink provided his own ethnographic collection.

To display the colony's raw materials, the colonial committee obtained sample collections from several traders in products from the archipelago: indigo from P. and G.C. Kalkoen, coffee from the Association of Amsterdam and Rotterdam Coffee Merchants, quinine and kapok from Briegleb & Co., nutmeg and a visually appealing "presentation of plants and fruit" from the Moluccan trading company

"Banda", "spices and drugs" from Schroeter & Co., and tea from Amsterdam's tea warehouse masters. C.J. van Houten and Zoon donated a picture of a cocoa plantation, Maclaine Watson & Co. supplied samples of sugar from the previous harvest, and G. Zigeler provided samples of cocoa. But even all these "comprehensive" and "unique" collections did not suffice, in the committee's view, to give a complete picture of the commercial products of "our East Indies possessions". The committee purchased what they deemed to be missing, including "gum copal, [the pods of] Cassia fistula, and cajeput oil [...] all in the original packaging".<sup>58</sup>



3.7 Dutch trophy: tower of colonial goods, Paris 1889

[*Verslag, 1890*]

The architect E.J. Niermans, who designed the interior of the colonial pavilion, ensured that objects were exhibited (as in 1883) in line with the preferences of the day. This entailed displaying as many objects as possible in the interests of completeness, and filling empty spaces with decorations composed of drapes (batik in this case) and

fan-shaped arrangements of war trophies. The enclosed illustration almost speaks for itself: the colonial pavilion was bursting at the seams. In the middle of it arose a towering display, several metres high, of "products in their original packaging", surmounted by a crown woven of cane and palm leaves and jewelled with braided hats. Visitors had to circumnavigate this edifice by squeezing in between the objects exhibited around it and those ranged along the walls. Sarongs, hundreds of metres of batik cloth, and trophies seized in battle, covered the walls; Niermans had not left an inch uncovered. Most of what was on show here came only indirectly from the Dutch East Indies — in fact the batik cloth came directly from the cotton printing works of Kralingen and Leiden. But some of the things that struck the eye had come directly from the Dutch East Indies: the samples of Java tea from the Parakan Salak, Sinagar and Tjisalak companies were later awarded a gold medal. The marvellous sarongs and ceremonial clothes of the Mangkunegara from Solo would also attract attention.<sup>59</sup>

#### *Hesitation, Penny-pinching, and Chance*

The official exhibition reporter W. van der Vliet concluded on the basis of the support provided for the colonial pavilion "that there is still hot blood flowing through the country's arteries when it comes to advancing the mother country and its colonies".<sup>60</sup> This was an overly optimistic view, since the support given was in fact fairly half-hearted. Were the depth and range of involvement in this event to be measured by the amount and the spontaneity of private financial assistance from the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, the inescapable conclusion would be that it was superficial, small-scale, and concentrated in the administrative and commercial centres of the Netherlands. While it is true that the organisers of the Dutch colonial exhibit promoted colonial interests in the Netherlands, the group they represented was unresponsive in terms of hard cash. So when it came to staging a triumph at an international exhibition, the blood flowing through the country's arteries was not in fact so very hot.

In 1889 the established colonial circles were evidently predominantly conservative, sedate, and unadventurous. Whatever support was obtained came through personal relations. The loss of one key individual meant that others followed, as after the death of Van den

Bossche. And any bold initiatives had to be left to a more modern type of entrepreneur such as Martin Wolff, who secured the concession for the kampong. Wolff had little to do with colonial circles, but he had an eye for new trends such as waxworks displays and kiosks. So the final result of the Dutch colonial exhibit in Paris did not depend directly on those who had a direct financial, political or scientific interest in the colonies.

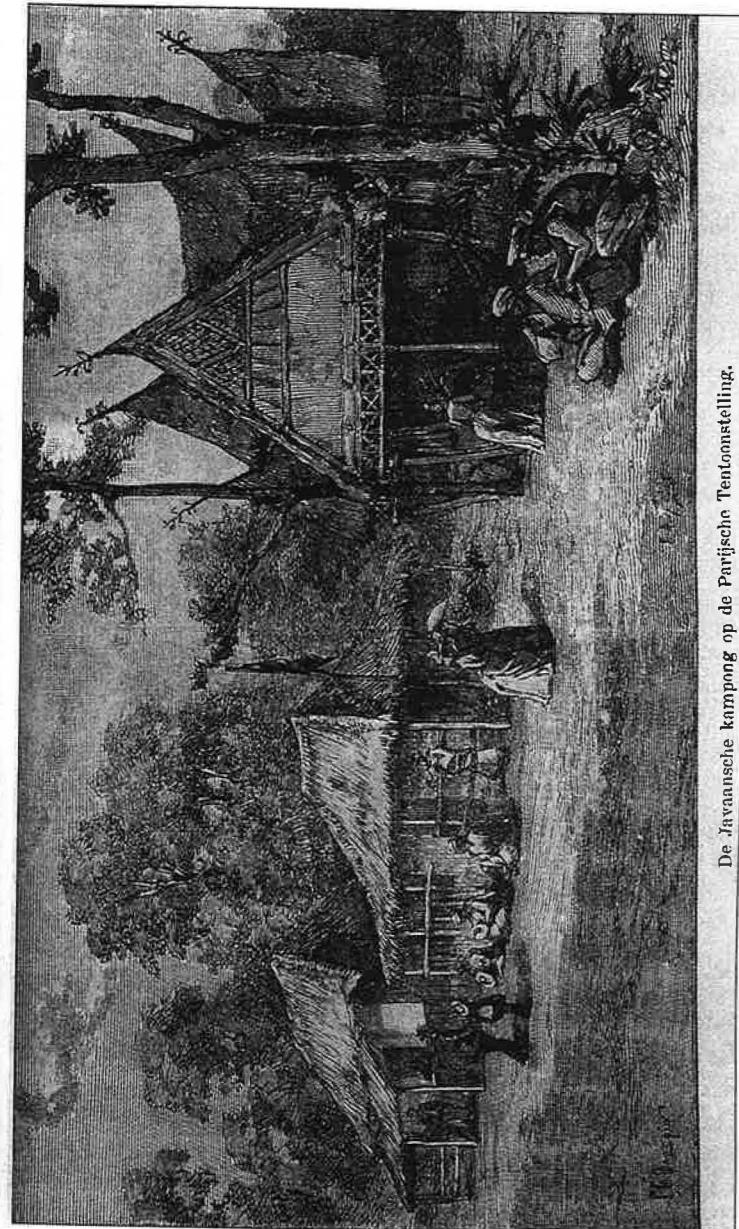
Although Paris had emphatically requested a noteworthy — and living — ethnographic colonial exhibit, the colonial scientific and cultural institutions in the Netherlands contributed virtually nothing in this area. The ethnographic objects that Wüste provided on loan at the last minute and the helping hand offered by the ethnographic curator Pleyte did nothing to change that. In retrospect, it is clear that the appearance of the colonial corner was largely determined by chance, or by how much money people were willing to spend on it. This makes the great popularity of the kampong in Paris all the more intriguing. Thanks to the kampong, the Dutch colonial exhibit in Paris — for all the difficulty and haphazardness with which it had been created — was a conspicuous success. And conspicuousness was the whole point of a world exhibition. How can this success be explained? Why was the kampong so popular?

### 3. The Appeal of the Kampong

There was no fresher, more appealing, or more original corner of the exhibition than this piece of the Malay Archipelago, transplanted live to the centre of Paris.

