

EUROPEANS IN JAVA IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The composition of the European group in early nineteenth-century Java was more diverse than one might imagine, for it legally included all Christians, many foreign Asians, and all Europeans and Americans whatever their country of origin. No single ideology or purpose for being in Java united these people though it was clear to most of the group's members that they were a small minority of the total population of Java. Politically, socially, and economically the European group was dependent on its ties with the motherland in Europe, which was the Netherlands, with the exception of a brief period from 1811 to 1816 when Britain ruled Java. This dependence made it unlikely that any serious separatist or independence movement would arise among the Europeans in Java. Quite understandably, the concerns of the motherland were more directed toward efforts from outside the colony by other powers than from any efforts within the European group to break the colonial tie. Moreover, the European group in Java was not a self-sustaining community but was totally dependent both upon Europe and upon other groups within Java, such as the Indonesians and the Chinese, for most of its fundamental needs. The European group performed certain specific functions which will be discussed in greater detail below. Above all, it saw itself as fulfilling a leadership function in the totality of Java, but it was not within itself a self-contained entity which could stand alone. This fact did not, however, preclude a general tendency to shape its goals and to formulate individual, personal ambitions as if the European group was a world onto itself. In this paper I will describe what this group looked like and how it behaved socially. In the process of doing this I will indicate how the policies of the motherland toward the colony affected this European group, and finally I will analyze the various socio-economic groups and levels within the European group as these relate to activities within Java and to various aspects of the prevailing colonial policy.

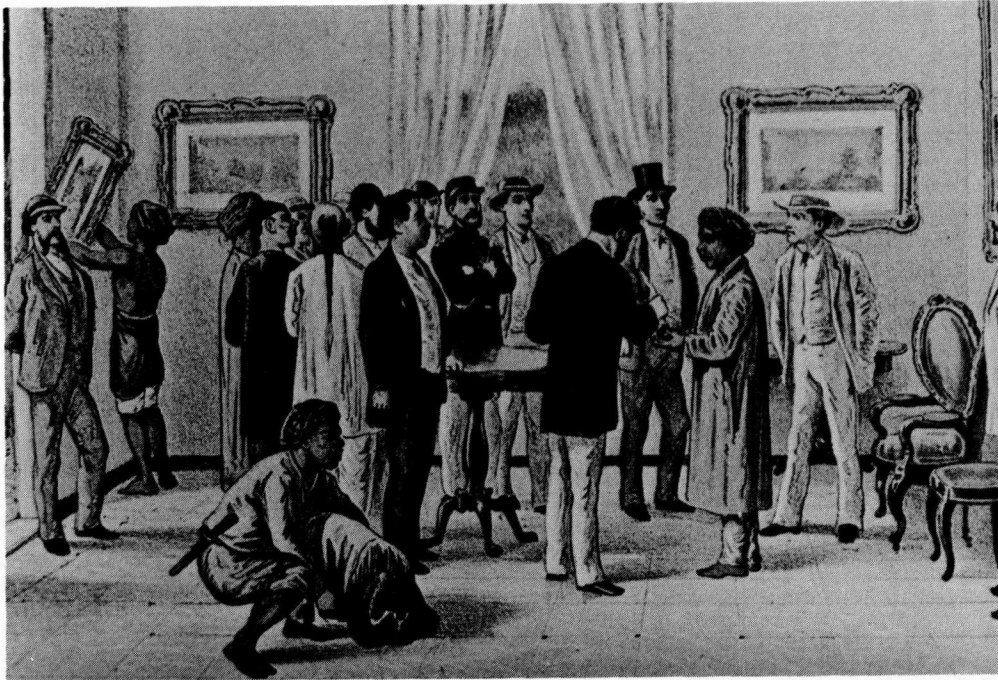
Whatever its legal composition, the European group in Java, as generally understood, was made up of persons who identified with the styles, goals, and predispositions of Western civilization, and who shaped, or attempted to shape, their life-styles to reflect this. Broadly speaking such a life-style dictated that a person be guided by Christian morality, which was believed to have higher civilizing value than the religions or beliefs of other groups; speak a European language or some patois that used numerous European words; wear particular articles and styles of clothing; assume a moral and ethical right to set goals and standards toward which other groups should seek to elevate themselves; and, above all else, feel one's self to be part of the European group. In short, it was more a state of mind and a condition of behavior than a particular legal definition which made one a European in Java in the early nineteenth century. The matter is put this way because it must be stressed that membership in the European group was not based on color of hair, or skin, or other special physical features. Obviously white skin was an immediate identification criterion, but since the European group in Java was mainly of mestizo origin the skin color could vary greatly as could other physical features. Being white, or as near to white as possible,

