



# MALLABY'S CAR: COLONIAL SUBJECTS, IMPERIAL ACTORS, AND THE REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN POST-COLONIAL EXHIBITIONS

Susan Legêne

## Abstract

*The iconic photograph of Mallaby's car shows the wreckage of the vehicle of British brigadier A.S. Mallaby, which was destroyed in Surabaya in Indonesia on 30 October 1945 during the Indonesian uprising against the restoration of Dutch colonial rule. The streets show military vehicles, in control of the situation; however the billboard with 'Once and forever – The Indonesia Republic' indicate that the nationalists did not give up their political aspirations. The photograph is iconic in the fragile balance it depicts; a balance between violence and negotiations with many stakeholders, symbolised in the balancing car, with its front wheels, hood and left front door up and open. This photograph triggered my investigation into the impact of decolonisation on the representation of colonial subjects and 'imperial actors' in museums in Indonesia and the Netherlands. The image of the car appears in a recorded interview with the two sons of Mallaby, who in minute detail recount the events that resulted in their father's death. The car points at a history of decolonisation that thoroughly changed the strong or weak citizenship entitlements of everyone involved. What role could they play, at the time, and how is this diverging agency now represented in historical or ethnographic displays? This theme is explored with close reference to the scholarly models provided by Asma Abbas in *Liberalism and Human Suffering* (2010), specifically the notion of representation as 'making present again'. I argue that distinct national frames, within which common histories of colonialism and decolonisation today are represented, create notions of 'historical citizenship' that discipline the victims of decolonisation, and refrain from challenging the legacies of the ethnographic categorisation in colonial museum displays.*

**Keywords:** Brigadier Mallaby, Surabaya, Indonesia, decolonisation, post-colonial, photography

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## Biographical note

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An earlier version of this material was presented on the occasion of the project conference 'Disturbing Pasts: Memories, Controversies and Creativity' (20 -22 November 2012, Museum of Ethnology/Weltmuseum Wien, Vienna). To view the film footage on the Open Arts Archive, [www.openartsarchive.org](http://www.openartsarchive.org), follow this link: <http://www.openartsarchive.org/oaa/content/disturbing-pasts-memories-controversies-and-creativity-conference-I>

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Many people around the world remember or know, as second or third generation descendants, the suffering from war, violence, separation, deportation, migration in the post-Second World War decades of decolonisation. Within and beyond Europe, the transformation of the European colonial empires after 1945 also meant an ultimate test for the strength and weakness of the various citizenship entitlements, both of former imperial citizens and of former colonial subjects (Balibar, 2004, p.76). We have hardly yet grasped the suffering at stake in this transformation process, and what losing, gaining and regaining certain citizenship entitlements meant to those involved. This paper will extend this theme into the 21st century. It asks how the human suffering that came with decolonisation was entangled with the issue of citizenship and is represented in museums today. I argue that current museum practice is rooted in colonial histories of representation, which have a problematic relationship to national state formation.<sup>1</sup>

The focus on museums starts from the view shared among many historians that in colonial times museums have been 'tools of empire'. Following this metaphor,

<sup>1</sup> This is an edited version of the Keynote Lecture for the ICMAH/COMCOL Annual Conference 2012 on 'Museums and the idea of historical progress', organised with ICOM-SA in Cape Town, 7.9.2012, a version of which was presented at the *Disturbing Pasts* conference in Vienna in 2013. The full argument with respect to the nationalisation of colonial history after 1945 has been developed in a chapter written together with Martijn Eickhoff for a volume edited by Ann Rigney and Chiara de Cesari, *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin, 2014). Research for this paper was done in the context of the HERA-funded project PhotoCLEC: Photographs, Colonial Legacy and Museums in Contemporary European Culture (2010-2012), by an international team, with Elizabeth Edwards (De Montfort University Leicester, UK) as project leader. See: <http://www.photoclec.dmu.ac.uk>. I thank the reviewers for their feedback on the first version of this text.



museums – and the same goes for world exhibitions and archives – presented and exchanged the images that supported within the European nation states the development of a hierarchical culture of 'thinking like an Empire' (Burbank and Cooper, 2010), which was crucial to the development of imperialism. Exhibition and collection policies played a role in the construction of empire and political practices of inclusion and exclusion, both within the colonies and all over Europe (Cohn, 1996; Cooper, 2005; Legêne, 2007; Leonhard and von Hirschhausen, 2011; MacKenzie, 2011).<sup>2</sup> A revealing example is the 1938 Jubilee exhibition in the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam, which celebrated the 40 years of (imperial) rule of the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina (Figure 1.6.1). The display presented mannequins of the peoples in Indonesia who since 1898 had been 'integrated' into the colonial empire. Each figure represented the specific ethnic features and essential attributes of his or her people. The single objects referred to the fixed collection categories kept in the museum stores, like weapons, textiles, tools, religious objects, jewelry and even human remains (Legêne, 2007; Sysling, 2013).

