

# Setting sails to sundry shores

## Transnational memories of the Netherlands East Indies in the eyes of Danish writer Aage Krarup Nielsen

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### ABSTRACT

The Danish travel writer Aage Krarup Nielsen (1891-1972) journeyed to the Netherlands East Indies on multiple occasions. Even though his translated work was popular in the Netherlands and beyond, so far it has been paid scant attention in the fields of travel-writing studies and the study of Netherlands Indies literature. Yet, it is valuable in its views on transnational power dynamics within the Netherlands East Indies society. This article examines two distinct patterns in Krarup Nielsen's 1928 travelogue, *Mellem kannibaler og paradisfugle* (*Between cannibals and birds of paradise*): the comparisons he makes between the different ethnicities and nationalities who lived in the Netherlands East Indies and the memories he includes in the descriptions of his travels. Analysing this travel account from within the framework of postcolonial studies and transnational memory studies, this article answers the question how encounters with the "Other" – colonized as well as colonizer – are represented in the Netherlands East Indies. Drawing on earlier work describing representations by colonialists in "their" colony, this article focuses on the outsider perspective offered by Krarup Nielsen and takes into account how his European background shaped his descriptions of the "Others".

### KEYWORDS

Transnationalism, memory, Aage Krarup Nielsen, travel writing, European, Other.

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## INTRODUCTION

It takes a short ferry ride from Amsterdam Central Station, followed by a twelve-minute walk from Buiksloterweg, for the present-day traveller to arrive at Van der Pekstraat 91 in Amsterdam-Noord. This address houses the restaurant “Kannibalen en Paradijsvogels” (Cannibals and Birds of Paradise), which serves both a “Kannibaal Rijsttafel” (Cannibal Rice Table) and a “Paradijsvogel Rijsttafel” (Bird of Paradise Rice Table). The seemingly unusual names of the Netherlands Indies restaurant and the *rijsttafels* – meals “developed as a prominent symbol of colonial eating in the Indies” – are taken from a travelogue written many years ago in colonial times (Susie Protschky 2008: 350). This culinary afterlife is only one way in which the travelogue continues to be remembered in present times. For another, one must go to London.

In April 2009, Jaap Harskamp wrote the introduction to an extensive catalogue entitled *A colonial obsession; Dutch narrative literature on the East Indies 1800-1945: catalogue of holdings in the British Library*.<sup>1</sup> He catalogued sources on the basis of two other catalogues, Dorotheé Buur’s *Persoonlijke documenten Nederlands-Indië/Indonesië* (1973) and her *Indische jeugd literatuur: geannoteerde bibliografie van jeugdboeken over Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië* (1992).<sup>2</sup> Haarskamp notes that “The British Library takes pride in an often unique collection of materials many of which are not mentioned in the Buur catalogues (referred to as *PD* and *IJ*) as has been indicated in this list of title descriptions” (Haarskamp 2009: 6). Listed under the category “Biography” in *A colonial obsession* is Aage Krarup Nielsen’s 1928 travelogue, *Mellem kannibaler og paradisfugle*, literally translated as ‘Between cannibals and birds of paradise’.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, and proudly one could say, Haarskamp’s *A colonial obsession* mentions “[Not in Buur]”, emphasizing the uniqueness of the source as well as the added value of including the travelogue in a collection which contributes to understanding Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia (Harskamp 2009: 148). It goes without saying that it is Krarup Nielsen’s travelogue which inspired the name of the restaurant in Amsterdam. The travelogue was translated from Danish into Dutch by Claudine Bienfait and given the title, *In het land van kannibalen en paradijsvogels*.<sup>4</sup> It was published by Querido in 1930. This article takes the translated version as its source of enquiry. Translation makes available foreign perspectives which add to Dutch reflections on coloniality in Indonesia which would otherwise be unavailable to researchers in Dutch Studies (Lucelle Pardoe and Arnoud Arps 2023: 50).

<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Marja Kingma of the British Library for pointing this document out to me and emphasizing its worth for the study of literature on the Netherlands East Indies.

<sup>2</sup> English translations ‘Personal documents Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia’ and ‘Dutch Indies children’s literature: an annotated bibliography of children’s books about the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia’.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, I use this English translation when referring to the book.

<sup>4</sup> This article is based on the 1930 Dutch translation of Krarup Nielsen’s book (see bibliography). All English translations are the author’s unless stated otherwise. The Dutch title means ‘In the land of cannibals and birds of paradise’.

The travelogue narrates a particular part of the voyages of the Danish author which took him from Antwerp, via Marseille, Batavia, Weltevreden, Bali, Makassar, Barang Lompo, Ambon, and Tanah Merah, to Merauke. As in other colonial travelogues, the “Other” plays a significant role in Krarup Nielsen’s encounters, in which he describes the colonized Other as inferior to the European individual (Elleke Boehmer 2005: 76). As Doris Jedamski and Rick Honings have shown in the recent volume *Travelling the Dutch East Indies*, colonial authors “could not rid themselves from their cultural baggage” (Jedamski and Honings 2023: 12). For Aage Krarup Nielsen, this meant that he wrote from the perspective of a European male travel-writer. “However, the ‘Western perspective’ is certainly not homogeneous, and has been subject to profound change over the centuries” (Jedamski and Honings 2023: 12). This article complements the observation made by Jedamski and Honings as I show how Aage Krarup Nielsen’s “Western perspective” relates to various “Others” in the Netherlands East Indies. Indeed, there is another significant “Other” at play in his travelogue: the non-Danish, non-colonized whom he encounters. This group consisted mainly of other Europeans in the colony but also included the Chinese and Indo-Europeans as separate Others. Analysing the descriptions and representations of the “Other” and the “Self” in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* requires taking these different ethnicities and nationalities into consideration. What then, can Aage Krarup Nielsen’s *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* teach us about the “Western perspective” on colonialism and Othering? To understand this, another aspect of his representations must be taken into consideration.

