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EMPIRE, COLONY, GENOCIDE

Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History

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A. Dirk Moses



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- Chapter 18 -

THE BRIEF GENOCIDE OF EURASIANS IN INDONESIA, 1945/46

Robert Cribb

Introduction

During the closing months of 1945 and the first months of 1946, a small and little-known genocide took place in Indonesia. The victims were members of Indonesia's mixed-race Eurasian community, the perpetrators were ethnic Indonesian nationalists, and the context was the difficult aftermath of the Japanese occupation of the Netherlands Indies that included the declaration of Indonesian independence in August 1945 and attempts by the Dutch to restore the colonial authority of the Netherlands Indies. The genocide was one of history's small number of genocides directed against a settler community at a time of dramatic political change. They were part of a process by which indigenous peoples recovered control of their own country from outside rulers after an interval of imperial domination.

Every genocide has its own characteristic forms of horror. The Indonesian genocide of 1945/46 was not an affair of gas chambers and methodical extermination like the Holocaust, but rather a time of unpredictable violence carried out with deliberate savagery and intimidation. The victims were seized in their houses late at night, ambushed as they walked to the morning market, hauled off trains in broad daylight. They were seldom held long in detention by their killers. Instead, they were murdered quickly, stabbed, strangled, beheaded, or hacked to death, and their bodies were buried in hastily dug graves, tipped into wells, flung into rivers or canals, or simply left on the spot as a frightening reminder to passers-by.

The agents of the genocide were a multitude of independent militias, known at the time as *badan perjuangan*, "struggle organizations," which

sprang up in the days and weeks after the independence declaration. Fiercely proud of their country's fresh independence, they had neither patience nor understanding of the national leadership's cautious strategies. Rather, they were convinced that the passionate commitment to the cause and a willingness to die for their country would overcome all obstacles.¹ There was much of a swaggering bravado among these militias: in order to put the humiliation of colonization behind them, they cultivated an air of arrogance and confidence. Intensely suspicious of Dutch plots and enormously sensitive to slights and insults, they reacted violently to perceived threats and challenges. To Westerners still smarting from the deliberate humiliations that had been heaped upon them during the Japanese occupation, this swagger was an extra source of shame.

In the memories of survivors, the violence seemed all the worse because it came after nearly three and a half years of Japanese occupation in the Indonesian archipelago. The Japanese, in a hurry to set their mark on their new territory, had consigned the most European-looking of the Western population to internment camps, where conditions had ranged from tedious to appalling. The bulk of the Eurasian population had not been interned, but life outside the camps had been terribly difficult as well. Acute shortages of food, clothing, and basic utensils,² together with the insecurity produced by a nervous and trigger-happy occupation force, made the occupation years a time of prolonged difficulty for most Eurasians, but their hopes for better times after the Japanese had left were shattered by the outbreak of the nationalist revolution.

As this brief description suggests, the genocide of the Eurasians in Indonesia was not a state-sponsored affair. Although the Indonesian republic had been formally created on 18 August 1945, a day after the independence declaration, for weeks the new state barely existed as an institution. Only gradually did officials in government departments transfer their allegiance from the Japanese occupation authorities, and only on 5 October did the leaders of the republic finally declare the creation of an army. This diffidence arose from the desperate desire of President Sukarno and other nationalist leaders to avoid what they feared would be an unwinnable military struggle with the Dutch. Instead, they hoped that the Atlantic Charter, which had promised self-determination for all subject peoples, would deliver them a smooth transition to independence. Thus they sought to appeal over the heads of the Dutch to the victorious Allies by promising an economy open to Western business interests and a peaceful social environment to allow postwar reconstruction to begin at once. For the national leaders of the republic, therefore, there was no reason to want a massacre that would only reinforce the Dutch argument that the republic had to be crushed if law and order were to be restored.

Whether they had emerged from the camps or simply tried to pick up the thread of their old lives from the old residences, the Eurasians of the Indies were profoundly shocked by the violence they encountered. Indeed, one of the striking features of late colonial European and Eurasian society was its relative lack of anxiety over native violence. The prewar Netherlands Indies had cultivated a myth of peace and order in the colony,³ a perception that benevolent Dutch development policies in the twentieth century had aroused a profound sense of affection for the colonial rulers amongst the vast majority of Indonesians. The Dutch therefore attributed the violence largely to the experience of the Japanese occupation when, in their eyes, their former subjects had been inculcated with a hatred of all things Western and with a "bushido" culture that glorified violence.⁴ For these observers, the violence irremediably tainted the republic, making it unfit to be the bearer of national aspirations. In scholarly studies of the nationalist revolution, by contrast, the violence against the Eurasians has been largely ignored, regarded as a marginal phenomenon, a regrettable but minor and understandable consequence of Indonesian resentments accumulated during the colonial era.⁵ The violence of the militias toward their victims in 1945/46 was a profound shock to the Western community in Indonesia, and the almost universal explanation offered at the time was that it was a consequence of malignant brutalizing policies carried out by the Japanese occupation forces.