Following the metaphor of museums as a tool of empire, what happened to museums after decolonisation in the transfiguration of state structures from empire to national states? Did the former tools of empire now turn into tools of the national state or did they find new roles beyond the state? And how did this transformation of state structures impact their exhibition policies and the hierarchical categorisation of their collections implied in ethnography and physical

<sup>2</sup> Eilean Hooper-Greenhill in her seminal book on *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (1992, p.21): 'how colonisation enabled the emergence of a particular range of subject positions, or a particular set of technologies, that together partly accounted for the transformation of existing practices of the collection of material things within a specific geo-historical site.' Current research stresses the interaction between colonisation and collecting, with collection formation as a formative part of colonisation and the development of imperial power relations.

anthropology (Clifford, 1988)? After decolonisation, imperial narratives on colonialism were 'nationalised',<sup>3</sup> but collections were kept in colonial hierarchies. In each country, both in the 'old' nations of the former colonisers in Europe and in the new nations of the former colonised outside of Europe, common histories of imperialism became distinct histories of state formation and nation building.<sup>4</sup> However, this has barely effected the interpretation of cultural artefacts that had been collected and classified in colonial times. Instead, new images emerged in relation to static ethnographic displays: images in dioramas and in exhibitions of photographs that visualise a historical citizenship connected to the national state instead of the colonial Empire. A better understanding is needed of how these new displays in the various parts of the former Empire relate to each other. Visual strategies, including dioramas, black-and-white photographs, and paintings that provide context to objects and mannequins are rooted in an exclusive understanding of human suffering as a legacy of colonialism, which implicitly defines who historically belongs to which of the postcolonial states concerned. The example of exhibitions on the independence struggle of Indonesia (1945-1949) in Indonesia and the Netherlands will be discussed here in order to look for their meaning in understanding historical citizenship. Photographs and dioramas seem to play a major role in turning 'types' into 'people', and people into historical citizens.

It was the 2007 documentary film *Soerabaja/Surabaya* by the Dutch film maker Peter Hoogendijk, that triggered interest in and focus on ethnographic collections, human suffering and the nationalisation of Europe's shared imperial past in current exhibitions on colonialism. The film is about Hoogendijk's mother, Thera André, who was a teenager in Surabaya when on 19 September 1945, one month and two days after the unilateral declaration of independence, young Indonesian nationalists (Pemuda) collided with Dutch civilians in the 'flag incident' at the Oranje Hotel in the harbour city of Surabaya on the island of Java, Indonesia. The Dutch had raised the national Red-White-Blue flag at the Oranje Hotel in order to celebrate the defeat of Japan and what they regarded as the return to a pre-war colonial order. The flag, however, was brought down by the Indonesians, who tore the blue stripe and

raised it in top again as the Indonesian Merah-Putih (Red White) national flag (Figure 1.6.2).

This incident was the start of a heavy fighting that led to the so-called Battle of Surabaya. In the process of negotiating a ceasefire with the Indonesian nationalists, on 30 October 1945, the unprotected car of the highest commander of the Allied forces in Surabaya, Brigadier Mallaby of the 49th infantry brigade of the 23rd Indian Division, became trapped in a crowd, and Mallaby was killed. In the following Battle of Surabaya, which started on 10 November and ended early December 1945, at least 6,000 people died – most of them Indonesians, but also hundreds of Indian soldiers of the 23rd Indian Division. Dutch citizens were hunted by the nationalists and many also died. Others, like Thera André who at the time hardly realised what was happening around her, were rescued through evacuation. Another 200,000 inhabitants of Surabaya fled the city. The Battle of Surabaya was a disastrous episode in a complicated global history in which the end of the Second World War and decolonisation struggle merged. Involved in the events were Indonesians and Indo-Dutch people of mixed descent, Japanese, Indians and Nepalese, Dutch, English and probably various other nationalities. Today in Indonesia, 10 November is a public holiday to commemorate the heroes of the Revolution; in the Netherlands though the events are barely known, a similar position pertaining in the UK, India or Japan.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the history as researched and visualised by Hoogendijk who collected the historical images and undertook the interviews with Dutch, Indo-Dutch and Indonesian participants and eye witnesses including his mother the DVD-version of *Soerabaja/Surabaya* also ran the uncut interview with the two sons of Brigadier Aubertin W.S. Mallaby, Sir Christopher Mallaby and his brother Anthony. They were six and nine year old children when their father died. While speaking about the events of how their father was killed, Anthony Mallaby tells Hoogendijk: 'Getting caught up in somebody else's quarrel is of course the very worst thing that can happen to you.' Asked whether he could explain this 'somebody else's quarrel', Mallaby replies with some emphasis that it was a quarrel 'between the Dutch and the Indonesians, not *our* quarrel, nor between the Indian army and the Indonesians'. The fighting turned into 'a dreadful waste of human resources and human lives', he states, obviously also implicating the death of his own father.<sup>6</sup>