Prince Roland Bonaparte (1883)

There was plenty to see, hear, and taste in the kampong. In the morning a picturesque, rural tranquillity reigned there; this was the time to watch the Javanese performing their everyday tasks, according to the official Dutch report.<sup>61</sup> The afternoon provided noise and sensation, starting with a procession to the sounds of the *angklung*, announcing the kampong's main attraction: performances of music and dance in the pendopo featuring four young women dancers from Solo, accompanied by the Sundanese gamelan of Parakan Salak. It is not entirely clear which gamelan music and dances they performed: almost certainly the Javanese court dance the *serimpi*, but possibly the more popular dance of seduction, the *ronggeng*.<sup>62</sup>



3.8 The Javanese kampong at the Paris exhibition

[Eigen Haard, 1889]

Even contemporary commentators remarked on the huge crowds that flocked to the kampong. The French reporter Paul Le Jenisel wrote that the kampong was without a doubt the “great attraction” of the Esplanade. “Which of you has not crossed the threshold of the Javanese kampong more than twenty times?” he demanded rhetorically of his readers in one of the many commemorative volumes published in the aftermath of the exhibition.<sup>63</sup> In May, the journalist J. de Meester, writing for *Eigen Haard*, counted as many as four to five thousand visitors a day, and on Sundays the figure was closer to ten thousand. In June the kampong was due to be equipped with electric lighting, enabling it to remain open after 7 p.m., and he therefore expected visitor numbers to continue to grow. His estimates correspond to the official figures. In the exhibition’s six months, the kampong attracted 875,000 visitors in total, twice as many as another nearby attraction, the popular Annamitic theatre — the entrance fee to which, it should be said, was five times as much.<sup>64</sup>

The visitors included celebrities who made the kampong famous. In the *village Javanais*, the composer Claude Debussy was bewitched by the Javanese gamelan music, which became a source of inspiration for some of his innovative compositions for piano.<sup>65</sup> The painter Paul Gauguin, the writers Emile Zola and Edmond de Goncourt, and professional and amateur anthropologists such as J. Deniker and Prince Roland Bonaparte also spent time in the kampong. According to the French novelist and orientalist Judith Gautier (1845–1917), the Javanese dancers were “the talk of the town”: the whole city was truly enchanted by the dancers — the whole of Paris, and artists in particular, wanted to have seen the spectacle.<sup>66</sup> Finally, the success of the kampong can be inferred from the profit it made as a business venture, the turnover in tea, chocolate and liqueur sales in the pavilions of the companies Parakan Salak, Van Houten, and Bols and Sons, from the increased consumption of Javanese tea in Paris that year, and last but not least from the highest tribute (a “certificate of honour”) that the international jury awarded to the colonial committee.<sup>67</sup>

Clearly then, in terms of visitor numbers, prizes, and advertisement, the Javanese kampong at the Paris exhibition was a success. For the Dutch organisers, it meant that the Netherlands counted for something at world exhibitions, which was probably the highest prize of all. After years of wrangling about industrial exhibits that had been dismissed as



Les joueurs de ang-klong (orchestre populaire) allant chercher les danseuses.

3.9 *Angklung procession*  
[*L'Illustration*, 1889]



3.10 The Javanese dancers in full regalia, Paris 1889

[Collection of RITLV. The Netherlands, 1890]

paltry, a formula for success had finally been discovered for representing the Netherlands at such events. But what was it that made the Javanese kampong so enticing to the Western public? The diverse reception material that is available may provide an answer. The Javanese village, its inhabitants and his visitors are featured in countless discussions and illustrations in catalogues, magazines, newspapers, several separate studies and at least one novel. Some of these impressions were intended to divert, and others to instruct. They reveal the source of the kampong's fascination and appeal.<sup>68</sup>

#### *The French View of the Kampong The Court of the Senses*

According to the official Dutch report, the kampong distinguished itself from the villages round about by the "cleanliness and order that held sway there".<sup>69</sup> A brief glance at discussions of the kampong suggests, however, that cleanliness was not in fact its most notable feature. These dwell with conspicuous frequency on the dancers Thâmina (sometimes spelt Damina or Djamina), Wakiem, Seliem (or Sariem) and Soekia, remarking on their youth and beauty: the eldest was sixteen and the youngest twelve or thirteen. Aside from the gold-trimmed costumes of the tender young dancers, it was the coloured and powdered skin of their arms, shoulders and legs that attracted most comment. It must have been a delight for gentlemen visitors to feast their eyes on these "bronze idols" as they tended to their bodies in the tranquil early morning hours praised in such glowing terms by Van der Vliet. Public displays of casual nudity were most unusual in this period; they were generally confined to Oriental paintings, postcards, or Paris revues.<sup>70</sup>

Reactions overheard, or made up, by a correspondent for the *Bulletin officiel de l'exposition de 1889* give an indication of the effect that the dancers had on the male visitors. Interestingly, they were associated in passing with colonial conquests. At the sight of Damina, one old tooth-clicking fellow (described mockingly as a regular at the opera) is described as hissing "Quel sacré petit animal", while his interlocutors thought the Javanese dancers less entertaining than the belly-dancers at the Rue du Caïre. Finally, there is the comment, "They won't lead our soldiers astray" which is attributed to the dimwit who thought he was looking at representatives of the French colonies.<sup>71</sup> Whether or not the conversation actually took place, the comments certainly say

something about men's fantasies or desires, and what they expected to see when they passed through the gates of the kampong.

While the kampong attracted visitors from all walks of life, those about whom most is known are obviously famous French writers and artists,<sup>72</sup> who immortalised the Javanese dancers, in words or images, as symbols of sensual desire. The kampong's appeal can be explained partly in the context of the Oriental rage in French art and literature, which did not eschew erotic motifs.<sup>73</sup> Writers and art enthusiasts also followed their custom of visiting celebrated European actresses in their dressing rooms.<sup>74</sup>



3.11 Javanese woman applying makeup, Paris 1889

[Monod, 1890]

The fact that the dancers included princesses evidently heightened the tension. Many accounts note that the dancers belonged to the court of Prince Mangkunegara (sometimes described as the Sultan of Solo). Although the word "harem" is never mentioned, this repeated comment will have evoked associations of this kind. Thus the ethnographer Raoul praised the generosity of "Pangeran Mangkou-Negoro", who

had lent the exhibition not only his court dancers but also magnificent costumes and a valuable solid gold tiara. Raoul wrote that the dancers took turns wearing the tiara to prevent jealousies arising among them. According to De Meester, the gold headgear of Prince Mangkunegara was really meant to be displayed in the Dutch colonial pavilion, and had ended up among the dancing costumes by mistake. This much-quoted anecdote may have fuelled "Thousand-and-one-nights"-type fantasies about Oriental princesses.<sup>75</sup> Each dancer in turn became a real princess, crowned as the most beautiful or the best loved.