But scholarship no longer treats any violence as unproblematic, and it is important to understand the violence inflicted on the Eurasians, both as an element in the history of violence in Indonesia and as a case of indigenous revenge against a settler community. The puzzle in the case of the Eurasians of Indonesia is that there was very little sign of violent antagonism towards Eurasians in colonial Indonesia. It is hard to present the violence of 1945/46 as the consequence of long-simmering, specific antagonisms. By contrast, the violence that took place against Chinese residents of Indonesia slightly after the period of violence against the Eurasians is easy to locate in a longer history of indigenous resentment of the Chinese.⁶

Rather, the genocide of the Eurasians was a consequence of a two-stage process. First, during the course of the twentieth century, the Eurasian community in the Netherlands Indies parted company with the Indonesian nationalist movement that it had helped to found. Then, at the time of Indonesia's independence declaration, the weakness of the two aspirant states in the postoccupation archipelago brought the issue of loyalty to the fore, precisely at a time when Eurasians were especially vulnerable to attack.

Colonial Society and Ethnic Categories

To understand that the violence of 1945/46 was not simply a consequence of colonial-era social antagonisms, it is necessary to begin with an exploration of the tangled racial politics of the Netherlands Indies. The Dutch colonial order, from its origins in the commercial ventures of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) in the seventeenth century until its overthrow by invading Japanese forces in 1942, consistently divided its subjects into ethnically defined groups. The categories into which people were classified and the practical social and legal significance of that classification changed repeatedly during the long colonial period. In the late colonial era, however, the dominant system of classification divided residents of the Indies between three categories: "Europeans," "Natives" (*Inlanders*), and "Foreign Orientals" (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*).⁷

Many scholars have been inclined to see these categories as having a profound effect on Indonesian views of the world, introducing a fundamental racial consciousness to societies where such consciousness had not previously existed, and dooming the Foreign Orientals in particular (notably Indonesia's substantial Chinese minority) to exclusion from "nativeness" and thus ultimately also from being accepted as Indonesian. These scholars have given less attention to the fact that the sharp legal classification of Netherlands Indies residents into three ethnic categories concealed not only a complex array of ethnic identities in the colony, but also ambiguities and blurred boundaries. Formal ethnic status was principally a function of paternal ancestry. That is to say, the child of a European man automatically acquired European status, provided either the mother was also European or, if there was no marriage, the father recognized the child as his own. Until 1838, the colonial authorities had banned interracial marriages, but European men had routinely lived with indigenous and other Asian women, and the children of these relationships had European status as long as they were recognized by the father. After 1838, when interracial marriage became legal, wives took the ethnic status of their husbands. The category "European" (*Europeaan*), therefore, included not only people of unambiguously European birth and descent but also many people with a high degree of indigenous ancestry. It also encompassed Japanese, who became a significant presence in the commercial and service sectors in the late nineteenth century and who achieved "European" status in the early twentieth century after a long diplomatic struggle by Japan.⁸ *Europeaan*, too, were people of non-European descent who had been legally assimilated (*gelijkgesteld*) to European status.⁹