What is also striking in his descriptions is how, besides making extensive comparisons between different ethnicities and nationalities, Krarup Nielsen peppers the travelogue with memories. It is therefore fruitful to analyse the representations of these encounters from the perspectives of postcolonial and transnational memory studies. In doing so, the insights into the power relations between the “Other” and “Self” extend those of the traditional colonizer-colonized dichotomy by taking other “Others” into consideration. As Remco Raben has argued, “colonial segregation and proximity are much more complicated than we are often prone to believe” (Raben 2020: 192). In Aage Krarup Nielsen’s *Between cannibals and birds of paradise*, the Netherlands East Indies is not a highly segregated space when mobility comes into play. In his journey, he weaves in and out of encounters with nationals living in the colonial contact zone (Mary Louise Pratt 2008). He illustrates that the “Self” in his travelogue is European and colonial. Yet, this “Self” is layered, because within that “Self”, “Others”, like other Europeans, are also embedded. The problems encountered by the European colonial “Self” are transnational, for instance, communism, mixed ancestry, and revolutionary emancipation. Krarup Nielsen is not without judgement about how the Danes (his national identity) relate to the “Self” of the ideal Western colonial. “Other” colonials are better, although also not exempt from criticism. This can be read through and is constituted by his multidirectional way of remembering: other colonial

histories are connected to the events through which he is living (Michael Rothberg 2009). This way of remembering creates not simply an opposition to these events, but a productive connection.

To illustrate this, this article first delves deeper into the life of Aage Krarup Nielsen and the creation and reception of *Between cannibals and birds of paradise*. Next, it positions itself within the transnational turn of memory and literary studies of the last decades. While also incorporating postcolonial theory, this postcolonial transnational memory lens is subsequently used to analyse how not only Batavia – as a multicultural metropolis – can be seen as culturally diverse, but this also applies to other cities and locations which Krarup Nielsen visits (Mikko Toivanen 2023: 524). The article analyses the most significant of the manifold comparisons Krarup Nielsen makes between the different nationalities present in the Netherlands East Indies. From this point of departure, the article pays attention to the connections he makes between his present and (violent) pasts, before finally arriving at the conclusion to the question of how encounters with the Other are represented in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* and what this teaches us about “the Western perspective” on colonialism in regard to Othering.

#### AAGE KRARUP NIELSEN AND *BETWEEN CANNIBALS AND BIRDS OF PARADISE*

The year after *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* was published in the Netherlands, F.S. Bosman praised Krarup Nielsen for retaining his sense of humour even under the most trying circumstances (Bosman 1931: 118-119). In addition, particularly appreciated by Bosman was Krarup Nielsen’s ability to “tell the story of a journey”. It is indeed Krarup Nielsen’s storytelling which illustrates that the colonial travelogue is not objective but “bound up with the acquisition of knowledge and power” (Jedamski and Honings 2023: 18-19). On many occasions, Krarup Nielsen delves into the minds of those he represents and describes things he cannot know. His subjects included not only native inhabitants, but also for instance a “small, funny German” watchmaker (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 83). He describes the scene in which the watchmaker, Master Heinrich, is working at his bench at night. The only person to disturb the nocturnal peace is the watchmaker’s wife, Mother Heinrich, who waits at the top of the stairs in a cloak and nightcap and harries him to bed with her razor-sharp voice (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 84). Through his interaction with Others, Krarup Nielsen reflects on the colonial sensibilities of his time. As an outsider, Krarup Nielsen was praised for how he reflected on the workings of the Netherlands East Indies colonial society.

Rarely have I heard such an appreciative testimony of the many good things we have accomplished in our colonies from a foreigner. Mistakes have, of course, been made in our colonial administration, but the present generation has done everything to undo the great mistakes of the past. This book contains striking reflections on the political situation in the Far East. (Bosman 1931: 119).

Like Krarup Nielsen, Bosman lived in colonial times and the undoing of the great mistakes of the past was his own personal opinion. However, a connection is made between earlier times in the colony and the 1920s when Krarup was in the Indies. This is something Krarup Nielsen also does continuously in his travelogue. Both the travelogue and Bosman's reflection on it constructed and were constructed by colonial discourse. The Other and the Self are presented in a sensationalist manner, driven not least by the figure of the cannibal:

Then the trip goes on to Merauke, in New Guinea, sometimes called the end of the world. The author writes fluently about the life of man and animal in this unknown country, where people still live in the Stone Age and headhunting is an everyday affair. For those who might as yet be unaware of it, I would like to quote from this book about the authority of a head-hunter chieftain, that the thumb is the finest delicacy of the cannibal's meal [...] (Bosman 1931: 119).

Therefore, *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* presents information on "how travellers defined themselves and others", making the travelogue "perfectly suited for gaining a nuanced image of ideologies and power structures" pertaining to the Netherlands East Indies (Jedamski and Honings 2023: 19). As the genre has been "greatly influenced by notions about gender, class, and race", it is crucial to understand how the author relates to these notions from his own positionality (Jedamski and Honings 2023: 19).

Age Krarup Nielsen was born in Ørby, north of Copenhagen, on 30 July, 1891. After graduating from Federiksborg Gymnasium in 1909, he studied to become a doctor, finishing his education in 1920. He began his medical career in Norway and, in 1921, was appointed doctor to a Norwegian whaling expedition which took him to the South Shetland Islands in the Antarctic and the Falkland Islands. He describes these travels in his first published travelogue, *En hvalfangerfærd (A whaling voyage)* (1921). Krarup Nielsen enjoyed travelling to such a degree he left his medical job to become a professional travel-writer. He recounts his love for travel in the first chapter of *Between cannibals and birds of paradise*, entitled "The eternal wanderlust". Even though the lure of home was great, the "addiction to wanderlust" was greater:

Those who return from a long journey, which has lasted months, maybe even years, know the wonderful joy of coming home; the feeling a person has with every hour which the rattling wheels of the train or the monotonous grinding of the ship's propeller brings them closer to their goal (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 8).

And you promise yourself that seven wild elephants won't drag you on another long journey. But, in some place in a distant land, without you noticing, another drop of the drug of wanderlust has seeped into your blood. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 9).

There is no longer any doubt, the fever, which has only been slumbering in your blood, has reawakened (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 10).