The writers Emile Zola and Edmond de Goncourt gave a highly graphic appraisal of the Javanese dancers at an artists' dinner in the Eiffel Tower. De Goncourt described it in his diary: "We were speaking of the Javanese women, and when I remarked upon their rather repulsive yellow plumpness, Zola replied, 'That plumpness has something soft that you don't find in European plumpness', and at these final words he firmly massaged his nose, which resembled a piece of rubber under the sensuous movements of his fingers." De Goncourt's expressions of approval or disapproval were not confined to the Javanese dancers: in the Rue du Caire he saw the lascivious curiosity of Paris awaken, with "obscene donkey-drivers [...] tall Africans in sensuous poses, who cast their lustful gaze at the women passing by, with those hot-blooded creatures who make you think of cats urinating on glowing coals". He often went there himself, and remarked that one of the belly dancers greeted people with her navel. He was scathing about the exhibition visitors in general: "When I look upon the coarse, brutish pleasure that I see on the faces of the exhibition visitors, which would make the old women's moustaches curl, I think of the boredom that all those people will feel next year, now that they have become accustomed to such overindulgence, and I'm afraid that this boredom will trigger a revolution." He ended by concluding that the exhibition had given him an aversion to the masses.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, the view of the kampong as a garden of delight is illustrated by passages from a novel (running to 1,688 pages) set in and around the exhibition: *Aventures merveilleuses d'un pousse-pousse à l'exposition* by G. Lefauré and H. Deneuville.<sup>77</sup> This gargantuan melodrama depicts the comings and goings at the exhibition through a string of amorous intrigues. The Javanese dancer Thâmina plays a minor role. The key protagonist is an attractive exhibition visitor named Raoul de Berry, aged thirty, who is described as someone of excellent physical and

moral stock. He attracts the avid attention of many women, some of whom are unmistakeably of loose morals. Thâmina is one of those to succumb to the charms of this Don Juan. She appears in Chapters XL and XLI, when De Berry introduces her to other guests at a gala dinner. Interestingly, Thâmina is referred to here by her Chinese/Annamitic nickname "La divine Yo-lang. L'étoile du kampong". This is because (as the narrator explains) her facial features are suggestive of a "race asiatique" mixed with Javanese blood. But it is tempting to read more into the name change. Perhaps it was intended to evoke the French colony of Tonkin. This would tie in with the widespread interest in the racial types of the kampong dwellers that is reflected in the French reports.

Thâmina, sporting a crown and her dancing costume, the exact length of which was described ("extending to her knees, revealing wonderfully shapely legs") ("le pagne, s'arrêtait aux genoux, laissant nue une jambe admirablement faite") was the main attraction of the evening. Although no one believes him, De Berry emphatically denies that she is his mistress. He conducts a brief conversation with her (almost an interrogation) in which Thâmina relates that she is from the court of Prince Mangkunegara. So she is a princess! De Berry explains to the company that 12-year-old Thâmina — who is still a virgin — is the epitome of chastity and will later marry a man from Yogyakarta. "On Java, the profession of ballerina has no connotations whatsoever of dissolute morals." The robust Parisienne Nini, who states baldly that she had had a man long before the age of twelve, asks Thâmina directly whether she has a lover. Thamina blushes and nods in the direction of the quasi-surprised De Berry, saying "I love you like my father". At the end of the evening, Nini acclaims Thâmina as the "Javanaise de Montmartre".

The story told by Lefaure and Deneuville reflects the fair-like quality of the exhibition. But it also seems to have been intended to convey something about other peoples. The dialogue with Thâmina teaches readers in passing a little about the customs and traditions of the Javanese.

Some of the sensual fantasies can be explained by the stricter sexual morality of the era: even a small area of bare skin displayed casually would have sufficed to titillate. The consciousness of being looked at, and the possibility of walking through the rain with these princesses, will also have enhanced men's individual sense of pleasure.<sup>78</sup>



3.12 After the performance, Paris 1889  
[Monod, 1890]

Images of the Javanese beauties in works of art and literature enhanced the Dutch colonial exhibits — in the Dutch East Indies at any rate. Somewhat anachronistically — Baudelaire had died in 1867 — the *Javabode* of 9 August 1893 printed a verse from Baudelaire's "Le serpent qui danse" to sing the praises of "La belle Wakiem":

Tes yeux où se révèille,  
De doux ni d'amer,  
Sont deux bijoux froids où se mele  
L'or avec le fer  
A te voir marcher en cadence  
Belle d'abandon  
On dirait un serpent qui danse  
*Au bout d'un baton.*<sup>79</sup>

[Your eyes where nothing is revealed  
Of bitter or sweet,  
Are two cold jewels where are mingled  
Iron and gold.

To see you walking in cadence  
With fine abandon,  
One would say a snake which dances  
On the end of a staff.]

But in the Netherlands, the garden of delight in Paris also attracted negative publicity. When it was rumoured in 1900 that the Dutch section of the *exhibition du siècle* was once more to be graced with Javanese beauties, several journalists warned of the danger of corruption, both for the Javanese themselves and for the dignity of Dutch colonial exhibit. Many years later, in 1931, when young Balinese dancers were incorporated into another international colonial exhibition in Paris, some Dutch announcements of the event rather exaggerated the girls' decency and exemplary morals.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Dejavaniation: Desire or Fear?*

Some accounts of the kampong bear witness to fears that the Javanese might fall prey to Western influence or be morally tainted by their long stay in Paris. "You should hasten to view the Javanese, since they are undergoing visible 'dejavaniation'" ("Il faut se hâter d'aller

voir les Javanais, car ils *déjavanaissent à vue d'oeil*") warned the *Bulletin de l'exposition*, adding that the *sembah*, the courteous Javanese manner of greeting, was also disappearing in Paris. Thâmina's designation as *Javanaise de Montmartre* points in the same direction. The apprehensions that the Javanese might become tainted reflected a yearning for authenticity and purity, while at the same time there was a certain desire for the two worlds to mix.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, the spectacle of the kampong confronted the Parisian visitors with their own world, which, while different, was not necessarily better than the world exhibited here.

The accounts of "dejavaniation" again focused on the dancers, but endowed them with Parisian airs. At the end of one column in the *Bulletin de l'exposition*, Thâmina is quoted as sighing, "Nicolas! ah! ah!", prompting the writer to urge Prince Mangkunegara to let his dancers stay in Europe. Thâmina's sighs appear to be a figment of his imagination. Similarly, the coquettish and seductive gaze of the four dancers, as depicted in the magazine *L'Illustration*, is more indicative of the artist's surreptitious desires than of any actual transformation of the Javanese dance into a Paris revue.



3.13 *The Javanese revue*  
[*L'Illustration*, 1889]

Maurice Brincourt, who worked as an assistant at the exhibition, gives an account of the visit the four dancers paid one day to a department store, the *magasins du Louvre*.<sup>82</sup> Elated, they had collected piles of merchandise, only to discover in dismay that the seven francs they had been allotted was far too little to pay for such treasures. Brincourt saw this as illustrating the extravagance of the Javanese, adding that they spent their leisure time gambling their money away. But the passage also reveals the kind of trips that the dancers were evidently permitted to make.<sup>83</sup> It also exemplifies the putative blurring of the boundaries dividing the two worlds. Brincourt had noted previously that the four dancers, unlike the kampong's other inhabitants, expressed their delight at being in Paris, "where they were treated like spoilt children for six months". Brincourt's accusations of extravagance and spoilt behaviour seem more indicative of concern about



3.14 The Javanese revue, in a satirical booklet on the Paris exhibition, Paris 1889

[Grosclaude, 1890]

the degeneration of Western civilisation than of any condemnation of the girls. Brincourt thought the other people in the kampong rather disconsolate as they went about their daily business. To him there was nothing stranger than to see these men and women, torn away from their land and sunshine and transplanted to the centre of Paris, pursuing their customs and way of life with "this rather sad calm and gravity that mark their every action". It struck him that they never displayed any surprise or curiosity.