Even setting aside the Japanese and the *gelijkgestelden*, the category *Europeaan* was not only enormously diverse but also divided into several loosely defined and overlapping subcategories. European newcomers to the colony were commonly called "import-Europeans"; if they expected to leave the colony in due course, they were called *trekkers* ("movers"), if they chose to stay there, they became *blijvers* ("stayers"). Those who were more purely European in culture and appearance were called *totoks*. In the early nineteenth century, the colonial authorities distinguished between *mestiecen* (mestizos, i.e., Europeans of mixed race) and *creolen* (creoles, i.e., those who were locally born of exclusively European ancestry), but by the late nineteenth century these terms had largely disappeared in favour of *Indo-Europeaan* (sometimes abbreviated as *Indo*), which generally implied mixed ancestry but that could also include *totok blijvers* who had adopted significant elements from the local cultures. There was often a social distinction between *totoks* and *Indos*, but the terms of this distinction varied enormously. In parts of eastern Indonesia such as Ambon and Kisar, Indo-Europeans were distinguishable from Christian indigenes only by their surnames.¹⁰ In parts of Java, *Indos* were a liminal group, seen as combining European self-confidence with "native" superstition, fecundity, hygiene, and shiftiness. Yet they could also be portrayed as classically small-minded burgers, conventional in their tastes, conservative in their values, and verging on racist in their views of the world. Depending on circumstance, physical appearance, accent, fluency in one or more indigenous languages, family name,¹¹ occupation, and cultural attributes such as clothing and food, might or might not be defining features of a local *Indo* identity.¹² The introduction of steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 led to a sharp increase in the number of European women traveling to the Indies, and therefore to a sharpening of the racial distinction between pure Europeans and the mixed-race community. Nonetheless, the distinction between different sections of the European community was never formalized and never absolute.

"Foreign Orientals" were an even more diverse community, encompassing the many different communities and individuals who had settled in the Indies from other parts of Asia. The most important group within this broad category was the Chinese, and colonial statistics often made a distinction between Chinese and "other" Foreign Orientals, of whom the most numerous were Indians and Arabs. All these groups themselves, however, were internally divided along a variety of cultural, religious, and class lines. In particular, different degrees of assimilation to indigenous cultures gave rise to a distinction between relatively unassimilated *totoks* or *singkeh* and the more thoroughly indigenized *peranakan*, a distinction comparable to that between *totoks* and *Indos* amongst the Europeans. The

Chinese were also divided into dialect groups and the Indians were divided both regionally and between Hindus and Muslims.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that those whom the Dutch classified as *Inlanders* were not all indigenous in the strict sense of the word. As we have seen, during the colonial era, the child of a European father and an indigenous mother became European only if formally recognized by the father. This recognition was by no means always forthcoming, and so there was a significant proportion of people with indigenous status who nonetheless had some European ancestry and who were well aware of the fact. Marriages between native men and mixed-race women with European status were not uncommon and had the same consequence. Even before the colonial era, moreover, during the great age of commerce in Southeast Asia beginning in about 1200, Chinese, Indians, Persians, Arabs, Siamese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Armenians, and many others had settled permanently in coastal cities and towns of the archipelago, often marrying local women and leaving progeny who were gradually absorbed into local societies. As a consequence, a great many "indigenous" Indonesians possessed some foreign ancestry.

Whereas the simple tripartite division of the legal system gives the impression of a society segmented into large, relatively coherent racial blocks, the social reality was very different. Skin color in all its shades, along with eye shape, created a finely gradated social hierarchy that was always modified to some extent by class, culture (including religion), and wealth. The Netherlands Indies legal system, privileging paternal ancestry over physical signs of race, saw nothing anomalous in the fact that a "European" might have considerably darker skin than a "native." Nor, at least after 1838, did the law place any obstacle in the way of interethnic marriage. Law and social prejudice never coincided closely in colonial Indonesia.

Nor, it seems, was the pattern of daily racial discrimination in the Netherlands Indies as pervasive as that in apartheid South Africa or in the United States South before the civil rights movement. There was no formal segregation of the races in public transport or in places of public entertainment such as swimming pools and theaters. Occasional mention has been made of signs that announced that certain public facilities were "forbidden for dogs and natives" (*verboden voor honden en inlanders*), but no photographs of these signs seem to exist and they are strikingly absent from contemporary critiques of Dutch colonialism. It seems likely that the anecdote has been transplanted from elsewhere, perhaps China, and has taken on life as an urban myth because it seems consistent with the character of colonialism.¹³

Netherlands Indies society was profoundly unequal in terms of wealth and power, but these disparities did not closely follow ethnic lines. A striking feature of the photographs of public events such as horse races and dances

from the first half of the nineteenth century is the significant sprinkling of Chinese and indigenous faces in the crowds.¹⁴ None of this is to disregard the reality of ethnic consciousness and ethnic discrimination in the Dutch colony. Europeans were the lords of society and indigenes were not. The system of government was autocratic and at best paternalistic. Public expenditure was perceived to favor the interests of the Europeans and, even when it was ostensibly for the interests of Indonesians, to reflect a European sense of priorities. Color and culture created a painful hierarchy within the European community. Eurasian girls, above all, were under pressure to marry men with paler skins to "rectify," as they sometimes put it, the mistake of their ancestor in marrying, or coupling with, an Indonesian.¹⁵ The overall picture of ethnic identity and ethnic classification in the colony was one of baroque complexity and overlapping categories. In short, the ethnic categorizations of the colonial era do not point to the violence of 1945/46.