5 On the Battle of Surabaya, see Frederick (1989); Tønnesson (1995, p. 121 and pp. 141-2).

6 Interview fragment Hoogendijk, *Soerabaja/Surabaya* 2007: 27,29 – 30, 17 minutes. More discussion concerning this interview in Legêne and Eickhoff (2014).

3 A case in point is the opening statement by Hooper-Greenhill (1992, p. 1), which, surprisingly, reads: 'What is a museum? Museums are no longer built in the image of that nationalistic temple of culture, the British Museum'.

4 See also McKeown's discussion of the intrinsic relationship between globalisation and the emergence of national borders and its implication for citizenship entitlements of migrants (2004).

These events of history, the memories of the participants, and the documentary film made by Hoogenberg, present various 'stages' of Disturbing Past as discussed in this volume. Mallaby's sons, Indonesian nationalists, Indo-Dutch youngsters and others who have been interviewed, were involved in the events from fundamentally different positions and with a different agency. As in Anthony Mallaby's quotation, they seem to frame their memories of the uprising in Surabaya within the history of 'their' current nation states, although both Thera André and some Indonesians and Indo-Dutch also express their sympathy with the position of the others, and share a certain sorrow with respect to the different forms of loss involved in the violence, separation, forced migration and resettlement. Their experiences will be addressed in the following section where I align them with Asma Abbas's argument in *Liberalism and Human Suffering: Materialist Reflections on Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics* (2010). Following her analysis, the representation of victims and suffering in decolonisation time (as made evident in *Soerabaja/ Surabaya*) might be regarded as a central issue in memory politics with respect to the end of empire and decolonisation, and, as I shall suggest, highly relevant to understand such representations in exhibitions.

### Human suffering

Abbas develops her argument based on Nietzsche and Marx, and in discussion with contemporary feminists, postcolonial scholars and liberal ethical thinkers. She explains that liberalism's representation of human suffering implies an opposition between autonomous actors and passive victims, who are alienated from their own suffering and cannot speak for themselves (2010, p. 134 and pp. 138-9). In the case of the Battle of Surabaya we could think of many such victims: those who died in the streets, who were enlisted in the British Indian or Japanese armies, who were liberated from Japanese internment camps and caught in civil war, and many others. Abbas understands re-presentation as 'making present again'. And she continues: 'If representations make present, then the process involves sensing and making sensible' which can be acting on behalf of, making a presentation of, acting/performing as if (2010, p. 51, italics in original). These three meanings refer to 'roles': to agency and empathy – somebody speaks for someone else, something expresses what is at stake, someone acts as if being someone else. This process is clear in the documentary film. Mallaby's sons narrate in minute detail their reconstruction of the events during the last day of their father's life. The

Indonesians actors fiercely re-enact the uprising in an annual commemoration. Hoogenberg carefully asks his mother whether he has hurt her by this confrontation with historical events she had not fully grasped at the time, by invoking and intervening in her memories. His project in making the documentary film on Surabaya in 1945 is about 'sensing and making sensible' (Abbas, 2010, p. 51) the human suffering in the transformation times of decolonisation. However, the filmmaker cannot turn it into a shared history; he cannot resolve the implicit separation, which is at stake among those involved, for this separation is based in the different citizenship entitlements before and after decolonisation. Thus Hoogendijk's mother is Dutch, Mallaby's sons are British, almost nothing is known about heirs to the British Indian soldiers, Europe is distant and aloof from the annual festive commemoration of the events in Surabaya and Japanese subjects do not register as part of Hoogendijk's filmed historical narrative.