In the Netherlands, the supposed Frenchification of these Javanese people would reverberate for years as something quite undesirable. The feminist journalist Nellie van Kol, discussing the kampong set up to exhibit women's handiwork in The Hague in 1898, which was also populated by Javanese women, wrote: "Have I not read somewhere of a company at a Parisian exhibition that became completely free, in the unfavourable sense of the word? Whose women, for instance, mastered a 'perfect' seductive gaze, could say coquettishly 'mon cher' and 'petit cher', and understood perfectly what the gentlemen said to them."<sup>84</sup> Van Kol was happy to see that the Javanese kampong-dwellers at the women's exhibition were "untainted". Her observation is strikingly similar to Brincourt's remark about the non-dancing Javanese people in the Paris kampong, although she suspected that their calm façade concealed other emotions. "They were exactly like the well-bred people of their race, the well-bred of all ranks and stations, whom I met on Java: earnest, quiet, seemingly passive and indifferent to the outside world, and yet you may rest assured that they observed the outside world and judged and criticised it inwardly and among themselves."<sup>85</sup>

The theme of "dejavaniation" was bound up with the realisation that the kampong-dwellers had their own ideas about the visitors. A week after the exhibition opened, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* reprinted in Dutch a piece from the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, entitled: "What the darkies think of Paris". A journalist working for *Le Figaro* had interviewed the temporary inhabitants of the Esplanade des Invalides. His fixed list of questions creates the impression that he was chiefly interested in what the foreigners thought of Western civilisation. After a cordial "Did you have a good journey?" came "What do you think of Paris? Do you like our feasts? What do you think of the President of the French Republic, his retinue, Parisian ladies, electric lighting, our fireworks, and so forth." The correspondent visited the "Kanaks", "Annamites", "Kabyle", "Senegalese" and "Gabonese", and with the aid

of the supervisor Bernard, he also interviewed the kampong-dwellers. In general he found the latter (in contrast to the Annamites in the nearby village, for instance) to be "extremely clean". Having described the Javanese as "highly civilised", he went on, "Some of them will say that Batavia has no reason to envy anything in Paris. They even had telephones before we did." According to this report, the Javanese were enthusiastic about electric lighting, but very surprised that the French president did not carry a parasol. Here the journalist explained to his readers that parasols were indicative of rank on Java. He too had been impressed by the beauty of the little dancers. "One cannot imagine how coquettish these young girls are". He had Bernard put a number of questions to "Miss Mina" (Thamina), whom he depicted as flighty and almost affected: "She is very happy to be in Paris, but says our railways have less gilding than those running from Surabaya to Batavia." The dialogue with the kampong-dwellers certainly revealed to this French journalist something of the mutual prejudices that existed. "To the Javanese we seem a very stern and earnest nation, that takes little interest in luxuries. In short, a Protestant nation. We, the people of Paris, should not judge their people by the examples we see on the Esplanade des Invalides. Aside from the four female dancers, who belong to the king, only labourers and servants have come to Paris."<sup>86</sup>

It was not only the French who were concerned with the question of "what the darkies thought of Paris". De Meester spoke to another exhibition visitor, who — still deeply impressed by the wonders he had seen in Paris — mused out loud: "What do those people themselves say about the exhibition?" De Meester told him, "When I took Miss Soekia, the dancer from our kampong, to see the Eiffel Tower, she took far more interest in a gewgaw on my watch chain." He contrasted this, however, with the "far less dull and narrow sensibilities of Dina Salifo, the Negro king, who, like the Shah of Persia, displayed a superstitious fear of the iron giant. Such a thing transcended his understanding". In the rest of his piece, De Meester likened himself, with his layman's knowledge and astonishment about everything that was on show and the ephemeral nature of the exhibition, to the Negro king. Soukia had been spoilt — dejavanised. The Negro king showed respect. De Meester's descriptions of both these individuals served to hold a mirror up to his readers — who thus learned very little about what these people actually thought of the exhibition.<sup>87</sup>

### *The Anthropological Laboratory*

A visit to the kampong could be called a day on Java, and anyone who troubled to study this curious village, detail for detail, would find material enough for most enlightening observations.<sup>1</sup>

(Rousselet 1889: 171)

The sensual appeal of the dancers was always dressed in "anthropological" interest. Every text studied in this connection pays more or less systematic attention to the geography, population and ethnic composition, the way of living, customs and traditions, crafts and industries, and — within an ethnographic perspective — the music and dancing of Java and the Dutch East Indies. Most writers confine themselves to personal observation, while a few, such as the ethnographers Roland Bonaparte and Raoul, go beyond this experience and incorporate details from reference works on Java into their accounts.

In the minds of the amateur ethnographers and anthropologists who spent hours in the Javanese kampong and registered everything they saw, this enclosed village displayed the reality of Javanese social and domestic life. They were fascinated by the customs and traditions of the Javanese, because these were believed to shed light on the nature and development of their own civilisation, and on the relations that existed or should be fostered between different peoples or civilisations. Most of their texts reflect a predominantly evolutionist outlook, although not always explicitly, in which the life of the kampong represents an earlier stage in the development of mankind. Some also use the kampong to expound more general ideas on Dutch colonial politics or the benefits of colonial domination. Given the casualness with which they express their views on this subject, and the fact that the message conveyed by their remarks appears to be subordinate to the will to pursue an objective, empirical form of ethnography or anthropology, their attitude can be described as an unquestioning colonialism that had become ingrained in everyday life.

### *The Kampong: The Key to Javanese Society*

Some French journalists sought to understand and explain the colonial control of Java on the basis of their observations of the kampong. This is most obvious in the work of the ethnographer Raoul and in that of Paul Le Jenisel, who wrote a chapter about the kampong for the *Livre*

*d'Or de l'exposition.* Both saw the kampong (or "desa", as Raoul called it) as the pivot on which the public and political organisation of Java turned, "similar to the role played by the commune in France".<sup>88</sup> Le Jenisel emphasised that the kampong was a rudimentary organisational unit. In that context he presented a fairly idealised and distorted picture of the administrative hierarchy on Java, with a Dutch resident (described by Jenisel as half civilian, half military) who administered a number of kampongs for the colonial government. Thanks to the submissiveness of the Javanese, only a few hundred soldiers were needed to control a population of 23 million. Le Jenisel was concerned about the soaring population, which had increased more than tenfold over the previous century, he reported. At this rate, there would be a hundred million Javanese to be fed in thirty years' time, while the land could scarcely provide for 30 million. Noting the efforts of Australia and the United States to ward off "Chinese infiltration", and quoting the words of Raoul Duval ("In less than thirty years' time, it will be the yellow nations who will be harvesting crops in the Eure département") he wondered whether "we" would not soon be having to ward off Javanese immigration.<sup>89</sup>

The ethnographer Raoul seems to have wanted above all to give an objective and encyclopaedic picture of Java, based on the kampong in Paris. This is immediately obvious from the systematic structure of his account: geography, natural characteristics (race), traditions and customs — including domestic and social life, the arts and sciences (music and dance), and means of existence (industry). The classification he adopted recalls the classes and sub-classes of groups I and II in Veth's catalogue (1883) and other common types of classification within the sciences of ethnography and anthropology. His description mingles elements of the kampong with the ethnographic and political reality of life on Java, which the kampong represents in his view. He does not get around to introducing some of the people living in the imitation village (the dancers) until he has informed his readers about the geographical origins of the "Javanais et Javanaises au kampong de l'Exposition Universelle", their characteristic racial features, and the nature and significance of their music and dance. The passage on the dancers is a mere digression,<sup>90</sup> in a treatise dealing successively with wayang theatre (shadow puppet plays), the clothing worn by the court dancers and by inhabitants of the hinterland, court etiquette, the nature and arrangement of a Javanese kampong, and the diet and

eating habits of the Javanese. But although his accounts suggest that the Paris kampong displayed the authentic Javanese way of life, Raoul freely concedes that the imitation village was at the same time a very European venture. Thus he writes that the exhibit demonstrating the making of bamboo hats partly represented French business interests. The Parisian entrepreneur Leduc had enlisted the labour of an entire village in Tangeran, transporting the headgear produced there directly to his warehouses in Paris. And Raoul's sales pitch on industrial production companies singles out for special praise the "Magasin de thé" set up by entrepreneurs from the Preanger, a successful venture to popularise tea-drinking.