His perpetual travels to the Netherlands East Indies and later to Indonesia reflect this “addiction to wanderlust”. Eventually, he travelled to the colony in 1922-1923 and returned to it in 1926-1927. In 1925, he published *Mads Lange til Bali. En dansk Ostindiefares Liv og Eventyr* (*Mads Lange came to Bali; The life and adventures of a Danish East Indiaman*). This is not an autobiographical travelogue, but tells the story of the nineteenth-century Danish trader Mads Johansen Lange who won fame as an entrepreneur and intermediary between the Balinese and the Dutch under the soubriquet the “king of Bali”.<sup>5</sup> Krarup Nielsen later returned to ego documents, or life-writing, about the Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia when he wrote *Mellem kannibaler og paradisfugle* (1928), *Paa Krydstogt mod Ny Guinea* (*On a cruise to New Guinea*, 1945), *Fra Korea til Bali* (*From Korea to Bali*, 1951), and finally *Merdeka: Strejftog i Indonesia* (*Freedom: forays into Indonesia*, 1954). In the latter, Krarup Nielsen travels through post-colonial Indonesia and compares his earlier travels through colonial Indonesia with independent Indonesia. On 13 December 1938, Aage Krarup Nielsen, with nine others, co-founded the Medstifter af Eventyrernes Klub (The Adventurers’ Club) at the University Café in Copenhagen. The club, which still exists, consists of globetrotters from different backgrounds: expedition members, cinematographers, painters, geologists, zoologists, big-game hunters, and more. Apart from being a writer, Krarup Nielsen also filmed during his travels. Today, in its collection, the Danish Film Institute has several of these so-called travel documentaries, most notably in the context of Indonesia, the twenty-nine-minute long, *Bali i Hverdag Og Fest* (*Bali everyday and festival life*, 1950). Aage Krarup Nielsen died in Copenhagen on 28 January, 1972, and was buried in Hillerød, north of the capital. His legacy remains alive through the travelogues he published.

This overview of Krarup Nielsen’s life frames the “Self” in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* as both European and colonial. The travelogue is a form of life-writing after all. The narrative of *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* centres on Krarup Nielsen’s journey towards Merauke in what is now the contested Indonesian province of Papua. From the title of his travelogue, his initial goal was to study the “cannibals”. They were the Kaja-Kaja (an antiquated name for the Marind-Anim), a native Papuan ethnic group. However, in his observations, the comparisons between ethnicities and nationalities come to the fore as well as the memories which layer his observations. To understand what possible new perspectives this offers on power relations in the Netherlands East Indies, a transnational approach is required. The next section first further establishes the “Self” of the travelogue as a European colonial, subsequently outlining how the colonial “Self” of which Krarup Nielsen is part, is actually layered. In the multicultural colony, not every European was equally European.

<sup>5</sup> To be precise, he was given the honorific title Punggawa Besar, “one of the highest titles/functions in the Balinese state” (Henk Schulte Nordholt 1981: 45).

## THE MULTICULTURAL COLONY: THE "SELF" AS COLONIAL

This article contributes to the field of memory studies in that it "extends the empirical purview on which theorizations are based" by looking at a region and country "less often treated" by analysing its representations in a travelogue which is set temporally before the Second World War (Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney 2018: 272). At the same time, Krarup Nielsen's travelogue fits within the ongoing emphasis on transnationalism in literary studies. Paul Jay (2010: 1) argues that "nothing has reshaped literary and cultural studies more than its embrace of transnationalism". This embrace has offered a renewing of the field and "new forms of expressions of coherence" (Jay 2010: 2). One concrete result is that a "representative range of contemporary literary texts" deals with "the historical, social, and political forces at work shaping personal and cultural identity in transnationalized spaces [...] under the combined effects of colonization, decolonization, postcoloniality, and globalization" (Jay 2010: 6, 9). After its translation into Dutch, Krarup Nielsen's travelogue belongs to the extensive corpus of colonial literature on the Netherlands East Indies. His perspectives help to transform the scope of the national and cultural literatures to which the travelogue belongs by "pushing beyond national boundaries to imagine the global character of modern experience, contemporary culture, and the identities they produce" in a colonial context (Jay 2010: 9). One of the ways in which *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* is made relevant to the study of colonial literature on the Netherlands East Indies is his comparisons between the people in the colony. The image of the Netherlands East Indies Aage Krarup Nielsen paints in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* is that of a multicultural colony, as it was home to people from all over the world.

Throughout his travels, he encountered various other Europeans, Chinese, Indonesians, and the Marind-Anim.<sup>6</sup> In his descriptions, power dynamics are ever present in his descriptions. Chinese Indonesians are structurally referred to as "Chinese" and relegated to a category completely separate from native Indonesians, the so-called "Inlanders". It was a Dutch travel companion of Krarup Nielsen, one to whom I return below, who stressed that the Chinese in the Netherlands East Indies will become a political factor to be reckoned with. He recognized that they were an invisible front against "us Europeans" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 58). The Dutch and Danish are therefore established as belonging to the same social group. For ten thousand Dutchmen, there were almost a million Chinese, the Dutch companion remarks. The Dutchman praises their tremendous economic power, their honed acumen, and their contact with native Indonesians, the last being "something we shall never achieve".

<sup>6</sup> I use "Indonesians" anachronistically rather than Aage Krarup Nielsen's "natives" to disassociate my postcolonial analysis from the colonial writing of Krarup Nielsen. Similarly, in my own arguments, I use "Marind-Anim" when referring to the people Krarup Nielsen called the Kaja-Kaja.

They settled in this country as merchants long before the first Dutch ships set sail for the East Indies, and, believe me, they will still be here long after we are gone (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 58).

For the Dutch companion, there was an irreconcilable distance between the Europeans and Indonesians. The Chinese Indonesians fell somewhere in the middle. Even though Krarup Nielsen categorizes the Chinese Indonesians separately from the Indonesians, in other descriptions, the Chinese Indonesians themselves and their possessions are also lumped together with Indonesians. Just like the Chinese boats in the modern port city Makassar had become, the native Indonesian boats were “grotesque and fairy-like” to Krarup Nielsen (1930: 69). The Marind-Anim were yet another story. To him, the Marind-Anim were “like all nature people in the tropics”, “extremely lazy and lethargic”.

They enjoy eating, sleeping, dancing, women, and headhunting. They do not work more than is strictly necessary to live the way they have lived for thousands of years. There is no trace of any desire for progress or development, either materially or spiritually. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 210).

As Elleke Boehmer explains, colonialist, or Orientalist, discourse, refers to “the collection of symbolic practices, including textual codes and conventions and implied meanings, which Europe deployed in the process of its colonial expansion” (Boehmer 2005: 48). Europe deployed these symbolic practices in particular “in understanding the bizarre and apparently untranslatable strangeness with which it came into contact” (Boehmer 2005: 48). Relying on images of grotesqueness, laziness, lethargy, absence of work ethic, and lack of development, these representations of the Marind-Anim are no different from the representations of native Indonesians from other islands in Dutch colonial literature, or other native inhabitants in other colonial literature for that matter. Within the colonial empire, symbolism was as central as “real distinctions in the world” as the medium of representation was used to express the dominance of colonial authority (Boehmer 2005: 49). The way in which Krarup Nielsen describes the Marind-Anim as underdeveloped in various senses constitutes such a dominance. However, he is not always negative about the Marind-Anim. Mirroring other colonial travellers who represented the Netherlands East Indies in a seemingly more nuanced manner, Krarup Nielsen also saw positive elements in the Marind-Anim (Rick Honings 2021: 484). However, his representation of the Marind-Anim is inevitably informed by the fixtures of colonialist discourse, even, perhaps especially, when he assesses them in a more positive light.