Abbas's analysis focuses on texts and classic theatre plays; she does not address such visual representations in documentary films, museums or exhibitions.

However, her notion of re-presentation as 'making present again' is pertinent to the understanding of those visual and visualizing practices. Making present again implies a dynamic relationship: speaking on behalf of, finding a form, performing or 'voicing' (Abbas, 2010, p. 74, p. 89 and passim).<sup>7</sup> Victims do not act themselves (they did not put themselves on display in imperial museums, did not write imperial histories): what is regarded as human suffering, is, at its core, a process of inclusion and exclusion, which acknowledges certain suffering. Liberalism addresses this process in moral, legal, social historical terms, but ignores suffering outside of this frame of 'liberalism'. Abbas (2010, pp. 67-8) connects this frame of liberalism to notions of citizenship and concludes that 'those whose sufferings do not fit into the regime of liberal mnemotechnics [...] cannot enter liberal politics' or, as argued here, cannot in retrospect enter the museum. Their suffering cannot be made sensible, gets no voice, is silent. In line with Gayatri Spivak's discussion of the silences in historical sources (1988), Abbas suggests that such silences might perhaps 'germinate in conscious responses to, or as an unintended consequence of suffering being diagnosed, interpreted, evaluated, sanctioned, and prescribed' (2010, p. 89). Such universalising diagnoses (which refer to a diagnosis as

7 This observation is put forth with reference to liberal thinkers like Susan Sontag (2003), Judith Shklar (1998) or Martha Nussbaum (1998).

either man-made or as natural disasters),<sup>8</sup> she claims, not only do not allow victims to speak nor do speak for them, but also ‘drown’ the political conversation of who must ‘account for’ the specific human suffering in specific historical situations (2010, p.90, italics in original).

Abbas’s argument is philosophical rather than historical, which leaves us somewhat helpless with respect to the notion of accountancy for human suffering – how, other than through historical discourse, can one address issues of accountability with respect to historical developments? However, her starting point is that human suffering is at the core of transformative politics (2010, p.14), and this suggests that her analysis is relevant to historically specific transition moments; moments like decolonisation and in our case more specifically, like the events in Surabaya in 1945. How and by whom has agency and human suffering in times of decolonisation been represented at the time, and what are its implications today?

The 1938 Jubilee display, that I noted above, with the display of colonial subjects celebrating their subjection to the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina (Figure 1.6.1), shows how, during the heyday of Dutch imperialism, the Colonial Museum in Amsterdam ‘represented’ – or more precisely, *silenced* – colonialism’s human suffering by aesthetically presenting the arts and crafts, the beliefs and knowledge, the traditions and customs of the people. At the time, the display contributed to the alienation and invisibility of human suffering with respect to forced labour or physical abuse, war and political conflict, everyday racism or discrimination. As such it seems to confirm Abbas’ analysis with respect to alienation and exclusion of citizenship. And although today the successor of the Colonial Museum, the Tropenmuseum, in retrospect tries to make colonial human suffering ‘available to the senses and to experience’ by deconstructing the hierarchical collection categories of empire, it struggles with the problem concerning about whom it speaks and to whom (van Dartel, 2009).

This problem has been openly addressed since 2003 at the Tropenmuseum in a new semi-permanent exhibition on colonial society in the Netherlands East Indies, which intentionally addressed and inverted the 1938 Jubilee display. Reflecting on its history as a tool of empire, it deliberately placed mannequins of the colonisers centre stage, with the colonised

8 Abbas refers here to the natural disaster of the earthquake in ‘Lisbon’ (Voltaire) and the man-made disaster of ‘Auschwitz’ as the ‘bookends of the Enlightenment’, as discussed in Susan Neiman (2004) *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History in Philosophy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