I do not want to discount the significance of ethnic discrimination in colonial Indonesia. This system had given rise to a range of discriminatory practices that were amongst the most important grievances against the colonial system. Nonetheless, the structure of ethnic categorization in the Netherlands Indies did not separate the Eurasians as a special category symbolic of the system's injustices to the poor who eventually spearheaded the massacres of 1945/46. One would not have expected such intense hostility to Eurasians in 1945/46 simply on the basis of racial prejudices simmering in the late colonial order. Prejudice did simmer, but there is no evidence of a vast reserve of animosity that might explain the genocide.

Not only was the genocidal violence against Eurasians in 1945 unprecedented in Indonesian history, it was also without sequel. Although civil violence remained at a relatively high level in Indonesian society until the military-imposed order of the Suharto era, Eurasians were never again specially targeted as victims. The Dutch citizens who were expelled from Indonesia in 1959 as part of the shrill nationalism of the Sukarno era were removed because of their nationality; the many Eurasians who had adopted Indonesian citizenship suffered no such discrimination. And today, although Eurasians are as subject to stereotyping as other Indonesian ethnic groups (they are seen as being mainly entertainers, criminals, and policemen), there is no hint of the venom that blights attitudes toward Indonesia's other contentious exogenous community, the Chinese Indonesians.

Ethnicity and Indonesian Nationalism

Although the urbane nationalists who created the Indonesian republic in August 1945 may have been innocent of the massacres, the exclusion of

Eurasians from the Indonesian polity was not simply the work of men of violence lurking in bamboo groves close to European habitations. The Indonesian constitution, drafted in the difficult weeks before the end of the Second World War in 1945, contains a curious contradiction. On the one hand, the document specifies that there shall be no legal discrimination between Indonesian citizens.¹⁶ This formulation may appear worthy and unremarkable but in fact it marked a revolutionary transformation by ending at a stroke the complicated system of ethnic discrimination that, as we have seen, had underpinned the legal system in the Netherlands Indies for more than three centuries. The abolition of ethnicity as a legal category, therefore, was an unequivocally revolutionary act by the nationalists who declared Indonesian independence in 1945.¹⁷

On the other hand, the abolition of ethnic classification in the 1945 constitution was incomplete. Article 6.1 of the constitution contradicted the bold new principle of equality by specifying that only those who were *asli*, a term normally translated as "indigenous," were eligible to become president of the republic.¹⁸ This small gesture has generally attracted little attention in analyses of the history of ethnic relations in Indonesia, but it is significant as the first formal act of ethnic discrimination by independent Indonesia. In view of the troubled history of ethnic relations and the persistence of gross ethnic discrimination in the archipelago since independence, despite the formal abolition of ethnic classification, explaining Article 6.1 may help us to understand both the genocide of Eurasians in 1945 and the complex nature of ethnic prejudice in Indonesia more generally.

In the context of Indonesian nationalism, moreover, the fact that Article 6.1 of the constitution excluded nonindigenes from the possibility of contributing a president to the new nation is puzzling. The idea of Indonesia, after all, was determinedly multiethnic and multireligious, encompassing hundreds of indigenous ethnic groups, including Papuans who were physically very different from the Austronesian majority. Especially in the years around the declaration of independence, moreover, the idea of Indonesia was a modernizing one, open in principle to ideas from anywhere in the world. Of course, many different ideas contended for the soul of Indonesian nationalism, including Islam and Marxism, but nationalist discourse was generally free of overt racism and of appeals to blood and ancestry of the kind that has often underpinned Western racism and nationalism.