For those involved in the Dutch exhibits, this discussion was a welcome bonus. Partly as an oblique gesture to Van der Vliet, perhaps, who had praised him in the official Dutch report of the exhibition, Raoul closes with a few reflections on the colonial success of the Dutch: "a wise and practically inclined nation, the Dutch have understood that the riches of a colony derive from these two sole factors: profitable crops and cheap labour". Raoul also praises Van den Bosch's Cultivation System (rather incongruously, since it had been abolished by then) as "la vraie politique coloniale".<sup>91</sup>

### On Racial Lines and Waistlines

Almost all the French authors quoted here (whether the texts concerned were intended for popular or academic consumption) discuss the nature and physical characteristics of the Javanese or Malay race as represented by those living in the kampong. In his *Livre d'Or de l'Exposition*, Paul le Jenisel indeed writes that the kampong had been built especially to show the public "samples of some ten civilisations that together make up the population of the Far East", though there is barely a trace of this motif in the official Dutch report of the exhibition.<sup>92</sup>

Some authors proceeded effortlessly from racial characteristics to lengthy discussions of the characters and customs of the Javanese. Not so the anthropologists J. Deniker and L. Laloy, however, who held firm to a strict, meticulous attempt at a purely empirical registration. This included recording the height of fourteen of the kampong-dwellers with a measuring tape, as part of a large-scale comparative physical anthropological study conducted among the different peoples at the exhibition. From their positivist scientific perspective, exhibitions of

foreign peoples such as those on the Esplanade des Invalides provided a splendid opportunity for study. They yielded an abundance of objectifiable data, which could also be compared on the spot. Thus, the delegates attending the *Congrès internationale d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie préhistorique*, convened for the tenth time in 1889, spent many hours in the various foreign villages on the Esplanade des Invalides.<sup>93</sup>

There is a great difference between the systematic and scrupulous working methods of Deniker and Laloy, which lends their findings (expressed largely in figures and averages) an aura of positive scientific objectivity (or verifiability), and the airy way which people such as Le Jenisel or Rousselet casually generalise about customs, character and innate capacity on the basis of racial classifications as perceived in the kampong. They dwell to a conspicuous degree on the mixed blood of the kampong-dwellers, which was seen — like their “dejavanisation” — as a form of degeneration. This negative view appears strongest in the work of Le Jenisel, who fears the mixing and dispersion of races not only because of its alleged consequences, but also in its own right. In general, however, the kampong’s inhabitants do extremely well in the racist evaluation.

#### *Fear of Mixing and Degeneration*

The racial reflections on the kampong-dwellers largely revolved around the issue of mixed blood. Some observers, such as Raoul, wove it into a historical explanation of the specific racial features of the Javanese. For others, such as Le Jenisel, mixed blood was in itself a sign of degeneration. With a little good will, Raoul might be called an evolutionary relativist. Besides trying to trace the nature and origin of the different racial types of the Netherlands’ “vast possessions”, he asserted that out of all the peoples of the Dutch East Indies, it was unquestionably the Javanese who represented “civilisation — relatively speaking if you will, but true civilisation all the same”. Raoul left unanswered the question of whether they owed this civilisation to their own racial origins, to the proximity of the Hindu civilisation, or to a religion that was perfectly adapted to the nature and climate of their land. The rapid population growth was in any case attributable not just to the favourable effects of Dutch control, but also to those of Islam. According to Raoul, the Javanese were capable of achieving progress.<sup>94</sup>

Like Raoul, Le Jenisel maintained that the kampong-dwellers owed their specific racial features to the mixing of various contemporary and old races belonging to Chinese and Indian civilisations. This meant that the Javanese were a “hybrid” (*métis*) race, like all Polynesian and Asian peoples. But to Le Jenisel this was an unfavourable sign. In his view, virtually all such “populations métisses” exemplified ethnic degeneration and mutilation. However, he was relieved to note that the Javanese were a happy exception to this rule. Given their shapely proportions (which in his view compensated for their flat noses), their skin colour (ranging from golden yellow to chestnut brown), and their own Asian standards of beauty, he gave them his condescending approbation. Le Jenisel did think it a pity, for reasons of completeness, that only a few of Java’s seven or eight races were represented in the Paris kampong. If only there had been a few Sundanese (evidently Le Jenisel had not paid such careful attention after all!), Malays, Maoris [*sic*], Madurese and Arabs — “the entire palette of human flesh” would have been exhibited, providing a representative picture. Summing up, Le Jenisel concluded that the kampong’s population was curious in its composition, not because of any repugnant quality, but because the people possessed qualities of unconscious and innocent beauty and virtue. He also mused, not without humour, that it was a pleasure to spend time with “these fine Javanese, who, not content with displaying their beauty among the indigenous peoples of all the countries exposed to view on the Esplanade des Invalides, add to this the merit of being virtuous, mild as lambs and entirely ignorant of drunkenness”.<sup>95</sup> He found there something he evidently missed: the innocence of childhood.

#### *Control: The Quest for Racial Characteristics*

Deniker and Laloy would have liked to examine individually each of the individuals displayed at the Esplanade des Invalides, but given the thoroughness of their approach, there had simply been no time to do so. The article in which they recorded the results of their measurements appeared in the first edition of the periodical *L'anthropologie* (a publication launched to provide a scientific arena for physical anthropology). It reveals their almost disconcertingly systematic approach and the numerical precision of their research, and hence the positivist urge for completeness that informed their work.<sup>96</sup> Still, lack of time meant that their work was necessarily incomplete. Deniker and Laloy examined 14

out of the 40-odd “representatives of Java” in the kampong, classified by sex and regional origin. They compared their data not just with Paul Broca’s colour charts but also with the findings of the craniologists C. Swaving, Augustin Weisbach and H.G. Langen, who had examined skulls from the Indonesian archipelago.



3.15 *Ajoë, Paris 1889*. Portrait *en face* by Prince Roland Bonaparte, published with the measurements recorded by Deniker and Laloy (1890), Paris 1889

[Deniker & Laloy, 1890]

Thanks to the work of Deniker and Laloy, the physical characteristics of fourteen of the kampong-dwellers have been preserved, to a degree of exactness that may well astonish today’s readers. These include the people’s height, waist size, skin colour (including detailed descriptions of localised variations), hair and eyes, the structure of their body hair, and the shapes of their skulls. There are also two named illustrations: the Sundanese man Otji and the Javanese woman Ajoë were both

photographed *en face* by Prince Roland Bonaparte.<sup>97</sup> Deniker and Laloy processed these measurements, together with those of the other ethnic groups displayed at the exhibition, in five tables surveying 1. waist size (in descending order); 2. skull index (in ascending order); 3. nose index (proportion between length and breadth of the nose, in descending order); 4. physical proportions (men only); and 5. the averages of specific physical measurements of several of the ethnic groups examined, including the Javanese.