people only present in form and roles that express the imperial imagination of the colonisers. This exhibition strategy originated from the argument, at the time, that the museum cannot make the colonised speak for themselves, but only can sensitise their history. By representing the colonial elite’s view on indigenous society, the museum explicitly intends to ‘exhibit’ the *silence* of those that were subjected to colonialism (Figure 1.6.3). This was what the museum has taken from postcolonial scholars including Stuart Hall (1997) and the critical approach to the museum as a tool of empire. Thus as an exhibition on Dutch colonialism, it addressed historical sensitivities and experiences in Dutch society with respect to the colonial past. Indonesian visitors and colleagues responded positively, but also stressed that the same concept and representations would not work in Indonesian society today. Even though the Netherlands and Indonesia ‘share’ a colonial past, the representation of that past, the memories it invokes and the histories it tells, is location specific. A display which invokes the memory of the Dutch colonial history in a monumental memory site in Amsterdam, tells another story than for instance the history of Indonesian state formation on display in the former Dutch East Indian (VOC) Fortress of Vredenburg in Yogyakarta, which is now a World Heritage Site in Indonesia. The stories differ even though the exhibition devices like dioramas and life size mannequins and the objects collected in colonial times in those different locations may be the same.<sup>9</sup> The history of the Dutch empire thus is not only addressed from different national perspectives, it has turned into multiple national histories. This ‘nationalisation’ of the colonial past has become even stronger since in the Netherlands, *historical* discourse on the colonial past hardly includes histories of postcolonial and *contemporary* Indonesia, and for Indonesia the other way around.

This indicates that with respect to colonialism and its forms of knowledge as gathered in ethnographic collections (Cohn, 1996) museums might be in a deadlock. How can ethnographic knowledge be displayed as anything other than as ethnographic knowledge (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2007, p.2 and pp.18–9) with all the connotations of human suffering

9 This argument links the historical events of decolonisation to Hooper-Greenhills more structuralist discussion (with reference to Foucault) of early mnemotechnic skills related to memory loci and (images of) things (1992, pp.91–2), the relationship between knowledge and objects and her argument ‘that material things have no essential identity, that meaning is not so constant, and that the processes of “keeping and sorting” (...) have not remained the same’ (1992, p.196).

implied? In the context of a developing imperialism, ethnography was not about suffering, it was not seen as a man-made disaster caused by colonial agency (Abbas, 2010, p.92), but as a step towards historical progress. This legacy of a progress that denies suffering creates a major dilemma in the Tropenmuseum and the many other ethnographic museums in Europe that once were the uncomplicated tools of empire, teaching the visitors to become imperial citizens themselves (MacKenzie, 2011). One way out of this deadlock might be to radically leave the ethnographic discourse and replace it by a historical discourse. Here, Mallaby's car mentioned in the title, enters the stage, or better: the photographic image of his burnt car (Figure 1.6.4).

## Decolonisation

It is necessary to better understand the connection – the sameness and differences – between ethnographic objects collected and classified in colonial time, and photographs with an ethnographic and/or historical meaning. To this end we should avoid making an absolute distinction between objects and photographs; photographs are objects, and certainly in museums, many object (like the mannequins in the 1938 Jubilee Exhibition in the Colonial Museum) are representations of photographed images (Edwards and Hart, 2004; Westerkamp, 2015). Besides, both content wise, and with respect to their collection histories, photograph collections make evident how museums channelled the transnational histories of colonialism connected to their collections, into national historiographical frames (see also Legêne and Eickhoff, 2014). Two photographs will serve as examples here in order to elaborate on this point. The first is an image of a small group of soldiers from the Netherlands-Indies colonial army who returned after the lost battle against the Japanese invasion for South Sumatra, on 1 March 1942 (Figure 1.6.5).<sup>10</sup> The second is the iconic image of a destroyed saloon car in the streets of Surabaya (scan from postcard for sale in Hotel Majapahit, the former Oranje Hotel), the car in which Mallaby had been killed on 30 October 1945. Both photographs represent many layers of human suffering rooted in decolonisation times, starting with the Second World War.

The photograph of the group of colonial army soldiers, made only four years after the exhibitionary celebration of Queen Wilhelmina's imperial rule, could stand for the 'last' picture in a long series of colonial images that made present to the coloniser the supposedly full devotion and loyalty of the colonised

people. It was taken, however, at a time when the perception of Empire by the colonisers themselves was in a fundamental transition, as a result of the outbreak of the Second World War. After 1940 the very purpose of Empire changed: in order to counter fascism, colonial subjects were no longer imagined as dependents of – as implied by the wax mannequins on display around an empty imperial throne four years earlier – but as supportive to their colonial centres in these times of national crisis.<sup>11</sup> The photograph of the defeated soldiers, orchestrated through the caption that stresses their dedication to fight against the Japanese, illustrates this shift. The perception of agency among colonial subjects further changed when, after 1942, ideas emerged in Europe about federative political bonds between the European nation-states and independent or autonomous former colonies. Allowing the concept of federative bonds, meant a fundamental change in the idea of Empire in Europe. However, a more radical change occurred in the perception of Empire by the nationalists and their followers in the colonies. To them, decolonisation became the only way out of Empire, with the nation state as the only political option to frame this ambition (Shipway, 2008, p.62 and p.235). Mallaby's destroyed saloon car, carefully depicted in front of a spic-and-span billboard with the slogan 'Indonesia Once and Forever' illustrates this fundamental change in the now *de facto* ex-colony.