Nonetheless, this admirable universalism of the Indonesian nationalist ideals concealed elements of racial antagonism. Since early in the colonial period, there had been tension between metropolitan Dutch and locally-born Eurasians. In 1721, an alleged conspiracy by the Eurasian Peter Erberfelt was suppressed with special brutality. The first modern political party

in the Netherlands Indies, moreover, was the *Indische Partij* (Indies Party) founded in 1911 and led by a Eurasian, E. F. E. Douwes Dekker, and two Javanese intellectuals, Suwardi Suryaningrat and Tjipto Mangoenkoesomo. The party's key slogans were "the Indies for those who make their home there" and "the Indies free from Holland." The party's program was progressive and particularly hostile to aristocratic authority.¹⁹ Tjipto was famous for having suggested that the archipelago would be better off if the Javanese language, with its multitude of levels of speech that made it virtually impossible to conduct a conversation without one side being designated as superior to the other, were extinguished.²⁰

The emergence of a mixed-race community as leaders of a local settler or creole nationalism was no unusual phenomenon. It had been characteristic of Latin America, bore important resemblances to settler nationalism in Australasia and North America, and was the central element in anti-Spanish nationalism in The Philippines. There the term "Filipino," which was originally applied to Spanish born in the colony, as opposed to the *peninsulares* from Spain itself, expanded in meaning to encompass all residents of the archipelago, including the indigenous peoples who had previously been called *Indios*. The *Indische Partij*, with its commitment to social democracy and its repudiation of ethnicity as a basis for nationality, lay firmly in this broad tradition.

In the course of the twentieth century, however, two main factors worked to marginalize Eurasians from the developing Indonesian nationalist movement.²¹ First, the colonial authorities, acutely aware of the fact the creole nationalism in The Philippines had come close to toppling Spanish power, and probably would have done so if the Americans had not stepped in and toppled it themselves, took sharp repressive measures against the *Indische Partij*, exiling its leaders and restricting its activities. More important, in constructing a rationale for continued colonial rule in the twentieth century, when developments all around the Netherlands Indies were pointing in the direction of a colonial retreat, the Dutch increasingly portrayed their rule as being essential to protect vulnerable groups in Indies society from exploitation or oppression by other parts of the same society. Whereas the rationale for colonialism in earlier times had been the alleged benefits it brought in terms of civilization, economic development, or welfare (especially peace, law, and medicine), the rationale of the late colonial state was more negative. It involved identifying both "dangerous" groups in society and the vulnerable groups that might be their victims. This protective rationale was manifest in a growing attention to the welfare of supposedly "primitive" indigenous peoples of West New Guinea, to the preservation of traditional Hindu culture and religion in Bali, and to the protection of indigenous Indonesians from Eurasians and Chinese.²²

The construction of Eurasians and Chinese as dangerous to the rest of Indonesian society took different paths. The classification of the Chinese as a group distinct from the Dutch ruling elite had much older roots than the sharp social distinction between Eurasians and metropolitan Dutch. The Chinese, moreover, had been a central element in the colonial system of revenue farms, in which the right to collect tax in a particular segment of the economy was auctioned off to the highest bidder, who then used private gangs of enforcers to extract tax from the public. Working at the sharp edge of colonial exploitation, these Chinese (though a tiny minority of the total Chinese population) were deeply hated. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the revenue farm system had been done away with in favor of more modern systems of tax collection, but the Dutch now drew increasing attention to the supposedly destructive effects of Chinese moneylending in the countryside. Chinese lenders, whose practices were indeed extortionate by today's standards, were excoriated as bloodsuckers and exploiters of simple-minded peasants in the countryside. It is notable that anti-Chinese riots in the Netherlands Indies only began in the early twentieth century at the time when this official vilification of usury began to take form.²³

The Eurasians, by contrast, were constructed primarily as the enemies of the modern Indonesian elite. This elite took shape in the first decades of the twentieth century as a result of the expansion of modern education beyond European society and beyond the high aristocratic elite most closely involved in colonial rule. As the economy and society of the Indies grew more complex, so too grew the need for literate, articulate middle-ranking employees and government officials. The colonial establishment fostered a discourse in which the interests of this new elite were set against those of the Eurasians who had tended, following the color hierarchy, to occupy the middle reaches of the colonial civil service. Eurasians were increasingly portrayed as clever and cunning, with the arrogance and ambition of Europeans but none of the European sense of noblesse oblige. By the end of the colonial era, the radical, inclusive nationalism of the *Indische Partij* was overshadowed by the antinationalist conservatism of the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* (IEV, Eurasian Association), representing a community that feared Indonesian nationalism and stood firmly behind the colonialist hard line of the 1930s and early 1940s.