Notwithstanding some problems and the fact that they headhunt, Krarup Nielsen regards them as good-natured and easy-going. They are gentle and peaceful in nature and, despite their contact with white people, they have not lost their dignity and pride. As a matter of fact, “they find no reason to grovel to the whites despite the latter holding the power and possessing all kinds of beautiful, enviable things” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 147). Krarup



Nielsen's explanation of this attitude is that, the common view among the Kaja-Kaja is that white people simply came to their country because they did not have enough to eat "and there is no denying that this consideration was not unfounded".

In reality, the whites with their entourage of Chinese, Ambonese, and Javanese are guests in the land of the Kaja-Kaja, albeit they are rather impertinent guests, who have invited themselves (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 147).

This paints a familiar picture. One broadly recognized in Netherlands Indies literature, corresponding to the colonialist stereotype of a noble, untroubled savage who is content with the uncomplicated, peaceful life he is living; one that is noble precisely because he is uncivilized (Honings 2021: 471; Honings 2022: 47). This is underscored more sharply in the travelogue when Krarup Nielsen leans more into the "savage" part of the "Noble Savage" and he describes the Marind-Anim in connection with the Stone Age.

The inclusion of references to the Stone Age when describing the Marind-Anim is a significant pattern in the travelogue. Here, not so much as presenting a personal memory, Krarup Nielsen leans on the image which people in the Netherlands at the time – and other dominant colonizer societies – had of human predecessors who lived in the Palaeolithic, that is, that of a primitive people. Krarup Nielsen was not a pioneer in this as it is a trope adopted by the Dutch in colonial times and afterwards. Between the 1930s and 1950s, the Dutch asserted colonial authority over the West Papuans through "demonstrations of technology", establishing that the Dutch had mastered technology and highlighting "the stone-Age living conditions of Papuans", even when Papuans were well acquainted with the technologies of the time (Martin Slama and Jenny Munro 2015: 8). Conceptualizing Papuans as Stone-Age people did not go far enough: "the Dutch felt the need to enact their evolutionist ideology visibly in face-to-face activities", for instance, when Dutch colonial authorities invited anthropologists to document "the alleged primitivism of the Papuans through films" (Slama and Munro 2015: 8). This is the "Stone-Age image" which Krarup Nielsen also actively constructs, not only by comparing Papuan tools, but also their clothing to that of so-called "civilized" European tools.

One photograph in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* is accompanied by the caption, "A Stone-Age man in twentieth-century dress". It accompanies a part which notes that only a few Kaja-Kaja have been in contact with civilization, as is exemplified by those who have bought European clothes from a Chinese merchant. This "oddest combination" results in "the Stone-Age man, who wanted to put himself in the uniform of the twentieth century" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 173). The Kaja-Kaja are also described as having a distinct sense of humour and a sensitive nature which Krarup Nielsen (1930: 175) found difficult to reconcile with their barbaric customs. He discerned "various types" among "that primitive people" and compared them to "the Semitic race".

Each time, one stands amazed at the striking resemblance of this primitive Stone-Age people, who literally cannot count beyond five, with the Semitic race. The shape of the head, the hooked, broad nose, and the big mouth with the thick lips, their facial expressions and their hand movements make the elderly especially perfectly resemble old Jews of the dark-coloured type, whom one finds in Morocco especially. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 176).

The Stone Age is cited as a trope for primitivism and is also literally engaged with technology.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the Kaja-Kaja cannot be categorized as a people from the Stone Age, because weapons and tools made of wood and bone play a much bigger role than do stone tools, of which they possess relatively few (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 202).

In his descriptions of the Marind-Amin, Krarup Nielsen (1930: 155-156) often claims to position himself in their minds. He writes, for example, that even the though Kaja-Kaja are a primitive people from the Stone Age, they are not easily impressed by the event of a landing of a seaplane in the bay. "They reason thus: if the white man has made so many remarkable things, it is not so surprising that he can also make a large bird [...]" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 155).

The Marind-Amin are therefore represented as a "primitive", "defenceless nature people" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 191, 122). Even though Krarup Nielsen (1930: 205) admits they had a tradition of sculpture as a form of artistic expression, he still considers these sculptures "primitive and grotesque". The Kaja-Kaja are described as devoid of any sentimentality or empathy (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 203). Krarup Nielsen looks at them and speaks for them. They are being contrasted to "humans": "They have a certain conception of beauty relative to human types." Of all foreigners, they "find the European type with straight noses and high foreheads the most beautiful" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 205). In the end, Krarup Nielsen creates distinct Self-Other power dynamics by using past-present comparisons which place the Marind-Amin in the Stone Age and Europeans in the present. This past-present dichotomy can also be recognized elsewhere in the travelogue, applied to other matters such as who is included as part of the European Self.

#### THE MULTICULTURAL COLONY: THE "SELF" AS A EUROPEAN

Besides the many comparisons Aage Krarup Nielsen makes between the people in the colony, he also writes about memories in his descriptions. Sometimes, these are personal memories, in other cases he draws from collective memory. For instance, he constantly includes colonial history in his descriptions, creating a past-present relationship of remembering which emerges as a salient pattern. What is created is a history lesson of the area travelled. I now want to draw attention to those instances in which Krarup

<sup>7</sup> I capitalize the Stone Age in reference to the historical era. I only capitalize it in quotations when the original author did so too.

Nielsen writes about memories and memory, both in the personal and the collective sense, and the power dynamics they construct.

On his way to Makassar, approaching Bali, Krarup Nielsen proceeds to give the reader a history lesson beginning in 1607 when the Dutch conquered a native fort close to Makassar. Lured by the scent of cloves, the first Danish ship arrived at Makassar in 1625. In contrast to the Dutch, the Danes were welcomed kindly by the local inhabitants. However, the Danes failed to keep their foothold in the Indies and left again within fifty years (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 67). Drawing on their advancements, modernity, and humanity, in the travelogue the Dutch are constituted the sovereign rulers of the Indies. The cruel colonial realities are negated, a “fundamental paradox in how Europeans conducted themselves in the colonies” (Honings 2021: 483). This is most conspicuous in Aage Krarup Nielsen’s disappointment in the Danes for not being successful colonials. The Dutch, on the other hand, have a good reason to be there:

For over three hundred years – since the Portuguese were expelled from here in 1605 – Ambon has been the point of departure for the power of the Dutch in these regions; hence, there is an honourable, historical tradition attached to the island (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 88).