was considered desirable, especially for women, but wealth and influence were more important determinants of social status within the European group.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century the Europeans who came from Europe to Java were almost entirely male. Women occasionally accompanied their husbands from Europe if the husband's rank was high enough, but such women usually returned to Europe with their husbands. The European group by the beginning of the nineteenth century had evolved principally from European men begetting children by local women, either fully native or mestizo, who might be slaves, concubines, housekeepers, or wives. If the father recognized the child of such a union by giving it his name, or a variation thereof, the child was taken up in the European group and raised by standards considered to be European. Boys born from such relationships were sometimes sent to Europe to be educated; and if they returned to Java were taken up in the government administration or in the management of family lands. Girls born from such relationships were at best privately educated at a lower school in Java and might even attend a so-called French school for secondary education. When of age these girls would frequently marry men newly arrived from Europe who were sent out as bachelors to enter the lower ranks of the civil or military branches of the government. The children of such marriages would repeat this process so that by the early nineteenth century one found mixed-blood 'colonial families' which were powerfully connected in government service and private enterprise. The mestizo women were the fixed or stable element in the European group; frequently they were the conveyers of family property and wealth. They were the ones who established the household patterns of urban Java, and they were the centerpieces of the social and cultural style which came to be identified as 'Indisch': that is to say, Indo-European or Eurasian.

Since this group of European-mestizo women had been born and raised in Java, or other outpost of the East India Company, and had from childhood on dealt with native and foreign Asian groups, both as intimate friends or playmates and as servants or subordinates, their attitudes and values were shaped by this Asian environment. Because they had little or no education these household influences played a major role in shaping their cultural and intellectual world. During the English period (1811-1816) these women were brought more out of the back veranda of the household and into the social world of men: a practice which continued after the restoration of Dutch rule. In their restricted world these women developed habits and styles which caught the attention and drew comment from virtually every traveller from Europe who wrote about what he saw in Java. The society to be seen called itself European, but in contrast struck the European as something he had never seen in Europe.

The cozy intimacy and social hospitality of the European group in early nineteenth century Java gave a closeness to life which is somewhat recaptured today in the urbanized upper strata of Indonesian society. The European group was mainly found in towns and cities, though the planter, administrator, and private landholder often lived far removed from these centers.



Inboedelverkoop. Litho naar J.C. Rappard in W.A. van Rees en M.T.H. Peerelaer, *Nederlandsch-Indië*, 4 dln, 1881-1883.

Even in these outposts, however, the Indisch style was maintained. Since travel was restricted by law, the limited visiting to outlying settlements resulted in a closeness among friends and acquaintances. Patterns of social exchange showed a generosity and expansiveness not known in Europe. Conversational topics focused on local gossip, or the newest journal or letter from Europe. Amateur theatre, music recitals, and poetry readings all had their place. The affairs of the world were known through government news sheets and books and letters from Europe. Local publications were severely limited by available printing facilities and were restricted by a censorship which seems not to have affected imported items. For some Europeans this local censorship was a grievance which after the middle of the century they set about trying to get changed. The interests of most Europeans were focused on their own group; only a few had a close knowledge of the Javanese and Chinese groups. For most Europeans daily contact with these other groups was restricted to relations with servants and vendors so that these other groups were seen in stereotypes such as the 'clever' Chinese and the 'lazy' Javanese. These surface relations were carried on through the medium of the Malay language and served, generally, to reinforce the Europeans' notions of cultural superiority. With occasional exceptions the intergroup relations in Java were decorous and structured. Whatever members of each group may have thought of the others, they observed accepted patterns of intimacy, interchange, and socializing. This conduct allowed each group to obtain what it needed from the others and each to have some measure of contact with the others without feeling that its own life style was being undermined.

