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Summary

This thesis is a history of the discipline of colonial physical anthropology from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. It investigates the practices of Dutch anthropologists and the strategies they used to make racial knowledge about the inhabitants of the Dutch empire. Its main objective is to understand the processes of making knowledge and the connections of these processes with the colonial state and the lives of indigenous Indonesians.

To understand how physical anthropologists made sense of human diversity in the Indonesian archipelago, this thesis looks at the 'on the ground' practices of anthropologists in the Dutch Indies. What were the expectations and anthropological questions that brought them to the Indies and how did colonial localities modify their ideas? To what extent did the new belief of anthropologists in quantifiable knowledge and metric data from skulls or measurements of the living yield new conceptions of the racial make-up of the region? Focussing on the local practices instead of the intellectual results of anthropology brings to the fore how anthropologists struggled with the possibilities and difficulties of measurements and with the presentation of their results.

For Dutch anthropologists the Indies archipelago was a testing ground where the new techniques of anthropology could be tried out. At times however, they were found inadequate to grasp local variety and this thesis aims to show how anthropologists never relied on measurements alone. In addition and as a reaction to measurements as their first strategy in gaining knowledge they also relied on their holistic medical gaze, made in the encounter with indigenous Indonesians.

The fact that bodies were not as quantifiable as expected and that anthropologists hardly ever went beyond recycling common sense racial categorisations meant that the direct benefit of anthropology for the colonial government was limited. That does not mean that the work of physical anthropologists was not intertwined with Dutch colonial presence. A second focus of this thesis therefore is to look at the multiple ways in which anthropology and colonialism came together. As we will see, anthropological practices such as the collecting of human remains were tied up with colonial violence towards indigenous Indonesians.

The protagonists of this study are a group of physical anthropologists who were interested in and specialised in the Dutch Indies as well as hundreds of their research subjects of whom we know much less. This group of Dutch anthropologists has so far escaped

scrutiny, perhaps chiefly because there were hardly any full-time physical anthropologists and their work was not very well-known or influential and never led to any major scientific breakthrough. Added to that, anthropology was situated mostly in the Netherlands Indies, the history of which has become more fashionable only in the last decades. Anthropologists have left behind piles of skeletal material, numbers and tables but few readable books and their historical material is scattered over different institutes and archives. These historical sources form the basis for this book.

Because this thesis is organised by topic rather than chronology, it is loosely arranged into two distinct parts. The first half of this book looks at different methods of physical anthropology related to the anthropologists' need to assemble 'objective' data: collecting human remains, measuring living people and making photographs and plaster casts. The second part continues the analysis by focusing on anthropological questions in the archipelago and the ways in which anthropologists tried to answer them. The first chapter establishes the scope of the book and presents my theoretical reflections on the making of colonial knowledge and the role of racial classifications in anthropology and colonial society.

The second chapter examines the collection of human remains in the Netherlands East Indies. Human remains, especially skulls, were the crown jewels of anthropology and enhanced its status as a true science. The aim of this chapter is to track the changing meanings of these human remains in time and to different people and to understand the encounters that went behind the exchange of skulls and bones. Archival research reveals the colonial infrastructure through which they travelled and the sometimes gruesome stories of capital punishment, military violence and the attempts to end headhunting. The chapter also suggests how anthropologists' attempts to make skulls speak were useless without additional information coming from their circuit of circulation.

The third chapter explores the encounters between Dutch Indies inhabitants and the Dutch anthropologists in measuring sessions. These sessions happened both in supposedly pure and distant regions and in the disciplining structures of the state such as prisons or hospitals. I describe the process of negotiation and coercion that took place before the anthropologists were allowed to measure indigenous bodies and how this influenced their ideas. In the unique case of one anthropologist, an anthropological project was halted because of criticism of his

measurement ethic. This example shows that anthropologists and the colonial state were not necessarily following the same line.

Chapter four focuses on the use of photographs and plaster casts for the making of anthropological knowledge. These visual techniques were hailed as objective but precisely how they conveyed knowledge was not usually articulated. This chapter argues that there were three main ways in which anthropologists thought photographs and plaster casts could be put to use: they were objects to measure, they were used as archetypal examples and they were published in large series to train the eye of the observer. This chapter shows how quantifying photographs and plaster casts never worked in practice but that these visual representations were used to recreate and convey the experience of the individual anthropologist that they were unable to communicate in text and numbers. It shows how anthropologists tried to synchronise quantitative data and qualitative impressions, two strategies of making anthropological knowledge that at times conflicted.

The second half of this thesis follows individual anthropologists and their research questions to understand what drove them to certain regions, what strategies they applied and how the experience reshaped their ideas. Chapter five follows the conception and construction of the idea that the Dutch Indies consisted of two parts, a Papuan-Negroid part in the East and a Malay part in the west. Since Alfred Wallace conceptualised what came to be called 'Wallace's line' between the flora and fauna of the east and that of the west, anthropologists started debating whether a similar line could be found for humans. This chapter follows the research of Herman ten Kate and others in the Timor Archipelago in the 1890s, part of the supposed border region between Papuan and Malay regions. It argues that his conceptions of a clear border region were challenged once he started doing his fieldwork.

Chapter six follows Dutch anthropologist J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan on his journeys to the Indies and back to Amsterdam, where he established the physical anthropology department of the *Colonial Institute*. This chapter analyses how Kleiweg de Zwaan constructed his ideas about the racial make-up of the Dutch Indies. He travelled first in the 1900s to central Sumatra and the island of Nias and one more time to Bali and Lombok in 1939. This chapter argues that rather than concentrating on the difference between white Europeans and indigenous Indonesians, Kleiweg (and his fellow physical anthropologists) made, recycled and supported a discourse of diversity in the archipelago.

Chapter seven deals with the work of anthropologist Hendrik Bijlmer, a student of Kleiweg de Zwaan, who organised expeditions to New Guinea in the 1920s and 1930s. He was fascinated by the possible distinction between the mountain people and the lowland people of the island and this thesis analyses his changing ideas, the influence of his encounters with the Amungme and Moni people and his scientific output in photographs, film and popular and scientific texts. Bijlmer hoped that the mountain Papuans he had studied could be protected by a reserve, an example of how anthropologists took the role of preservationists.

The conclusion ties these chapters together. It emphasises that the daily life of anthropologists in the Indies reveals their reliance on the colonial structures, military networks and unequal encounters between coloniser and colonised. Second, studying the works of physical anthropologists shows that they were interested in explaining the internal differences within the archipelago and based their ideas on the racialised notions of difference that already existed. Third, this thesis shows that Dutch anthropologists tested out the new techniques of anthropology in the Indies, but mostly found them inadequate to explain the variety that they encountered in the region. This meant that anthropologists had to balance their efforts to quantify and their more holistic gaze. Together anthropologists created an imagined archipelago of (internal) difference, whose rigid racial boundaries however were continually undermined once anthropologists started to zoom in on a specific place.