Krarup Nielsen also reflects on the Danish colonial past. Observing the great, modern quaysides in Makassar as a Dane, he says, “one is tempted to shed a tear at the thought of the opportunities we have missed in this part of the East Indies, because we lacked the qualities necessary to found a colonial empire” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 67). He also includes some criticism of the Danes from a Dutch perspective. The Dutch believed it was not the Dutch East India Company (VOC) which was the biggest enemy of the Danes, but the Danes themselves. They lacked insight; there was a lack of support from the motherland; their administration was misguided and apathetic; all resulting in the Dutch calling them “those powerless people” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 68).

Krarup Nielsen praises colonialism, but this does not stop him from being outspokenly critical of its implementation in the places he visits. He really thought Merauke was the end of the world, at least the end of the fully diverse world which defined the sprawling Dutch colonial empire (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 140). It was there he wrote how “the Europeans in Merauke, in their entourage of various colours, have not always shown themselves to be such well-bred guests as the uncivilized Kaja-Kaja” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 148). For instance, the Dutch authorities had allowed a European trading company to hold a large section of the coconut palms along the coast “notwithstanding the fact that these belonged to the natives” and “only after several years was that injustice rectified” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 148). In these examples, the Europeans are portrayed as humans more ill-mannered than the Marind-Amin. In a multicultural colony, someone is always more disagreeable than the other. In this case, Krarup Nielsen considers the Chinese even worse than the Europeans: the former are the “most rapacious in exploiting the Kaja-Kajas”

(Krarup Nielsen 1930: 148). As elsewhere in the Netherlands East Indies, the Chinese were “the inevitable intermediaries between the natives and the producers and consumers on the world market” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 148).

There is not a trick they up their sleeve when it comes to getting hold of the natives’ coconuts at bargain prices and being paid for their own goods of the worst quality at usurious prices (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 148-149).

It offered the Marind-Amin little comfort to know that the Chinese, if they were able, would also dupe the Europeans. In these comparisons between ethnicities and nationalities in the Indies, Krarup Nielsen reinforces the multicultural character of the colony. At the same time, he draws on this character to reinforce nationalistic and ethnic stereotypes.

These descriptions, plus those in the previous section, show that Krarup Nielsen shared ways of framing the Other with Anglophone and Neerlandophone colonial travel writing. That the “colonial European Self” was colonial is hereby established. How Europeanness is constituted in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise*, is striking. In his comparison with the British Empire, Dutch customs also come under scrutiny. Firstly, Krarup Nielsen (1930: 126) observes that “indeed, in the Netherlands East Indies, *jenever* is considered as indispensable remedy against malaria as whisky is in the British East Indies”. Then, upon arrival in Weltevreden, he writes:

One can hardly imagine anything more satisfying here on Earth than a party of well-to-do Dutchmen from Batavia meeting in Hotel des Indes in Weltevreden with the famous *waringin* in front of it to partake of a communal *rijsttafel*. They certainly do have reason to be pleased, because no better hotel is to be found in the entire East, and its *rijsttafel* with the ice-cold beer which accompanies it is the most magnificent meal served on this planet. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 42).

Here, Krarup Nielsen observes the Dutch colonialists and shows a special interest in the Dutch women. The appearance of the Dutch in Weltevreden, including the women, is characterized by prosperity. Most of them, he writes, lounge about lazily all day in their deckchairs on the covered verandas. Not until the sunset brings coolness will they decide to take a short stroll, a car-trip, or visit the cinema (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 44). Not only do the Dutch and British differ in how they deal with “their colonial possessions” politically, they are also different in their appearance:

Strange, that the same tropical sun which reduces the English ladies to mere skin and bone makes the Dutch women so excessively fat. Could the secret perhaps be that, compared to their Dutch sisters, the English ladies in the tropics are less interested in the *rijsttafel* than in sports? (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 44).

Krarup Nielsen declares matter-of-factly that “the Netherlands East Indies is without question the last place on Earth where slimness will triumph” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 44). The Dutch and English, as is shown, have their differences. More alike are the Germans in the colony.

Krarup Nielsen met several Germans all of whom had their own quirks, but were still considered to belong to the same European “we” that he did. After having received a very friendly reception from the Dutch civil servant in Merauke (“at the end of the world”) he describes how “the whole European colony” gathered on the jetty (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 140). It consisted of only ten members plus five Roman Catholic missionaries. One of them was the European businessman, a Mr Renner, from Germany who invited him for lunch and, apart from the missionaries, “has the most understanding of and interest in the natives” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 141, 192). They went on expeditions together to map out what life was like in the villages of the Marind-Amin. Like the Dutch, Renner was friendly and hospitable. This was in stark contrast to his brush with an Armenian in Makassar. This encounter showed that not every European was equal in his eyes.

Although the Armenians were a small community in the Netherlands East Indies, they were important traders and were “regarded as Europeans on the basis of their Christian faith and their social position” (Bart Lutikhuis 2013: 545). The business acumen of Armenians is acknowledged by Krarup Nielsen (1930: 71) when he states that there are only a few thousand Armenians in the Netherlands East Indies, but that “they are incredibly adept at making money”. With great fondness, he writes, they have bought hotels and land and, without being too concerned about how, they have managed to make the greatest possible profit for themselves (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 71). He needed information from an Armenian, the owner of the hotel in which he resided to ask when the boat to Ambon left, to which the latter replied twelve o’clock. This information turned out to be false as the boat had already left before Krarup Nielsen arrived on the wharf. His attitude towards the Armenian hotel owner swiftly changed.

The very fact that the man is an Armenian should have made me more suspicious. I was well acquainted with the famous saying: a Greek can outwit two Jews, but an Armenian can outwit as many as three Greeks (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 71).

He blamed himself for believing the Armenian despite the experience accumulated during his past travels in the East and castigated his “blue-eyed Danish innocence” for his error in judgement (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 71-72). The moment he realized he had missed his boat is described as follows:

It was a moment when I could no longer worry about the way Armenians were being treated by the Turks. On the contrary, I would like the Turks to come to Makassar one day and give that Armenian hotel owner a good thrashing. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 73).

Bear in mind that Krarup Nielsen was making this statement after the last Armenian Genocide had taken place in 1915 during World War I. It seems he felt missing the boat on a deeper level. Another instance when “blue eyes” came up is when Krarup Nielsen met the old German Sandtfelter. Just like his own blue yes, those of Sandtfelter have a positive connotation. His own eyes



harbour innocence; Sandtfelter's blue eyes twinkle with optimism (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 165).