As indicated earlier, the government of the motherland through its officials set the policy with regard to colonial matters. With the exception of a few high officials in Java, the European group had little to say about the making of this policy, and had, as a matter of fact, little to say in the management of its own local affairs and interests. As a matter of fact the individual Europeans were permitted

in Java only with the permission of the government and could be removed from the colony if the government so ordered. Since 1799 when the government in the Netherlands took over the management of the colony from the United East India Company, the underlying principle regarding colonies was they must be of benefit to the motherland; in short, they must be profitable. Colonial policies were invariably directed toward setting up means and institutions by which this profitability could be realized. The fiscal situation of the Netherlands was precarious in the early nineteenth century. No end of persons came forward with schemes for making the colony of Java a profitable venture; the fact that this was not achieved until the 1830s would lend substance to the contention that the matter of extracting profits from a tropical possession was not as simple as it appeared.

The European group in Java was expected to work along in advancing the well-being of the motherland to the degree that their own local interests and goals always had to be tailored to the pattern currently being advanced from the motherland. One might assume that personal gain and advantage among members of the European group would conflict with the interests of the motherland in siphoning off profits for expenses in Europe, but there seems actually to have been very little complaining in this direction. The above-noted identification of the European group with European interests was partly at the root of this apparent satisfaction. Probably more significant was the looseness of controls permitted the European group to do rather well for itself while at the same time cooperating in the government's efforts to gain export commodities for sale in Europe.

One area in which the financial interests of the European group in Java seemed affected during the early part of the nineteenth century was in the area of remitting money from Java back to Europe. Remittances were closely tied to the intrinsic worth of the currency in circulation. For various reasons, ranging from sheer stupidity at the one extreme to astute calculation of internal currency needs at the

other, the colonial government pursued a monetary policy which for virtually the entire first half of the century placed the East Indies currencies in a discount position against the Netherlands currency. Paper money had been issued in Java and the Indies since the beginning of the century; this money invariably lost value. New issues suffered the same fate. In 1828 a chartered bank was established which might have resolved the problem were it not for the fact that the government intervened, forcing the bank to issue paper currency representative of copper coinage. The collapse of the bank in 1839 made painfully evident the need for reform. Our question here, however, is how this affected the European community in Java. The answer is that it affected a few big persons a bit, and most of the Europeans in Java hardly at all. The agio on currency remittances was annoying and sometimes could not be avoided, but mostly these difficulties could be avoided by dealing in return cargos or by placing money with English factors, of which there were plenty in Java, and having the funds transferred via England. With the introduction of the Cultivation System in 1830 and the new stimulation this gave the sagging fortunes of the Netherlands Trading Company (NHM), founded in 1824, the government made available a larger, albeit still limited, amount of remittance money through the channel of the NHM. In short, the Europeans in Java might have been adversely affected by the government's dilatory fiscal policy had they not found ways of getting around it.

In the main, therefore, the grievances, particularly of the business sector of the European community, were outweighed by the policies of privilege on import and export duties and the internal advantages given to persons resident in Java. Voices were indeed raised against the commercial policies of the Dutch and the Dutch East Indies governments in the early nineteenth century, but these voices came mainly from Singapore merchants who, quite correctly from their point of view, regarded the Dutch actions as directed against free market trade and especially against the

position of Singapore.

What did concern the European group in Java was the issue of education of their children and their recruitment into the civil service in the Indies. A petition signed by many leading citizens in Batavia in 1848 placed this issue in a primary position; a far distant second was the matter of freedom of the press. The education problem grew in magnitude as the nineteenth century progressed and as the European group in Java developed its own self-consciousness and socio-economic pretensions. The European group wanted public education of a primary and secondary sort of the same quality as was available in Europe. Privately this was available, but the persons who could afford this could also afford to send their children to Europe to be educated. Western-style education was not only important in maintaining the view of the European group that they were culturally European; it also became important in preparing the young men of this group for entry into government service. But the thought of having the Dutch civil administration in Java staffed throughout its ranks by mestiszo boys born, reared, and educated in Java did not fit the image of the government, or better put, the image of some of the government's servants. These people were afraid that this administration would lose its ties with the motherland and with the principles of European civilization. These persons were powerful enough to hold back the expansion of public, Western-style education in Java while at the same time issuing regulations, beginning in 1825, which sought to require a European education for entry into the higher ranks of the Java civil service. The establishment in 1842 of the training academy in Delft for Indies civil servants was a serious blow against the mestiszo boys and led to the 1848 petition. Though not immediately resolved, the education problem gradually resolved itself in the gradual expansion of European-style lower and secondary education in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the impact or lack of impact of various governmental policies and actions upon the European



De sociëteit De Harmonie waar in 1848 de vergadering plaatsvond tegen het monopolie van de Delftse Academie. Litho naar C.M. van der Velde, *Gezigten uit Neêrlands Indië*, 1843-1845.