Indonesian nationalism was always a hugely diverse movement. It was never united in a single organization, and even periods of domination by a single organization were no more than brief. The movement included radical Muslims and communists who envisaged violent revolution against the colonial state, as well as conservative gradualists who imagined long eras of tutelage during which the Dutch would slowly relinquish control to a trusted, indigenous elite. For all this division, however, these diverse forces

saw themselves as a single movement (*Pergerakan*) ultimately sharing the same goal. Precisely because Indonesian nationalism saw itself as inclusive of those who regarded the Indies as their home, the pro-colonial views of the IEV seemed deeply and contemptibly disloyal to most Indonesian nationalists. The European Dutch were a powerful and dangerous enemy, but the IEV were traitors who had betrayed their homeland to uphold its subordination to foreign rule.

During the final decade of colonial rule, hostility to the IEV and to Eurasians in general was mitigated by the fact that they did not play any pivotal role in maintaining the colonial order. The colonial parliament, the *Volksraad*, was heavily weighted with government supporters and had relatively few powers. The colonial state's capacity to censor, to spy, to exile, and to imprison was far more important to its survival than the small chorus of support coming from the IEV. In 1945, however, the perception of Eurasian disloyalty suddenly moved to the center of the political stage.

Loyalty and the Critical Moment, 1945

Indonesian independence was declared by the two most prominent nationalist leaders, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, on 17 August 1945, two days after the Japanese surrender. In the previous weeks, both leaders had been members of a committee sponsored by the Japanese occupation authorities to prepare for Indonesian independence under Japanese auspices. The Japanese intention, although they did not come to it until late in the war, was to create an Indonesian republic as a puppet or client state alongside other states in the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prospcrity Sphere—Manchukuo, Wang Ching-wei's China, The Philippines, Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The preparations for Indonesian independence, however, had been short-circuited by the end of the war and by the obligation that the Allies placed upon Japan to maintain the political status quo in occupied territories. The Indonesian nationalists thus had two reasons to abort the independence process: they risked suppression by the Japanese authorities, and they risked having their claim for independence tainted by its association with Japanese imperial plans.

After considerable hesitation, the Indonesian leaders chose to create what we would now call a virtual republic. Rather than seeking to create state institutions or to take over institutions from the Japanese, they focused on winning expressions of loyalty from the people of the archipelago. They were hopeful that the Allies would recognize the principle of self-determination as set out in the Atlantic Charter and that the promise of an independent Indonesia open to Western interests would outweigh any

sense of obligation to the Dutch, whose performance in resisting both the Germans and Japanese had been hardly impressive. In particular, the new government declined to transform Japanese-trained local armed units into a national army for fear that such a move would brand the republic with the then-pejorative term, "made in Japan."

Indonesians outside the central nationalist elite, however, generally viewed this strategy with alarm. They were immediately aware that the Europeans in the archipelago regarded the Japanese defeat as a victory and expected that the colonial order would be restored. They remembered how obdurate the Dutch had been in resisting the claims of Indonesian nationalism before the Second World War. Whereas The Philippines under the United States had acquired a high degree of internal autonomy as a commonwealth with its own Filipino president, and Burma had achieved responsible parliamentary government under British tutelage, the Dutch in Indonesia had set their caps firmly against any significant movement toward independence. Even after the fall of the Netherlands to Germany in 1940, the Dutch had promised no more than a constitutional convention to consider changes to the relationship between colony and metropolitan power. And during the Second World War, the Dutch had made it clear that they planned to reestablish the colonial order before contemplating ways in which it might be modified.

With apparently nothing but moral force standing between the new Indonesian republic and a return to Dutch colonial rule, many Indonesians resolved to take matters into their own hands, forming the *badan perjuangan* (struggle organizations) mentioned above, and fired with a determination to use any means at hand—bricks, stones, sharpened bamboo stakes, even poisonous snakes—to resist the return of colonialism.²⁴

But Dutch forces did not land on the coasts of Indonesia in the days after the Japanese surrender. The Netherlands itself had been occupied by Germany until the very end of the Second World War, and the colonial government-in-exile based in Australia had virtually no forces at its disposal. It was to be six weeks or more in fact before the first substantial Allied forces were to arrive in the main islands of Java and Sumatra. In the immediate aftermath of the war, therefore, the Netherlands Indies was as weak as the republic whose existence it refused to acknowledge. This weakness had much the same effect on European residents in the archipelago as the weakness of the republic had had on Indonesian nationalists. Like the nationalists, the Europeans began to flaunt signs of their loyalty to the Netherlands, waving flags, singing patriotic songs and generally behaving as if a return to the colonial era was imminent. Like the nationalists, though on a lesser scale, they began to form militias, partly to maintain local law and order, partly as a surrogate colonial army.