What this section has illustrated is how Krarup Nielsen paints a multicultural picture of the colony. Remco Raben stresses that examples of various forms of mixing and amalgamation between communities are constantly present when colonial societies are discussed; therefore, the term "melting pot" never seems far away (Raben 2020: 184). These excerpts about Europeans, Chinese, and Marind-Amin certainly construct the Netherlands East Indies as such a melting pot, or more fittingly, as a "contact zone". Mary Louise Pratt explains that "contact zones" are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominations and subordination", citing the colonial contact zone as an example (Pratt 2008: 5). It is clear how Krarup Nielsen's descriptions of Europeans, Chinese Indonesians, and Marind-Amin unveil, and discursively construct, the social hierarchy in the colony, but at the same time problematize it. The way in which he makes comparisons between ethnicities and nationalities illustrates this even more explicitly when the Self encounters transnational problems.

#### TRANSNATIONAL DANGERS

Not only because of its form as a travelogue, but also because the past is often brought up, *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* is a text with an emphasis on spatial and temporal mobility. Krarup Nielsen's extensive "looking beyond the border of nations" can be approached fruitfully from a transnational perspective which has been part of the "transnational turn" in memory and literary studies in the last two decades (Aleida Assmann 2014: 546; Erll 2011: 4).

"Trans" stands of course for "transit", emphasising movement in space across national borders, but it also stands for "translations", the cultural work of reconfiguring established national themes, references, representations, images, and concepts. Nations are not elided in this transnational perspective, but they are symbolically and politically recast. They are imagined differently as inherently and externally relational, embedded and contextualised, always implicated in and partaking of larger processes and changes. (Assmann 2014: 547).

As such, Aleida Assmann presents a framework for understanding what the role of the nation is in remembering, but even more important are the notions of "transit" and "translations". Assmann maps out seven types of transnational memories and gives empirical contexts, two of which are most relevant here. The first is Michael Rothberg's (2009) notion of "multidirectional memory". The second has to do with entangled and dialogic memories. Multidirectional memory describes how one memory can be a prism for another memory, countering "the trap of competitive victimhood and the conceptual impasse that it has created" in how memory culture has been seen up to that point (Assmann 2014: 551). By focusing on "two paradigmatically irreconcilable victimhood memories" - the Holocaust and the crimes of colonization

- Rothberg shows how they can be productively connected, rather than remaining fixed in polemic opposition (Assmann 2014: 551). The victimhood memories in *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* focus on the colonialist. There are external factors which pose a threat. In what follows, I argue that the travelogue recognizes various dangers to the status quo of the colonial European Self, all transnational in scope. Through reflections on communism, mixed ancestry, and revolutionary emancipation, *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* betrays cracks in colonial rule. As the sections analysed below illustrate, these are not neatly separated transnational dangers as at times they fold into each other. In *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* one can see how memories of violent pasts are productively connected to some of the contemporary developments in the Netherlands East Indies. Krarup Nielsen shows how these memories have been entangled – sometimes by himself – and it is the transnational concept of dialogic memory which enlightens us about its meaning. For Assmann (2014: 553), dialogic memory is a conspicuous form of memory as it entails that two countries with a shared history of mutual violence mutually acknowledge their own guilt and regret as well as empathy for the other's suffering. In the case of colonialism, one cannot say that "a shared history of mutual violence" is an equal history of violence, because to do so would negate structural imbalances central to colonialism. Therefore, I do not want to suggest that Krarup Nielsen lays bare such a dialogic memory between the Netherlands and Indonesia, but that he does present cases in which the first steps in it can be recognized, possibly made easier by his perspective as an outsider to this relationship.

#### A CITY OF EXILES

Although Aage Krarup Nielsen often compares what he sees with what he is familiar in Denmark – in doing so making the unfamiliar Netherlands East Indies familiar to the reader back home (Pratt 2008: 200) – one other principal comparison he makes of people is between the Dutch colonizers and the English. This had already begun on his voyage to the Netherlands East Indies, when he compares the situation in the Netherlands East Indies with that in a British colony. He explains that he does not expect that the Netherlands East Indies will be boring as "there is some turbulence in the atmosphere" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 33). Four years earlier, the hot topic among the Dutch had been the unrest in the British colonies. The English had then just exiled the Egyptian revolutionary, Saad Zaghloul Pasha, which led to serious, bloody events. Krarup Nielsen captures the Dutch reaction at the time:

Not without a certain smugness, the Dutch pointed out the peaceful conditions in their own possessions. It was not uncommon to hear the Dutch say that these difficulties were the result of inept political actions by the English, and that conditions in the Netherlands East Indies were quite different, both secure and stable, also as far as the future was concerned. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 33-34).

This misconception, Krarup Nielsen explains, was not because nationalistic sentiments were unacknowledged, but that the thought of communism was only a distant reality. Four years earlier, the Dutch had been unable to comprehend that experiences as eventful as those to which the English had been exposed in their colonies would become reality in theirs (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 33-34). He (1930: 105) is referring to events surrounding one of the most extraordinary places he visited, which he calls "the city of exiles". This "city" was in fact Boven-Digoel, located "at the end of the world; just one step, the people said, and you will fall out" (Rudolf Mrázek 2020: 2-3). As Rudolf Mrázek (2020: 13) describes, this "isolation camp" was built in a panic for Indonesians who had attempted a communist revolution in 1926. As it happens, Krarup Nielsen was there when the first prisoners were to be exiled to Boven-Digoel. The plan of the communist revolutionaries, as described by Krarup Nielsen, was to eliminate all Europeans in the Netherlands East Indies, whereafter the leaders of the rebellious organizations would take over all positions then held by the Europeans. A plan like this, Krarup Nielsen (1930: 35-36) writes, would scarcely have been able to have been carried out by revolutionary leaders like Lenin and Trotsky, but "under no circumstances by the natives in their present, primitive stage of development". Krarup Nielsen (1930: 88) simply asked to board the "communist ship" to Boven-Digoel and his request was willingly and friendly complied with by the Dutch officials. In the end, he writes that the fear of internment in Boven-Digoel had not stopped the communist propaganda among Indonesian as "there must now be thousands of natives who could just as easily be sent to New Guinea as politically undesirable elements" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 123-124). It is here that Krarup Nielsen recognizes how transnational forces, like communism, are intertwined with revolutionary emancipation.