	Civil Administration and Missionaries	Military	Mercantile and Commercial sector	Planters and Local Business
Upper	Residents, council members, judges and department heads	Generals Staff officers A.D.C.s	Factors Partners	Landowners Planters Business owners
Middle	Assistant Residents Certified officials Missionaries Controleurs	Officers	Post holders Agents Chief clerks	Managers Superintendents Bookkeepers Skilled artisans
Lower	Non-certified officials, clerks, scribes	non-commissioned officers and troops	Apprentices Scribes	Clerks and scribes Assistants

group in Java will become more evident if we consider the way in which the members of this group made their living in the early nineteenth century. To display this graphically I have prepared a chart which has divided the European group into four broad occupational categories, the first two of which can be seen as the government sector, and the other two the private sector. These four categories are each broken down into three levels based on income and/or wealth. This is a rough schema with many imbrications, but I believe it to be roughly correct.

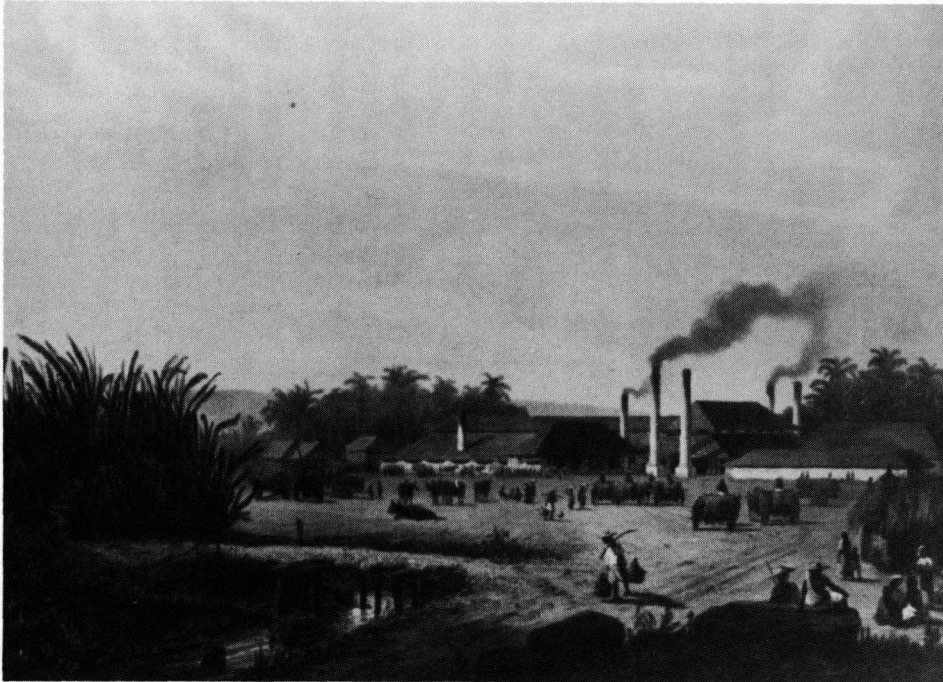
Before proceeding into an analysis of each occupational component of this chart and its role within the European group and within the total context of the activities in Java, a few points should be explicitly mentioned, even though these may be immediately obvious. First, a cursory glance at the chart will confirm what has already been said above about the limited nature of the European group. There are no basic producers, farmers, peasants, laborers, etc., among the group of Europeans. For these functions the European group was dependent upon the Javanese and Chinese groups within Java, on the one hand, and dependent upon products imported from Europe or America, on the other, for its survival and continued functioning. The European group was generally well aware of this dependence and also well aware that its own major function revolved around roles of leadership, governance, control, or management. Second, the distinction between government sector and private sector mentioned earlier should not be taken too literally. Everyone within the European group was in Java at the sufferance of the government - at this time this meant the King - and everyone within the group played a part in furthering the function of making the colony profitable to the motherland. It is simply that the first two occupational groups were salaried and directly employed by the government while the latter two were somewhat, but not exclusively, privately employed and focused upon private profit while fitting into the aims and directions dictated by the government. Third, insofar as there was seepage from Javanese (Indonesian) and Chinese groups into the functions of the European group as displayed on this chart, this seepage was from the bottom and from the right hand side of the chart. What this meant was that the lower economic levels of the European group and those in the agrarian and local business sectors felt the most immediate competition from the Chinese and Indonesians; this in turn produced a greater insecurity and resultant hostility at these levels toward other groups in Java.