The two photographs of the soldiers returning from the lost battle against the Japanese invasion and of Mallaby's car, depict historical events and actions, with dedicated actors confronted with situations of life and death, instead of musealised imagined static and lifeless 'subjects'. They also show how the nationalisation of the empire after decolonisation transferred sensitivities and sensibilities with respect to the human suffering that was implied in decolonisation, to specific national histories. In broad strokes: those who died in the streets of Surabaya now belong to Indonesian history, those who were evacuated and shipped to the Netherlands now are part of Dutch history, whereas Mallaby's history is entangled with Allied

<sup>10</sup> NIOD Photograph Collection 48731 – This is also the first opening image in the image photograph collection on the Second World War presented in Kok and Somers (2011).

<sup>11</sup> This is also what the caption to the original photograph of the colonial soldiers confirms. The text at the reverse of the image reads that the soldiers are of various ethnic decent (Javanese, Menadonese, Amboinese, Indo-Dutch and Dutch) that they were very motivated to fight against the Japanese but were not able to withstand the invaders. The caption thus stresses the multicultural character of the colonial army and the preparedness of the soldiers to defend a status quo. We do not know what has happened with the soldiers. Their picture came in the Dutch Second World War archive (NIOD) via the Netherlands Information Bureau in New York. (NIOD Photograph Collection 48731).



warfare and the British Indian armies at the eve of the independence and partition of India and Pakistan, and the Japanese are mostly absent. This split of historical accounts on the end of empire into separate national narratives brings into focus the issue of citizenship again.

Decolonisation turned histories of colonial subjecthood into narratives of historical citizenship. Former colonial subjects have entered the museums of their new states in historical displays that confirm their agency. In Indonesia this is often achieved with dioramas, including those in Yogyakarta that tell the story of the second Dutch Military Aggression against the Republic of Indonesia in 1948, and depicting, for instance the capture of Soekarno by Dutch special forces in 1948 (Captain and Jones, 2010) (Figure 1.6.6). Reminiscent of the static and fixed ethnographic exhibition practice, such dioramas visualise a state-historical narrative, with historical actors that represent individual activities in times of change. Because of this *historical* narrative, these dioramas differ fundamentally from the timeless ethnographic representation of the cultural diversity among the peoples of Indonesia as it still is on display in ethnographic museums both in Indonesia and the Netherlands. The two exhibition practices exist next to each other: historical displays next to ethnographic exhibitions. The one represents the struggle of decolonisation, to the other decolonisation appears irrelevant, based as it is on the timeless ethnography that was part of colonialism and denied the colonised any agency.

In the historical displays new mechanisms of exclusion and invisibility emerged. Whereas the Indonesian dioramas on decolonisation history do not represent the people like Thera André or the Moluccan soldiers of the former Royal Dutch Indies Army, who voluntarily or by force left the ex-colony in the process of decolonisation, these histories did in fact enter Dutch museums in new historical displays. These were based on donations to those museums by these immigrants to the Netherlands of their precious ethnography and the photograph albums of their lives in the colonies. With these objects and images of a colonial past in the Netherlands Indies, the postcolonial immigrants inserted their overseas history into a contemporary Dutch history based in Europe. In Indonesia, except for references to the Dutch East India Company, the past of those (groups of) people who did not become citizens of the new Indonesian state, but left in the process of decolonisation, is not represented in museums. Their emigration is not addressed in recent historical dioramas in Indonesia, whereas in colonial times European and Asian-Dutch populations

in particular were never 'collected' for ethnographic displays in the Netherlands Indies either. As a result, the history of these groups is only represented in the Netherlands, where it is framed as a history of immigration into Dutch history (Figure 1.6.7). This offers a telling example of a shift in historical framing in times of transition: from an implicit overseas history of the empire to an explicit history in a national past. This shift in the framing of memories on decolonisation, which Hoogendijk also discusses with his mother and which is connected to large-scale migration and change of citizenship entitlements, represents another aspect of human suffering. It is about a historical citizenship that cannot easily be diagnosed as a man-made disaster, because its legitimacy once rested upon an idea of modernisation and historical progress.