NOMBRE DE SUJETS, TRÉSORS PROVENIENCES	ALTÉRÉ, S. VÉRIFIÉE A. CONFIRMÉE B. FAUX C. INCONNU	MEAS. INDICES	LES RACES EXOTIQUES.									
			TITRE		MEAS.		INDICES		TITRE		MEAS.	
			ALTEUR.	WAIST.	HAUTEUR.	WAIST.	HAUTEUR.	INDICE.	ALTEUR.	WAIST.	HAUTEUR.	INDICE.
100 Gschichtschw. ♂	—	—	178 (1)	109 (1)	129 (1)	102 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	103 (1)	125 (1)	105 (2)
2 — ♀	—	—	177 (1)	114 (1)	129 (1)	107 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	128 (1)	104 (1)	125 (1)	107 (2)
23 Tombéche ♂	—	—	179 (1)	102 (1)	124 (1)	104 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	128 (1)	103 (1)	125 (1)	106 (2)
7 Jeudonate ♂	—	—	178 (1)	117 (1)	140 (1)	103 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	130 (1)	108 (1)	130 (1)	108 (2)
3 Jevadie ♂	—	—	178 (1)	100 (1)	129 (1)	104 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	128 (1)	103 (1)	127 (1)	105 (2)
1 Indj. de Willem ♂	—	—	179 (1)	119 (1)	126 (1)	105 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	104 (1)	126 (1)	106 (2)
(Médecin Mal.?)	—	—	171 (1)	147 (1)	129 (1)	103 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	105 (1)	127 (1)	107 (2)
1 Matemalas ♂	—	—	171 (1)	151 (1)	129 (1)	105 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	106 (1)	128 (1)	108 (2)
1 — ♀	—	—	170 (1)	159 (1)	129 (1)	107 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	107 (1)	129 (1)	109 (2)
4 Tchidone ♂	—	—	176 (1)	129 (1)	127 (1)	107 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	108 (1)	129 (1)	109 (2)
3 Tchidone ♀	—	—	170 (1)	157 (1)	129 (1)	123 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	109 (1)	129 (1)	110 (2)
1 Pala-Calidion ♂	—	—	176 (1)	129 (1)	127 (1)	107 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	109 (1)	129 (1)	110 (2)
1 Kédou Més-Calid.	—	—	175 (1)	148 (1)	127 (1)	107 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	111 (2)
1 Anc. ♀	—	—	175 (1)	148 (1)	127 (1)	107 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	111 (2)
14 Peus-Rouges	—	—	170 (1)	156 (1)	145 (1)	122 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	112 (2)
(Médecin) ♂	—	—	170 (1)	156 (1)	145 (1)	122 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	112 (2)
1 Peus-Rouge (Médecin)	—	—	170 (1)	156 (1)	145 (1)	122 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	112 (2)
4 Malia (1/2 sang)	—	—	172 (1)	153 (1)	142 (1)	123 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	113 (2)
1 — (1/2 sang) ♂	—	—	170 (1)	154 (1)	142 (1)	123 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	113 (2)
1 — (1/2 sang) ♀	—	—	170 (1)	156 (1)	142 (1)	123 (2)	10 (2)	10 (2)	129 (1)	110 (1)	129 (1)	113 (2)
12 ans	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

(1) Moyenne de 11 sujets enlevés.

(2) Moyenne de 10 sujets analysés.

(3) Moyenne de 11 sujets analysés.

(4) Moyenne de 2 sujets —

3.16 Overview of the measurements recorded by Deniker and Laloy, Paris 1889

[Deniker & Laloy, 1890]

These data really only possess significance as part of Deniker and Laloy’s wider research project. The fact that these scientists, with all their empirical thoroughness, nowhere suggested that these physical features had any moral or other particular connotations, while others were quite happy to do so on the basis of very superficial observations, is indicative of the gap that was arising between scientific and popular racial doctrine. The empiricism practised by Deniker and Laloy illustrates

the trend towards scientific observation in physical anthropology in this period. But it also illustrates the uncertainty that existed within this discipline about whether any conclusions could be drawn from all those quantifiable physical features, for instance on matters such as which were "pure races", and the relationship that existed, if any, between character traits and moral qualities.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the historical or evolutionary perspective adopted by Raoul and Le Jenisel posed a particular threat to beliefs in the existence of a pure race. Deniker himself eventually came to see this. Although this did not stop him publishing a scientific standard work on racial doctrine in 1900, his introduction conceded: "To tell the truth, they are almost impossible to find, these people who represent somatological entities, comparable to the species of zoology."<sup>99</sup>

### *The Dutch Kampong*

Most of the Dutch reports presented the Javanese enclave on the Esplanade des Invalides as a standard exhibit, virtually a mandatory feature, and sometimes as a familiar sight. Thus one reporter of *De Opmerker* compared it to the kampong that had been displayed in Amsterdam in 1883. Some of the workers who had been selected to visit the Paris exhibition free of charge, their expenses to be paid by leading citizens of Amsterdam, even thought it unnecessary to include a description of the kampong, "since every Dutch schoolboy is taught what it looks like!" At the Tonkinese section on the Esplanade, they saw "the little men who have more than once been to the French what the Acehnese are to the Dutch colonials: frequently treacherous, but nonetheless courageous natives who fight for their nation's freedom".<sup>100</sup> This immediately points up the main difference between the Dutch and French responses to these displays: the Dutch saw the kampong in the first place as Dutch, and believed by analogy that the Tonkinese section was French. But whether the Dutch visitors saw the kampong-dwellers as Dutch citizens is another matter. The above discussion has already made clear that while the official Dutch report described the kampong as neat and orderly, the French saw it as a garden of delight. Do the sensual and anthropological elements highlighted in the French reception also turn up in Dutch accounts?

### *Dutch, Pleasant, and Neat and Tidy*

At the festive opening of the *exposition universelle* on 6 May 1889, one proud reporter of the *Algemeen Handelsblad* referred to "our sweet Javanese, that is to say, the big-eyed young ladies, naturally in festive apparel, who do not move a muscle of their faces" — right next to the lodge occupied by Mme Carnot, the wife of the French president, and surrounded by many richly attired *Parisiennes*. At two o'clock the president himself arrived, to the sounds of the *Marseillaise*. After a nod in the direction of the representatives of the countries taking part and the speeches that the reporter by then deemed predictable — only the praise accorded to the "unknown workers" and the idea of the exhibition as the glory of humanity were worth remarking upon — the president could begin the most exciting part of the opening ritual: the parade past the exhibits, in which he greeted each of the committees representing their respective countries. In a convoy of carriages, preceded by cavalrymen, the president finally reached the Esplanade des Invalides. The Javanese all stood waiting at the kampong entrance, dressed in grand style. "Bowing and waving their hands, they shouted a variety of loud welcoming phrases in the president's honour, at one point reportedly including the cry '*viv' l'emp'reur!*' but surely not with any malicious intent" wrote the reporter, smoothing over this blunder. With swelling pride he then enumerated the dignitaries who had visited the kampong.<sup>101</sup> At the festive opening the next day, a special performance was given in the kampong for the benefit of the government authorities. That day, the grenadiers of Belgium's royal guard played *Wien Néerlands bloed* ("Whose Dutch Blood", the Netherlands' national anthem at the time) in honour of the kampong-dwellers.<sup>102</sup>

In focusing on the tributes paid to the Javanese during the ceremonial opening of the world exhibition, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* reporter acknowledged the Javanese as Dutch subjects. The singing of *Wien Néerlands bloed* in honour of the kampong will have also confirmed to readers the indisputable unity of the Netherlands and its colonies. Examples abound of Dutch reporters who mention the quickening of their patriotic pulse at the *exposition universelle* upon entering either section of the Dutch colonial exhibit. In the introduction to this chapter, De Meester expresses his pride in the sedate colonial pavilion. But the kampong too had won his heart. Interestingly, his brief description of

it refers casually to Prince Mangkunegara as an “independent ruler”. Whether his readers were led to ponder the complex nature of colonial relations is debatable; they are more likely to have been captivated by the anecdote about the princely crown, which was used by mistake as a trophy to be shared among the dancers, while it had actually been intended to be displayed.<sup>103</sup>