Turning now to each of the four occupational groups, the remainder of this paper will be devoted to a descriptive analysis of how each group felt about its role in the Indies, and how its members viewed government policies and saw their own personal position and advancement within their own group as well as within

the total European group and within the total society living in Java.

The civil administration in Java during the early nineteenth century consisted essentially of two types of persons, the old East India Company servants and the government servants sent out after 1800. The former group had been business and trade-oriented, administering only insofar as they had to, and then in the style of the grand Javanese tradition. These persons, such as the Engelhardts, IJsseldijks, van Riemsdijks, etc., had either died or passed out of government service by about 1820. With them passed the tradition of great personal wealth associated with the top levels of Company service. More important for the nineteenth century were the servants who were hired by the government in Europe and were sent out to Java to administer the colony in the tradition of the *fonctionnaires* as seen in the enlightened traditions of the late eighteenth century and Napoleonic period in Europe. Due to the exigencies of war and peace these civil servants were sent out to Java in spurts; from about 1802 to 1804 more than a hundred arrived, and again from 1816 to 1819 a couple of hundred more were sent out. Between these two large shipments a number of English officers and private individuals entered Java and became involved in administrative tasks. Together these persons numbered a few hundred, but their power and authority position within the European group was great. At the highest levels these administrators advised the governor-general and might indirectly influence both policy and the application thereof. Their position and potential for advancement within the service depended in first instance on their connections which might be enhanced through a proper marriage, and in second instance on their ability to survive the afflictions which carried off a large part of the European population in Java. Ability was desirable and helpful but not as important as connections and survival. Since the policies of the colonial government were set down in regulations and ordinances there should have been little leeway for the administrators in which to operate. In actual fact, the administration of Javanese society was conducted principally through the traditional native elite. The application of regulations and ordinances in that area was lax in the extreme, most civil administrators making an adjustment between what was desired and what was possible. With regard to the European group, however, it was easier to live by the stated rules, and that was indeed what happened. For the administrative group the route to success was fairly evident. With a bit of luck and proper connections one could count on a lifetime of service in the Indies leading to a comfortable retirement in Holland or, as many preferred, in Java.

For the newly arrived civil servant in Java the greatest problem was making ends meet financially, for the salaries in the lower ranks were not high and the cost of maintaining an appropriate living standard was



Suikerfabriek op Java in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw. Naar A. Salm door J.C.Grieve jr.

high. Most of the young recruits were quickly sent out of Batavia into the provinces of Java or elsewhere; this tended to relieve the immediate financial need since housing was then provided and the salary adequate to local needs. All civil servants with the exception of the highest ranks came out to Java as bachelors. A good marriage to a mestiszo girl would often help to relieve the financial strain and would usually also tie one into family connections that stretched across all four occupational categories of our chart. The civil servants themselves were not permitted to engage in trade or commerce, but there was little to prevent them from keeping an eye open for opportunities for members of the clan. This close personalism characterized most strongly the European group in Java in the early nineteenth century and was the route through which things got done and careers were assured. From time to time an old hand would rise to the top of such a large group of family connections so that he could dispense largesse almost as a patriarch; such, for instance, was a de Kock, a Merkus, and a Baud.

Government policy, whatever shifts it underwent, tended to have little effect upon the careers of this civil servant group. The arrival of Du Bus in 1826 and the introduction of the Cultivation System in 1830 tended to terminate a couple of careers and temporarily set back a few others, but the capacity for adjustment was immense and people tended to bob to the surface again. It was almost impossible to be so incompetent that one was cashiered out of the service; only absconding with government funds or using one's official function to extort money were causes for dismissal, but for the rest, if one followed government policy in a general way and prepared the required reports one could count on a long and successful career.