This situation put tens of thousands of ordinary people in the front line of the monumental struggle between colonialism and nationalism. The struggle was not delegated to formal armed forces, but rather conducted by patriotic individuals whom the extraordinary circumstances drove to action. It was not carried on through institutions, but rather as a contest over manifestations of loyalty. The enemies of the Netherlands Indies were not soldiers of a yet-to-be-formed Indonesian army, but ordinary Indonesians who had chosen for the republic. The republic's enemies in turn were not the returning soldiers of the colonial army but rather the ordinary people, Dutch, Eurasian, and Indonesian, who wanted to see the Dutch tricolor flying again. Those who perished in 1945/46 died for their beliefs, rather than for their skin color or their formal ethnic status.

Yet ethnicity was important. Eurasians suffered more than any population group in this period. The recorded death toll is around 5,000, based on recovered bodies, but an estimated 20,000 Eurasians were noted as missing by the time the Dutch authorities were in a position to begin compiling records.²⁵ Out of a total European population of around a quarter of a million, this was a substantial proportion, even allowing for the likelihood that many of those registered as missing had in fact managed to escape or to survive. By contrast, the Chinese of the archipelago, four times more numerous than the Europeans at the time, probably suffered between one fifth and one tenth of the casualties.

The acute victimization of the Eurasians probably arose partly from sheer physical factors. Whereas Chinese tended to be clustered in so-called *Chineesche wijken* (Chinatowns) that were somewhat more easily defended, Eurasians were more widely scattered and tended to be more vulnerable. Europeans, still in Japanese internment camps, were paradoxically protected by the fact of being concentrated in defensible encampments.

The genocide of the Eurasians in Indonesia in 1945/46 has largely been forgotten within Indonesia, and memory of what took place is kept alive mainly by aging survivors in the Netherlands.²⁶ The broader significance of the genocide lies not in the fact that on this occasion a settler community was the victim of genocide instead of the perpetrator, but rather in the tangled relationship between ethnicity, nationality, class, and political affiliation that led to the genocide.

The colonial legal, social, and cultural system did not itself mark out Eurasians as likely victims of violence with the departure of colonialism. Rather, despite early involvement in shaping the idea of Indonesia, Eurasians developed an ambiguous, and then an antagonistic, relationship with the Indonesian nationalism movement. During the colonial period itself, this antagonism had little significance beyond colonial elite circles, though it was ultimately to lead to the otherwise puzzling provision of the

Indonesian constitution that insisted the nation's president be of indigenous descent. In 1945, however, this separation became fatal. Both the new Indonesian republic and the recovering Netherlands Indies were in a state of utter weakness, and their respective capacities to command loyalty became the single most important attribute of the state. In these times, those who were perceived to be disloyal paid a heavy price. Just as Eurasians could not be trusted in the presidential palace, they had to be eliminated from the streets as potential traitors.

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Notes

1. For a powerful evocation of this belief, see Benedict R.O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946* (Ithaca, NY, 1972), 125-31.
2. There is evidence that hundreds of thousands of people died of hardship and starvation during the occupation, while clothes were so scarce that some families had only a single sarong, which they took turns in wearing in order to be able to emerge from the house. See Pierre van der Eng, "Bridging a Gap: A Reconstruction of Population Patterns in Indonesia, 1930-61," *Asian Studies Review* 26 no. 4 (2002): 487-509, and Shigeru Sato, "Japanization in Indonesia Re-examined: The Problem of Self-sufficiency in Clothing," in *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895-1945*, ed. Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb (Richmond, UK, 2003), 270-95.
3. J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge, 1948), 271-73.
4. For a gripping literary evocation of this conviction, see Hella S. Haasse, *Oeroeg* (Amsterdam, 1961); for a recent exploration of perceptions of the Japanese period, see Remco Raben, ed., *Representing the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia: Personal Testimonies and Public Images in Indonesia, Japan, and The Netherlands* (Zwolle, Netherlands, 1999).
5. See for example, Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution*; Audrey R. Kahin, ed., *Regional Dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution: Unity from Diversity* (Honolulu, 1985); William H. Frederick, *Visions and Heat: The Making of the Indonesian Revolution* (Athens, OH, 1989).
6. Takashi Shiraishi, 'Anti-Sinicism in Java's New Order' in *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*, ed. Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid (Seattle, 1997), 187-207.