The Dutch initially shrugged off the events in the British colonies as something beyond their concern, but Krarup Nielsen situates the revolutionary efforts in the British colonies in the context of the communist revolt in the Netherlands East Indies a few years later. Through this comparative prism, Krarup Nielsen formulates a transnational connection of revolutionary emancipation and its threat to colonial rule. His reflection can be seen as an impetus for dialogue between East and West in that he paints a picture which evokes recognition, with optimism possibly even avenues for solidarity. Krarup Nielsen recognizes communism and revolutionary emancipation as problems for colonial rule, although he is never candidly against it. He dismisses the revolt merely as a "communist issue", and elsewhere as "small-scale riots" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 89, in the caption to image 14) and, as Rudolf Mrázek observes, he describes the prisoners mainly by their clothes (Mrázek 2020: 14). It is through the medium of their clothes that the communist prisoners are represented being closer to the Europeans. The prisoners "walk around with hairstyles irreproachably European", many wear "Western shoes" and "more than half of the men are clothed the European way" (Krarup Nielsen quoted in Mrázek 2020: 14, 29). Their clothes make them similar to, but not entirely,

Europeans: "As a whole, they make a contrast with the dull-brownish-yellow fatigues of the Dutch soldiers who watch over the embankment" (Krarup Nielsen quoted in Mrázek 2020: 14). Aspects of multidirectional and dialogic memory come to the fore in this example, but this can more strongly be seen in Krarup Nielsen's description of the afterlife of Pieter Erbeveld.

#### THE MEMORY OF WHICH HAS BEEN PRESERVED

Memories of earlier violence arise once again when Aage Krarup Nielsen is in Batavia and tells the tale of Pieter Erbeveld. He describes the narrow streets and the big river which runs through the city, comparing it to an unnamed, old forgotten city in the Netherlands on the shores of the Zuiderzee. Only the brown and yellow faces he meets remind him of the fact that the Netherlands is thousands of miles away. It is the contrast between the ancient memorials and the colourful Eastern life which evokes for him the romantic past of travellers and golden adventures (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 45).

It is a wondrous feeling to find among these reminders of earlier times a couple of "relics" in old Batavia, whose legends curiously direct attention to the question which can be considered the most urgent in the Netherlands East Indies now. They remind us that the idea of ending Dutch rule has been around for many centuries. The rebellious spirit, which is causing the Dutch so much trouble at present, is not new. Others - both guilty and innocent - have had to pay for it in days gone by and the memory of which has been preserved. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 46).

The most burning question of the moment to which Krarup Nielsen alludes is the revolutionary emancipation of the Indonesian population. When Krarup Nielsen was writing this it was the communist revolt, but he connected it to an older revolutionary legend. Krarup Nielsen describes a section of an old wall. On the wall hangs a memorial honouring the "detestable memory" of the "traitor" Pieter Erbeveld.

As one can deduce from this sombre inscription, a cruel and bloody historical event underlies this "denouncement". A reminder of a time when fiery passions and a fierce desire for honour flared up in the hearts which competed for the gold and power of the East Indies. (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 46).

The story of Erbeveld in Krarup Nielsen's travelogue recounts that he was born in Batavia, the son of a German father and a Javanese mother. It was said that, together with the Javanese, Kartadrya, and twenty thousand followers, he forged a plan to exterminate all Europeans in Java. Before this alleged plan was to be carried out on 1 January 1722, he was captured and put on trial together with twenty-one native Indonesians. Pieter Erbeveld's fate "would not have shaken posterity to such an extent if it were not for the tragic fact that historical research in later times has shown he was innocent of the crime for which he was put to death" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 47). It transpired

that it was the personal vendetta of the Governor-General, the man who had him arrested, which led to his death.

The dust has now been settled on Java's red soil for a few hundred years, but historical research, which has wavered between guilt and innocence, has not exonerated Pieter Erberfeld [sic!] of his shame; nor will it for the time being, because, in these stormy times, such a "lasting reminder" is needed for the restless Javanese of Batavia, a warning of how a troublemaker will be punished and how a commendable Governor-General will be honoured (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 48).

Pieter Erberfeld's story functions here as a form of multidirectional memory, in which Erberfeld's memory is put into a relationship with the ongoing, in Krarup Nielsen's time, struggles for Independence (Rothberg 2009).<sup>8</sup> Significant to the connection between Erberfeld's fate and "the rebellious spirit" "plaguing" the Netherlands East Indies in Krarup Nielsen's time, is that Erberfeld is "depicted as an Indonesian freedom fighter" in colonial times even though he was not a Javanese but an Indo-European (Honings 2023: 164). Olf Praamstra describes how this image of an "early freedom fighter" was constituted through various mediated reiterations of Erberfeld's story (Praamstra 2021). Krarup Nielsen's reiteration of the story utilizes the past to explain the socio-political relevance of the memory to the times in which Krarup Nielsen was travelling to the Indies. In this case, the impetus for dialogue is raised by Erberfeld's innocence and fate, if anything evoking empathy for his suffering. Even more pronounced is how Krarup Nielsen hereby offers a snapshot of how the Indonesian desire for freedom can indeed be seen as "not new", but as a long struggle for Independence, or in his words, a "rebellious spirit" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 46). The final significant threat to the Self dealt with in the travelogue is miscegenation.

#### THE CHILDREN OF THE NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES AND NOT OF EUROPE

In his comparisons with other colonial empires, Krarup Nielsen makes it clear that not all national subjects are equal, not only in appearance, but also in how colonies are governed. Krarup Nielsen makes value judgements, especially when it comes to which nation is the "better colonialist". In his assessment of the Dutch and the English, the latter are deemed the better colonialists. Focalizing through his Dutch travel companion, Krarup Nielsen concludes that by nature the Dutch are not a ruling people. According to the fearlessly honest, very stubborn travel companion, the Dutch are a simple people consisting of stingy farmers and clever seafarers. The English, on the other hand, possess a carefree superficiality, yet nonetheless rule the world (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 53). The impending problem for the Dutch colonialists, the Dutch travel companion predicts, will be the relationship in which Indo-Europeans

<sup>8</sup> On his journeys through the Netherlands East Indies, the Javanese Purwalelana also visited Batavia, where he stopped at Erberfeld's monument. Here, "Purwalelana implicitly emphasizes how colonialism was bound up with violence" (Honings 2023: 163-164).



stand to them. Here a distinction is made between the "Self" (a white, Dutch colonizer) and an "Other" (the Dutch subject of mixed ancestry, but colonizers nonetheless). The difference between the Dutch and English occurred because the Dutch followed a principle opposite to that of the English.