De Meester made the Javanese village strikingly Dutch: it was neat and tidy, but it also radiated a congenial, warm atmosphere. He does not appear to have made any effort to practise popular Javanese ethnography. The account entitled “In the kampong in Paris” might just as well have been called “In the little village in Zeeland”. De Meester dwells invitingly on details such as the Indonesian cook’s *rijsttafel* (which was all the rage in Parisian high life), the liqueur served by “brown boys in white smocks”, the old batik maker from “Djokja” (presentday Yogyakarta) who for a pittance would use her coloured wax “to draw a figure on your handkerchief or calling card”, and the straw hats that were sold as Panama hats. The most popular kampong-dweller among the visitors, he maintained, was the “handsome, mischievous lad of twelve who was constantly being slipped *sous* and sweets, and whose European education had progressed to such an extent, in the few weeks that he had been in France, that he had learned, to the great consternation of the kampong authorities, how to make visitors laugh — fortunately only laugh! — by shouting “Vive Boulanger!” Finally, the absolute highlight, the most attractive element of the kampong, consisted in De Meester’s view of the “beautiful dancing, performed so chastely and with such feeling, a glorious change from the misbegotten Paris ballet”.<sup>104</sup>

Like Van der Vliet, De Meester tried to indicate that this congenial atmosphere observed clear boundaries of decency, although he was more ambivalent about it. While suggesting that the chaste atmosphere of Java was tangible here, making a stark contrast with “the misbegotten Paris ballet” — he also presented a picture of coquettish women, and described the commotion that had arisen when the dancers, “saffroned, left their hut and walked barefoot over the gravel to the pendopo. [...] The public thronged around them, just like the dandies in their tailcoats jostle to reach the dancers behind the scenes of the opera.”<sup>105</sup> Here his account came close to the fantasies of writers such as De Goncourt and Zola. De Meester had not failed to notice the dancers’ bare feet.

### National Pride and Foreign Jarring Notes

For the *Opmerker*, the weekly magazine of the visual arts, technology and science published by the society Architectura et Amicitia, the Paris exhibition was an unmissable event. It demonstrated not just progress, but also the great achievements of architecture.<sup>106</sup> That an artistic and technological perspective is no impediment to patriotism or colonial pride is clear from the five letters “From Paris” in which a columnist writing under the name of “Osado” described the many sights in and around the exhibition for the *Opmerker*. The section marked “the Netherlands” that he came upon during his first visit to the main building was a tonic for his “patriotic heart”. “The products of our colonies are displayed tastefully in a domed hall, and although the display falls far short of what was on show in Amsterdam in 1883, the overall effect is very pleasing.” That the colonial and Dutch sections belonged together was obvious to him; the Amsterdam exhibition had certainly helped to strengthen awareness of this link.<sup>107</sup>

The comparison with Amsterdam recurred later on, when Osado visited the “Javanese village” on the Esplanade des Invalides. Like De Meester, Osado noticed the contrast it made with the dignity of the Champs de Mars. On the Esplanade, he wrote: “We are led involuntarily to think of a Dutch *kermis* when we see the bustle and hear the Oriental music coming from most of the buildings.” But Osado had not come to be entertained. He was primarily interested in architecture and the arts and crafts exhibited in the French colonial section, and the incessantly crowded pagoda of Angkor impressed him particularly with its “pure Oriental” ornamentation. To the south of this pagoda Osado found the kampong, which he knew to be “one of the main attractions of the exhibition for the Parisians”. He too asserted that this village was “far less complete than that which graced our own exhibition in 1883”. Even so, the world displayed beneath the trees on the Esplanade exuded “a warm atmosphere” that caused Osado, like others, to linger in the kampong. It was the response of the public that interested him most. “The French become engrossed in the wistfully passionate sounds, the strange harmonies of the Oriental music, and never tire of watching the elegant steps of the four dancing girls. We must admit that in terms of outward appearance, these four are far superior to the two we saw in 1883. Even so, the images of the Javanese ‘Bayadères’ that were recently published in certain French magazines greatly exaggerate their

beauty." Osado was dismissive of the kampong's buildings, merely noting that they were "all made of bamboo and other Indonesian materials". He saw the kampong as possessing little architectural significance, and counselled visitors interested in seeing Oriental architecture to go to the French colonial section.<sup>108</sup>

The cheerfulness of the Esplanade did not blind Osado to the discordant apparition on the west side of the grounds: the gigantic pavilion of the French war ministry, which was swarming with visitors. It elicited from Osado a critical observation: "the French do not tire of gazing upon the enormous instruments of destruction with which they hope to defeat the hated Prussians. As a peaceloving nation, we Dutch find it disheartening to see how human beings have used their ingenuity to invent machines with which they can kill or maim their fellow human beings with unfailing accuracy from a distance of some set number of kilometres. To us it seemed that after the events of 1870, it would have been better to dispense with an exhibition of that kind." After the far more useful palace devoted to public hygiene, Osado wound up his first visit at the Rue du Caïre, on the west side of the exhibition building, the realism of which apparently drove the misery of war from his mind. "The imitation is as true to life as possible, and the air would only need to be a slightly darker shade of blue for one to fancy oneself in Africa. The bustle in those narrow little alleyways is indescribable: all manner of Oriental merchants, their appearance more picturesque than trim, try to market their wares, while boys trot along behind donkeys burdened with spindly 'misses' and strange Eastern music sounds from the small coffee-houses."<sup>109</sup>

Osado was familiar with the kampong from the Amsterdam exhibition. And this reveals something about his colonial consciousness: to him too, both the colonial section and the kampong were wholly Dutch. While in 1883 the *Opmerker* had criticised the Aceh monument, in 1889 Osado did not trouble to reflect on the ways in which overseas territories were made European. The French war pavilion filled him with sadness, but only because it reminded him of the wars fought close to home. He completely ignored the link — even though it was shown explicitly — with colonial conquests. For the rest, his observations again confirm the kampong's popularity among visitors, and the *kind* of popularity. Perhaps this was its most attractive feature: if you liked bustle and atmosphere you went to the Esplanade, especially to the kampong, or to the Rue du Caïre. Osado did distinguish between

these areas: while the former was picturesque, he thought the latter really filthy.<sup>110</sup>

### *Ethical Concerns and Social Struggles*

And that those people are not even allowed to look around the exhibition and to see Paris, properly escorted, [...] strikes me as quite disgraceful.

This sentence could be said to encapsulate the ethical ideas on colonial policy that were later formulated by the judicial official C.T. van Deventer in his famous *Gids* article "A debt of honour".

Having calculated that the Netherlands owed the Dutch East Indies a debt amounting to millions of guilders, he advocated a development policy that would benefit the indigenous population of the Dutch East Indies, though he conceived this in terms of Western-style development led by Westerners.<sup>111</sup> In 1888 and 1889, Van Deventer — then still working as a lawyer in Semarang — toured Europe to catch up on European culture, the lack of which he felt so keenly in Dutch colonial society. Among the places he visited were Bayreuth (for the Wagner festivals), Amsterdam (including the Rijksmuseum), London and Paris. He returned to Paris for the third time shortly before the end of his tour, especially to see the world exhibition.<sup>112</sup>

Since he lived and worked in the East Indies, Van Deventer understandably headed straight for the Javanese kampong, in spite of his eagerness for European culture, which was also in abundant supply at the Paris exhibition. His accounts testify to a certain sympathy with the kampong-dwellers, whom he saw as old acquaintances. Sipping a liqueur in the Bols restaurant, he recognised the very boys who had served him on his boat trip in the *Princess Amalia*. In his view they were doing better than the woman from Yogyakarta, to whom he also spoke: they were more cosmopolitan. One of them even spoke Dutch to a German visitor, who translated the conversation into French for his companions.<sup>113</sup>