7. C. Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block: Racial Classification and the Late Colonial State in Indonesia", in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden, 1994), 31-56.
8. Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block," 40.
9. *Gelijkstelling* involved demonstrating either a thorough assimilation to European culture or a pressing practical (usually commercial) reason to have European status. Those who made this transition were expected also to take European names. An Indonesian named Prawiraningrat, thus might take a name such as "Tom Praaning" on becoming a European.
10. Ernst Rodenwaldt, *Die Mestizen auf Kisar* (Batavia, Dutch East Indies, 1927).
11. All Europeans had European family names, but French surnames were common among people of mixed descent, probably as a result of Huguenot (French Protestant) settlement in the archipelago after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.
12. Paul W. van der Veur, "Cultural Aspects of the Eurasian Community in Indonesian Colonial Society," *Indonesia* 6 (1968): 38-53; the novels of Pramoedya Ananta Toer provide a powerful, though not always reliable, picture of ethnic relations in the colonial period. See, for example, *This Earth of Mankind: A Novel* (Melbourne, 1982).
13. The most explicit reference to this sign is provided by H.C. Beynon, *Verboden voor honden en inlanders: Indonesiërs vertellen over hun leven in de koloniale tijd* (Amsterdam, 1995). Beynon's introduction refers to "private swimming pools" where the sign was allegedly displayed, while the chapter of Abdul Haris Nasution, entitled "Honden en inlanders," refers specifically to a high school (HBS) in Bandung where the swimming pool was labeled in this way. I have argued elsewhere, however, that Nasution is an unreliable historical source and I am reluctant to accept his unsupported testimony in this case. On the persistence of urban myths as bearers of an important and plausible message about the way in which society functions, see Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: Urban Legends and Their Meanings* (London, 1983).
14. The idea that Netherlands Indies society was infused with racial consciousness also owes a good deal to the writings of J.S. Furnivall, who coined the term "plural society" and described Netherlands Indies as socially segregated along ethnic lines, with its different groups meeting only in the marketplace. See Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 303-12. Recent work by Coppel, however, has pointed out how misleading Furnivall's description is as an account of day-to-day experience in Indies colonial society. See Charles A. Coppel, "Revisiting Furnivall's 'Plural Society': Colonial Java as a Mestizo Society?," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20, no 3 (1997): 562-79.
15. Van der Veur, "Cultural Aspects."
16. Bab X Pasal 27.1: "Segala warga negara bersamaan kedudukannya didalam hukum dan pemerintahan dan wadajib menjundjung hukum dan pemerintahan itu dengan tidak ada ketjualinja." The 1989 translation reads: "All citizens have equal status before the law and in government and shall abide by the law and the government without any exception."
17. Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block," 54-55.
18. Bab 3, Pasal 6.1: "Presiden ialah orang Indonesia asli." The official 1989 translation reads: "The President shall be a native Indonesian citizen." Although there have been occasional attempts to argue that the exception laid down in Article 6.1 was a translation of Article 6.1X of the United States Constitution, which requires the president to have been born in the United States, there has always been a general political consensus that the article was directed at members of Indonesia's substantial communities of nonindigenous descent, regardless of where they were born.

19. E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, "The Indies Party: Its Nature and Objectives, 1913," in *Indonesia: Selected Documents on Colonialism and Nationalism, 1830-1942*, ed. Chr. L.M. Penders (Brisbane, 1977), 228-32; Robert van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague, 1970), 63-66.
20. Takashi Shiraishi, "The Disputes between Tjipto Mangoenkocsoemo and Soetatmo Soeriokoesoemo: *Satria vs. Pandita*," *Indonesia* 32 (1981): 93-108.
21. Religious difference was significant, of course—the Christianity of most Eurasians was a barrier between them and the Muslim majority. This element can be only part of the explanation, however, because indigenous Christians were an important part of the nationalist movement.
22. Henk Schulte Nordholt, "The Making of Traditional Bali: Colonial Ethnography and Bureaucratic Reproduction," in *Colonial Subjects. Essays in the Practical History of Anthropology*, ed. Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999), 241-81.
23. Shiraishi, "Anti-Sinicism."
24. Robert Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-1949* (Sydney, 1991), 38-69.
25. Okke Norel, *En . . . hoe was het daarbuiten: buiten de Japanse kampen en in de bersiap* (n.p., 2001), 8.
26. See H.Th. Bussemaker, *Bersiap!: opstand in het paradijs: de Bersiap-periode op Java en Sumatra 1945-1946* (Zurphen, Netherlands, 2005).

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