We have systematically done our best to form an Indo-European population and, without stopping to think, have given it such a place its members can work together with us to manage and advance the Netherlands East Indies; so far this experiment has succeeded (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 57).

The result of this so-called "experiment", the companion continues, is a split in the Indo-European community: on the one hand, there are those that feel and think like Europeans, and, on the other hand, there are those whom the companion describes as the "children of the Netherlands East Indies and not of Europe". "They" are the "ever-growing class of Indo-Europeans who feel neither European nor native" for whom "Holland, where they have never been and never will go, is an infinitely foreign country" (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 57).

The words of the Dutch travel companion are striking in their criticism of Dutch colonialism, but they are "safely" contained by colonialist discourse demonstrated in the praise of colonialism Krarup Nielsen provides at the conclusion of his conversation with the Dutchman:

Nor does his pungent criticism deprive the Dutch – although a small nation of only 7 million – of the honour of having formed the second-largest colonial empire and of working on its civilization and progress using such thorough, scientific methods that no other colonial power surpasses them in this (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 63).

So, even though Krarup Nielsen initially seems to offer grounds for a dialogue – a critical look at past and present political action is presented – the conclusion is that it must be admitted he remains relatively superficial in contemplating possibilities for any bi-directional understanding. The discourse is inevitably colonialist. This can be also palpable in how Krarup Nielsen sees the Dutch. In general, he describes them in a positive light, negating the oppressive colonial structures imposed by them like the clear social hierarchy which has directly influenced those of mixed ancestry. Krarup Nielsen writes repeatedly of the Dutch as being "friendly" towards him. He is also more positive about Dutch colonialism in comparison to other colonizing nations:

Nor should it be forgotten that they are the only colonial power to have hospitably admitted young men of other nationalities to their colonial service on the same terms and with the same prospects as the sons of their own country (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 63).

In this example, Krarup Nielsen has mentioned the internal threat to the Self which is miscegenation. The Dutch companion with whom he is conversing recognizes how the freedom movements in China and British India are top

of the agenda in the minds of the mixed ancestry youth in the Netherlands East Indies (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 57). In looking back, Krarup Nielsen is also looking forward. He presents an anticipatory view of events which will happen in a revolutionary form in the decades following the publication of his travelogue.

Talking about the communist revolt, but extended by me, Krarup Nielsen (1930: 36) states that the real question which needs to be answered is what influence these kinds of (communist) threats “have on the ordinary population and what are the future chances that they will develop into a truly threatening factor for the Dutch colonial empire”. In *Between cannibals and birds of paradise*, Krarup Nielsen offers an early entrance for dialogue when he sets out two Dutch perspectives on this question: there are those who “swear by the harsh measures of earlier times” and claim that all deserve to be hanged if one wants peace, and there are those who support the opposite policy, “which seeks to win over the population through forbearance and appeasement” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 38). He does not dare to declare which approach is the better, and concludes that one must wait to see what the future holds for “that great colonial empire, which the small motherland has managed to build with such great energy and expedience” (Krarup Nielsen 1930: 38-39). Through his reflections on transnational threats like communism, revolutionary emancipation, and mixed ancestry, Krarup Nielsen draws connections between earlier and contemporary events. In these connections, the Dutch were implicated in their own problems. They would be better off not underestimating the power that opposition to the colonial status quo held, whether its roots lay in beliefs, spirit, or exclusion.

## CONCLUSION

*Between cannibals and birds of paradise* is an object of colonial life-writing, and therefore an object of memory, as it recalls the journeys that Aage Krarup Nielsen made through the Netherlands East Indies. The rub is that the narratives which tell a life story are many and varied as “autobiographers often stray into fiction, and infiltrate the lives of others into their own stories” (Hermione Lee 2015: 124). For Krarup Nielsen, this foible meant that his own experiences were intertwined with the experiences of those he met on his journey. Consequently, the final narrative of his journey is both highly personal and collected and combined. Indeed, “remembrance results from a mix of individual and collective memories, and involves a narrative structure of the past remembered”, which “allows a multilayered understanding and performance of past events” (Simona Mitroiu 2015: 1-2).

Analysing the travel account from within the framework of postcolonial and transnational memory studies, this article has examined it to uncover how the past is remembered in a multi-layered manner. It has done so by answering the question of how encounters with the Other - colonized as well as colonizer - are represented in the Netherlands East Indies. This has been done by looking at the Self in relation to the multicultural colony

and the transnational dangers it faced. It has discussed how the Self in the travelogue is both European and colonial, but also simultaneously layered as not all Europeans in the colony are equal because of embedded "Others". In *Between cannibals and birds of paradise*, three so-called transnational threats to the Self are discussed: communism, mixed ancestry, and revolutionary emancipation. By addressing these threats in connection to other histories both inside and outside of the Netherlands East Indies, Krarup Nielsen illustrates aspects of multidirectional, entangled, dialogic memories. In doing so, he has made border-crossing connections which augment our understanding of the Netherlands East Indies.

In the context of Hungarian authors in the Dutch colonies, Gábor Pusztai has argued that "what was special about these people was that, as outsiders, they did write about the same things as their Dutch colleagues, yet in a different way. They *looked* at the same, but they *saw* something else" (Pusztai 2016: 16). This, Pusztai argues, enriches Dutch colonial history as it allows us to have a better understanding of the time in which they lived as well as their motivation, choices and ultimately our own past (Pusztai 2016: 16). Aage Krarup Nielsen wrote about the Self and Other in the Netherlands East Indies as a traveller from a smaller colonial power. This is, as Pusztai argues, important to understanding Dutch colonial history, but also has a concomitant worth beyond it. On the one hand, it gives insights into its similarities and differences to Anglophone and Neerlandophone colonial literature; on the other hand, it is instructive for Danish colonial history. As Mads Anders Baggesgaard (2016: 467) has argued, "Denmark may have played a smaller part than other countries, but Danish colonial history is in no way anecdotal." Moreover, studies of texts like *Between cannibals and birds of paradise* "add important aspects to our understanding of the colonial system and the role of literature and text to this understanding" (Baggesgaard 2016: 467). In a nutshell, there are entanglements to uncover in the understudied cross-cultural encounters which Krarup Nielsen and travellers like him had and this article contributes modestly to this goal. What has been shown is that, by setting sail to sundry shores, the Danish writer Aage Krarup Nielsen painted a transnational picture of power relations which is at times recognizable and at times divergent from other colonial travellers to the Netherlands East Indies.

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