The army and navy officers who served in Java during the nineteenth century (whether they were Dutch or English) were also career-oriented. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century many of these men left the military service and entered the government civil service where promotion was faster. This was

especially true after 1816 when the restored Dutch administration in Java was flooded with military officers discharged from the Napoleonic legions and seeking employment. There was enough for them to do in the Indies for the restoration of the Dutch rule called for a good bit of fighting throughout the archipelago and ultimately in Java too. The prevailing tactic of the bayonet charge with the Europeans to the front tended to reduce the problem of numbers so that by the 1830s the chances for promotion within the Indies army became greater. This was especially favorable to the mestiszo men, many of whom had entered military or naval service and who now had an opportunity to advance.

The soldiers and sailors who served in the East Indies were generally the dregs of European society. Drinking, whoring, and fighting made up their lives and death was not long in coming, if not in action then through disease or illness. Numerically the basic military group was the largest segment of the European group in Java, being counted in the thousands, while the other occupational groups were no more than a few hundred. In fact, however, the common soldier and sailor were not regarded by the European group as falling within it except for the occasional decent young man or aspiring mestiszo youth who would generally rise through the ranks rather rapidly since there was opportunity enough. But the rough and tumble lot that made up the ranks of the European military were an embarrassment to the other members of the European group, a sort of necessary evil. These men took up with Javanese or Sundanese village women, begot bastards for whom orphanages and training institutions were established, and fought madly in or out of battle. This was a true foreign legion of men who never expected to see Europe again and who mostly did not.

For the military element within the European group the effects of government policy are to be sought exclusively in the officer category. The chief grievances in the early nineteenth century concerned pay and promotion, both of which came to be somewhat more

satisfactorily regulated after the Java War. Since military service in the Indies, while voluntary, remained part of the Dutch military service, the careers of the military at this period did not necessarily relate only to conditions in the Indies. But many of the men preferred service in the East and, since they had married mestiszo women, often preferred to remain in Java or elsewhere. For those who retired from the military service in Java there were often opportunities in the planter category, as will be indicated below. Also the military service offered opportunities for young men from the mestiszo group for whom training toward this type of career was available in Java and who could rise up through the ranks to high posts. There is no indication of serious military defection from the general directions of colonial policy in this period.

The mercantile and planter categories on the chart, which have loosely been termed the private sector, were financially the top element of the European group. Wealth in the form of cash reserves and usable land was a prime element in the societal values of the European group. Such wealth was held mainly by the mercantile and planter groups in Java. These groups became the axle around which much of the social life of the group rotated, for even though the administrative group had power in the regulatory sense it was really circumscribed bureaucratic power which could assist or hinder activities but could not by itself create the means to wealth. For this the mercantile and planter sectors were needed. As the permanent sector within the European group, this sector provided the wealthiest marriage partners. Around these families the important personal relationships were developed that tied together all the categories of the European group. These sectors of the European group developed the highest forms of the Indisch life-style in their grand homes and country estates, a life-style that many envied but few could afford. Finally it should be noted that the members of these categories numbered but a few hundred.

The European mercantile and commercial sector consisted of import-export houses, agency houses for various types of investment, individual merchants and traders, shippers, postholders, and company representatives. The major members of this group were Dutch and English, and their enterprises were frequently a combination of the two. The easy optimism of the post-Napoleonic years had faded as prices for basic tropical agrarian products proved unsteady; during the 1820s most mercantile establishments were barely holding their own and some became bankrupt or left the East Indian trade. There was not a strong urge to invest more capital in East Indian enterprises since it had not proven to be profitable, and most of the capital available in Java was already committed so that there was little available for expansion. As a group the merchants watched government policy cautiously. The creation of the Netherlands Trading Company was seen as a return to the old VOC monopoly system - which it was not - the efforts of Du Bus to encourage European colonization was cautiously applauded, though few could do anything about it, and the plans of Van den Bosch to involve the government in the agricultural production process were initially viewed with alarm. Within a few years after 1830 when the Cultivation System was introduced, however, most merchants found that their share of the export-import market was growing along with the general stimulation provided production by the operation of the System. For the next thirty years the share of the Java market accorded to the private sector grew along with a growth of the total market so that most members of the mercantile sector of the European group fared very well.