It is striking that recently, suffering through man-made disaster in transitional times has been put on display by means of photographs of victims, for instance in military confrontations in colonial and decolonisation struggle, both in Indonesia and in the Netherlands. An example is the exhibition at the Indies Remembrance Centre in Bronbeek near Arnhem, the Netherlands. This exhibition tells the story of the postcolonial immigrants who had to leave Indonesia and came to the Netherlands (Figure 1.6.8). Some photographs deal with the decolonisation struggle. In contrast to the iconic photograph of Mallaby's balancing burnt out saloon car in an empty street with military vehicles, these photographs in the Indies Remembrance Centre explicitly show rows of Indonesian rural village (*desa*) people who have been executed by the soldiers under Dutch command. So, what do these displays of the violence of decolonisation 'do' in terms of understanding decolonisation? The photographs are presented as hard facts that may break the silence in Dutch politics and historiography with respect to unlawful violence committed by various parties in the era of decolonisation. As such, they have the potential to trigger debates on law, justice, reparation. However, I am not sure how to interpret the role photographs are made to play in this debate within the context of the colonial archive at large. Is displaying the dead bodies of those *desa* people who have been killed, and thus effectively made the 'last' passive victims of empire, a way to acknowledge them as the historical citizens of the postcolonial nation state? Is showing their pictures a way to inscribe them – and all those subjected people whose artifacts and human remains were collected in ethnographic museums – into the history of empire as active citizens, just as the soldiers who fought with the Japanese (Figure 1.6.3) finally became individuals instead of the ethnic types as displayed in Figure 1.6.1? The



exhibition suggests that the *desa* people share a history with the immigrants who came to the Netherlands during the same events.<sup>12</sup> This suggestion has a major historiographic impact.

Photographs, understood in transnational frames beyond the national background of the institutions in which they are kept, may enable us to see continuities and changes in the context of representation more clearly and more fully understand how the nationalizing of the imperial past after decolonisation has created new mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, which silence human suffering in the process of state formation in order to naturalise the international order of national states. They may help to open up the legacies of ethnography by a new historical understanding of the transition processes in colonial

and decolonisation times and its relationship to the historical meaning of the ethnographic collections in our museums. And they may help to lift the 'burden' of the violence implied in decolonisation from the shoulders of its victims.

Colonial relationships, as contained in ethnographic collections and colonial photographs, refer to human suffering of people who were denied access to liberal politics. This elaboration on exhibition practices with respect to Indonesia and the Netherlands suggests that representations of the colonial past in museums today could raise awareness of another diagnosis of human suffering, as an extension of the diagnostic categories of natural and man-made suffering: that is a suffering caused by the many explicit and implicit distinctions made in contemporary society between historical citizens as the nationals of one and the same, or of different nation states (MacKeown, 2008).

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12 Cf. Abbas (2010, p.92): 'One is bound to find remarkable continuities, and grounds for radical solidarities, between the experiences and political desires of those marginalized and betrayed along any avenue of global capitalism.'



Figure 1.6.1 The symbolic throne of Queen Wilhelmina surrounded by peoples of the Netherlands East Indies, exhibited at the Jubilee Exhibition in the Colonial Museum in 1938. The mannequins represent, from the left to the right: a Dayak man, a man from Bali, a warrior from Nias, a Dayak warrior (Eastern Kalimantan), another man from Nias, a Toraja warrior; a Balinese woman, a Toraja woman. At the left in front of the throne sits a woman (possibly from Toraja) and at the right a Batak man. At the background left a woman from Lampong, the woman at the right side is unidentified, possibly she is a Dayak (Western Kalimantan). Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. Collection nr. 10000091