Van Deventer's final verdict on the kampong was mixed. It presented a distorted picture of reality, and the people living in it did not seem really at ease. One woman from Yogyakarta complained to Van Deventer that they had no lombok (chili peppers) or betel leaves

(chewed as a mild intoxicant), and that they were never allowed to leave the grounds. Van Deventer went on to compare the kampong to the prisons of the Dutch East Indies (which did at least provide chili peppers and betel leaves).<sup>114</sup>

The socialist periodical *Recht voor Allen* was naturally drawn to express solidarity with the kampong-dwellers. The reporter "Souvarine" was convinced that the world exhibition, as an event staged by the "gentlemen of the bourgeoisie", concealed the dismal nature of the workers' lives. The kampong bore out all his preconceptions about capitalist exploitation and oppression of the weak. Visiting the Esplanade des Invalides, he tended to identify with those who were exhibited there, as people who were oppressed and exploited. At the same time, he also saw the exhibit as a colourful and instructive racial spectacle: "Here we may admire brothers and sisters with the colours of cinnamon, chocolate, coffee, lemon and even shoe-black, and thus learn a little about the non-European races." In his account of this part of the exhibition, which he saw even before the official opening, he explained to his readers that protectorates were "countries that have not been placed under the direct authority of the 'mother' country, but which are only 'protected' by them. The wretched natives are only too well aware of the cost of such protection. Death and famine, or sometimes, for a change, famine and death."<sup>115</sup>

Souvarine's kampong reports are written in the tone of a picaresque romance. Noting that the general secretary of the French colonies section had permitted him to visit the French villages and palaces at his leisure, he added that he had been refused entry to the Javanese kampong "by some Dutch fellow — the Dutch bourgeois are the most detestable and scabby creatures imaginable — belonging to the Dutch colonial committee". Souvarine nonetheless managed to steal into the kampong three times, where he noted the generally dismal state of the people living there: inadequate clothing, poor food, no freedom whatsoever, and exhibited like animals. "These unfortunates have been placed at the mercy of some three bandits, who exploit them in the most disgraceful fashion. [...] They are forced to play music, to dance and so forth, and since the entrance fee is 50 centimes (25 cents) and thousands of visitors come to see the kampong every day, it will readily be appreciated that the unscrupulous villains into whose 'care' these poor devils have been entrusted are making a fine profit". Souvarine writes that he has promised the Javanese to bring this scandalous treatment to

an end and names the man in overall charge of this business venture: "this scoundrel, the chairman of the operational committee [...] is called Wolff, Martin Wolff, and he is a fellow countryman of ... Droogstoppel. Of course!"<sup>116</sup>

The revolutionary "Souvarine" also knew his *Max Havelaar*. He sided with the people who to him represented the weak and oppressed members of a society that the exhibition depicted so vividly. He also leapt to the defence of the workers, whom he claimed were being deliberately excluded from the exhibition, given that visitors were charged one franc each for a ticket, and double this fee in the evening hours. He also referred in passing to another example of exploitation: "Thus, a few 'enterprising' bandits have had a number of Annamites brought over here to haul two-wheeled carts known as *pousse-pousses* to carry bourgeois ladies or gentlemen who are too shiftless to stand on their own two feet. Although the entrepreneurs earn — or more accurately, steal — thousands of guilders by this means, they pay the poor Annamites ludicrously low wages, and, not satisfied with this, the bloodsuckers even rob the hapless fellows of the tips they receive; they search their pockets in the evening and take it all, down to the last sou."<sup>117</sup>

Of all the Dutch descriptions of the kampong discussed here, Souvarine's displays the most compassion for its inhabitants, but not because he saw them as Dutch citizens. As victims, they were examples in his struggle against capitalist exploitation. His impressions therefore primarily clarify his own view of the world. Souvarine also displayed casual anthropological interest in the different races inhabiting the Esplanade, though this seems to have been limited to those outside the kampong enclosure.

#### *French versus Dutch Views of the Kampong*

In comparison with the French kampong descriptions, the Dutch reception places far less emphasis on ethnographic details, possibly because the kampong was already a familiar concept to some Dutch visitors. The virtual absence, in the Dutch texts, of references to the racial features of the different ethnic groups represented in the kampong is harder to explain. Were the French more steeped in physical anthropological, or racist, ideas, simply because this anthropological world exhibition was held in France, and in the French language?

Did the fact that physical anthropology as an independent science was less strongly developed in the Netherlands, and enjoyed less public recognition, play a role?<sup>118</sup> The popularisation of colonial ethnography and anthropology (as undertaken in the 1880s by Lindon Serrurier in the National Museum of Ethnography and P.J. Westerman in Artis) was certainly still in its infancy — as well as being the subject of controversy — in the Netherlands.<sup>119</sup>

While the French describe the kampong as a garden of delight, the Dutch texts evoke a congenial, friendly atmosphere, with such an insistence on the element of chastity that the reader suspects that the dancers did not leave the Dutch unmoved after all. Dutch journalists were evidently unable to be as explicit about this as the French. Perhaps they wanted to emphasise the decency of the kampong to avoid tarnishing the Netherlands' reputation. But were the emphases on sensuality on the one hand and chastity on the other not expressions of the same thing?

#### *Exoticism as a Pretext*

Can the substance of popular anthropology be distilled from the above accounts? That it involved a mixture of scientific interest and popular attitudes is clear. The organisers had expressly sought to present and popularise the anthropological issues of the day at the beginning of the event, providing a kind of framework for the rest. The Dutch kampong was thus assigned a role in this popularised lesson on the progress of civilisations. Similarly, the Dutch organisers used the kampong as a vehicle for a lively presentation of the way of life of the indigenous population of the Dutch East Indies — as well as the products traded there, of course.

Conversely, in providing this framework the exhibition organisers were evidently fulfilling a demand for anthropological information. The casual observations made by visitors in the kampong show that this anthropological interest on the part of the public arose from a mixture of colonial pride and feelings of superiority (whereby the sight of the kampong prompted reflections on overseas colonial possessions), an evolutionary conceptual framework (in which skin colour or race was deemed indicative of the level of civilisation), and sensuality (stimulated by the suggestiveness of bare skin).

But was the public's interest in the kampong really anthropological at all? What did the visitors actually see, when they entered the kampong after the exhibition's lessons on the evolution of civilisations and colonial superiority? Did they actually connect the explanations in the anthropological exposition halls to the world exhibited in the kampong? One thing that emerges clearly from the texts is that a number of the kampong visitors, in spite of — or because of — their anthropological and racist prejudices, were impressed by the beauty and refinement of these people, by the fact that they possessed nobility, by the products they made, and by their music and dancing. This civilisation was evidently more refined and of a higher level than they thought they had learned. Was this really anthropological curiosity? In other words, did what the visitors saw in the kampong not cause a problem? Was anthropological curiosity not primarily a justification applied in retrospect, including for the visitors who described it as such? And is it not possible that exoticism was precisely a way of escaping from the rigid conceptual frameworks of evolutionism and colonial domination, which suggested a clarity belied by personal observation? In that sense, exoticism was also something that people used for self-reflection, to avoid facing incomprehensible contradictions. By adopting this strategy, they absolved themselves of the obligation really to concern themselves with the "other".

If this is true, the popularity of the kampong had little to do with orientalism. Edward Said frequently makes the mistake of taking statements (or conspicuous silences) about colonised "others" as intentionally conveyed information about those others. Since he then proceeds to pry these statements loose from the persons making them, it is all too easy for him to fit them into his hegemonic conceptual framework. If exoticism was in fact an evasive approach, it demonstrates how difficult the persons gazing at those others found it to come to grips with what they saw, and has nothing to do with hegemony.