Socially the members of this group arrived from Europe as apprentices or clerks, often with family or business connections to one of the major factors or partners. They came as bachelors and tended to marry

into the same group of mestiszo women as did the administrators and military officers. If they survived the rigors of life in Java long enough and showed some degree of competence, they could look forward to an increasingly responsible position within this sector and eventually might be transferred back to Europe. Through family connections they were often involved in the production of export commodities, and through their close alliances with the Chinese community they were frequently involved in financing of internal trade and coastal shipping. Their tendency toward trade and free markets seems to have prevented them from becoming enthusiastic supporters of the government policy of controlled enterprise, but in the main their complaints remained muted during the early nineteenth century as they found ways to make substantial profits from the system as it worked in practice.

The planter and local business sector of the European group consisted of private landowners, planters under leasehold arrangements, factory and mill operators, and operators of workshops and retail businesses. Each of these had separate experiences with the government and its policies during the early nineteenth century. In general the private landowners dated from the late eighteenth century up to about 1815; after that no more private estates were sold to individuals and the restored Dutch government did not look very favorably upon these persons. This did not, however, prevent the value of their private estates from increasing, especially as urban areas spread onto them and as they were cut up into smaller lots for private upland houses. Some of the old Company servants who no longer fit into the new style administration increased their fortunes through such business arrangements. The planters on leasehold had suffered from government policies in the early 1820s but had recovered their positions in the late 1820s and continued to hold strong economic positions during the Cultivation System which did not encourage more of their kind but did not seek to drive out the already existing leaseholds. The factory and mill operator group was essentially a creation of the Cultivation System which brought the government into the role of planter but allowed the processing of the agricultural product, particularly sugar, to reside in the hands of factory and mill owners. These entrepreneurs worked in first instance for the government with loans from the government, but the surplus product over the amounts required to repay the loans was permitted to be sold in the private sector. These government contractors made fortunes after 1830, fortunes which were plowed back into the expansion of export agriculture throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. Many of these persons were of humble origin, many being retired civil administrators of military men. There were always a few European workshop and storekeepers in Java who worked closely with the import houses, but this group always remained peripheral since the competition from the Chinese group was most intense in this area. The expansion of the agricultural sector after 1830, however, created some opportunity for sale and maintenance of factory equipment, ship and barge construction, and wholesale dealing in products from Europe. Again the stimulation to all economic activity after 1830 helped this sector of the European group and whatever their views about private enterprise may have been, there was little doubt that the government's role in stimulating the economy was helping them to advance.

Whatever differences of aims and opinions may have existed between the colonial policy of the motherland and the ambitions of the Europeans in the East Indies in the first half of the nineteenth century, none were sufficiently focused on single issues to lead to open protest until 1848. That protest, no more hostile than an airing of grievances, centered principally on the issue of schooling and the related issue of opportunities for the mestiszo youth. This issue,

along with others noted in this essay, focused mainly on the need and desire for a viable social group which would represent European culture and have a share in the official governmental goals. That the government for most of the early nineteenth century interpreted its role narrowly with regard to the European group in Java may be attributed to the prevailing statist views of King William I and the position of the colony within the Kingdom. The government, it might be added, did not attach the importance to the European group which that group attached to itself. It was not the aim of the government to promote a separate and viable European society for it was not about to promote an independence movement, but a society did come into being which proved to have stronger internal cohesion than often realized. At some time or other any given part of that European society might disagree with any particular action or policy advanced by the government, but this was not a society that could continue to survive without the colonial connection. Whatever impediments it may have seen in one or another aspect of colonial policy, it always viewed these within the context of the continuing colonial connection. Even the 1848 grievances show this to be the case.

Finally it should be emphasized that the European group within the East Indies established its own milieu which relied heavily upon personal favoritism and on connections both within its own ranks and also with the other groups in Java. In so doing the accommodation made with the policies and aims of the government allowed the life styles of the various groups to continue while satisfying the expectations of the motherland. This accommodation became more difficult as government policies elicited more deep-seated change and modernization toward the end of the nineteenth century. Many of the values and styles of Indisch society endured. They came eventually to be adopted by urbanized Chinese and Indonesians after Indisch society had been replaced by a plural society.