See also: <http://www.tropenmuseum.com/smartsite.shtml?ch=TMU&id=7523>

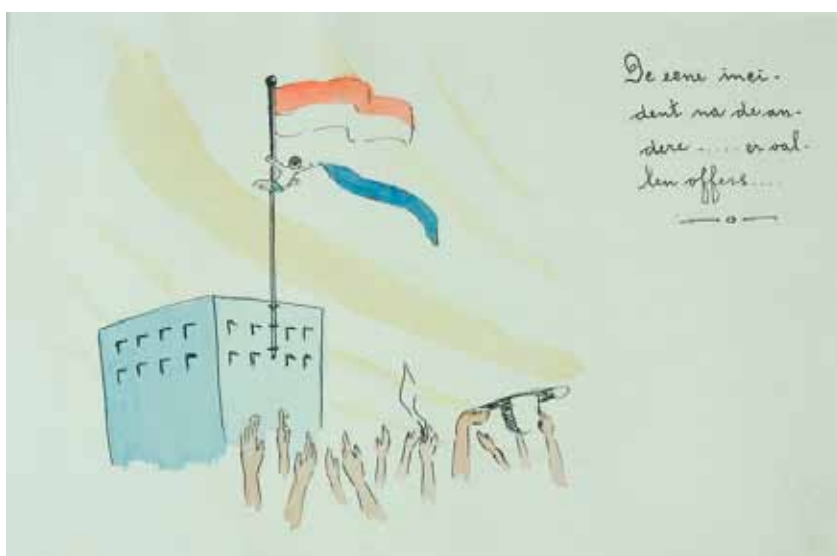


Figure 1.6.2 Drawing of a 'Flag incident' as also happened in Surabaya on 19.9.1945. Young Indonesian nationalists turn the Dutch national flag into the Indonesian Merah-Putih (Red White) national flag. The caption to the drawing reads: 'One incident after the other ... people fall victim'. Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam. Collection nr. 5653-6



Figure 1.6.3 Overview of a part of the 'Colonial Theatre' at the semi-permanent exhibition on the Netherlands East Indies at Tropenmuseum, which mirrors the 1938 Jubilee Exhibition at its predecessor, the Colonial Museum. In this display, mannequins refer to colonial historical archetypes, like from the left to the right: the artist (in this case Charles Sayers), the Governor General (here B.C. de Jonge), the colonial housewife (a fictional character composed from various memoirs), the tobacco planters/founders of the Colonial Institute (in this case, J.Th. Cremer). The mannequin at the centre of the photograph is 'Toean Anwar', the main protagonist in a short novel by a Dutch colonial author. Not visible are a colonial soldier (again a main protagonist in a short novel) and a nurse, wife of a missionary (and again a fictional character composed from various memoirs). Photograph: Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, Irene de Groot 2003.

Also see: <http://www.tropenmuseum.com/smartsite.shtml?ch=TMU&id=7523>



Figure 1.6.4 The destroyed Lincoln sedan in the streets of Surabaya. In this car the British brigadier A.S. Mallaby was killed on 30 October 1945. At the other side of the street are the 'Gedung Cerutu' (sigar building) and the 'Internatio' building, at the Willemssplein (now Jalan Taman Jayengrono). Source: Peter Hoogendijk – see also Imperial War Museum IWM SE-5865 November 1945. See also the trailer of Hoogendijks documentary at: <http://www.dammasfilms.nl/?c=122&id=46>





Figure 1.6.5 Soldiers return from a battle in South Sumatra at the first day of the Japanese invasion, 1.3.1942. The caption at the reverse side of the photograph reads that the soldiers are of various ethnic descent (Javanese, Menadonese, Amboinese, Indo-Dutch and Dutch) that they were very motivated to fight against the Japanese but were not able to withstand the invaders. The caption thus stresses the multicultural character of the colonial army and the preparedness of the soldiers to defend a status quo. We do not know what has happened with the soldiers. The picture is now in the Dutch Second World War archive (NIOD) in Amsterdam. Collection: NIOD 48731.



Figure 1.6.6 Soekarno arrested by the Dutch special forces in Yogyakarta, 19.12.1948. Diorama in Museum Monumen Yogya Kembali (Museum and Monument to commemorate the struggle in and the recapture of Yogyakarta). Between February 1946 and August 1950 Yogyakarta was the capital of the Republic of Indonesia. (Photograph by the author, 2009)



Figure 1.6.7 Collage with photographs of arrival scenes at the Indies Remembrance Centre at Bronbeek near Arnhem, the Netherlands, which opened in 2007. (Photograph by the author, 2011) See also: <http://www.indischherinneringscentrum.nl/> and [www.hetverhaalvanindie.com](http://www.hetverhaalvanindie.com)



Figure 1.6.8 Photographs and historical film footage are used as well to address violence and human suffering in colonial and decolonisation times, at the Indies Remembrance Centre at Bronbeek near Arnhem, the Netherlands, which opened in 2007. (Photograph by the author, 2011) See also: <http://www.indischherinneringscentrum.nl/> and [www.hetverhaalvanindie.com](http://www.hetverhaalvanindie.com)

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