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GENDER AND EMPIRE

POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE "WEST" AND THE "EAST", 17TH-20TH CENTURIES[1]

Introduction

The conference held in Rome celebrated the fact that it has been 25 years since the publication of *Histoire des femmes en Occident*. A quarter century ago, this book series meant a great leap forward, constituting a synthesis of women's history in the west since antiquity. In the early 1990s, at the verge of the emergence of the discipline of gender history, *Histoire des femmes* represented the state of the art in women's history research. It addressed important, hitherto neglected issues in historical research such as: women's voices, the economic and social role of women, in the public as well as the private sphere, and women's relationships to the emerging nation state and their repertoires for gaining equal rights. It provided important building blocks for the 25 years to come, and laid the foundation for new directions in the study of women and gender in the past.

Just a few years earlier, Joan Scott had published her influential article *Gender – a useful category of analysis*, giving new directions in the study of the history of women, men, feminity and masculinity.[2] Instead of merely adding the "her"story of women to the historical narrative, which is highly valuable in itself, gender historians came to see the relations between the sexes as an important organizing principle for societies in past and present. The term gender rejects notions of "men" and "women" as fixed biological binaries, but regards masculinity and femininity as cultural constructions that are adjusted to what particular societies believe are appropriate roles for both men and women. Since "male" and "female" were considered to be social constructions, they could vary over time and space. Moreover, gender often interacted with other identities and

[1] Note that this paper only refers to the topic of gender in European Empires. Some recent literature on gender and empire in other parts of the world: Lal 2005; O'Hanlon 2007, p. 889-923; Dalal 2011, p. 120-165; Kinli 2013, p. 381-395; Altınbaş 2014, p. 114-125.

[2] Scott 1986, p. 1053-1075.

social categorizations, such as class, age, ethnicity and race.[3] These notions led women's and gender historians to turn away from the Neo-Marxism that had been influential for women's history since the 1960s, and to increasingly focus on issues such as culture, identity, and sexuality.[4]

In line with this so-called "cultural", often postmodern, turn, and inspired by the rise of "subaltern studies" in non-western academia, a postcolonial perspective emerged in the fields of women's and gender history in the 1990s. This postcolonial perspective pointed out that from the earliest colonial encounters, gender had been crucial to shape relationships between colonizers and colonized, and, in turn, that colonialism greatly influenced how gender relations developed, not only in the indigenous societies Europeans intruded upon, but also back in the metropole. The concept of gender has implicated major shifts in analytical thinking about identities and categories, also in the imperial context. In turn, the postcolonial perspective has enriched the field of gender history in two important ways. First of all, the questions that were posed a quarter century ago for "women in the west" have now been extended to women in other parts of the world. Second, postcolonial perspectives also allow for an assessment of the importance of empire on the experiences and identity of women in the metropole, even if they never actually travelled to the colonies themselves.

New questions have thus come up, which range from a rather empirical level to more analytical puzzles, such as: how do we uncover the voices of those women in "the shadows of the shadows"[5] – indigenous women – who, being "natives" *and* women, rarely surface in the colonial archives? What role did gender play in the hybrid environments of colonial frontiers, in which different cultures both clashed and intermingled? How "national" is national in the context of empires, which most larger western countries had, and how does empire relate to the notion of women's citizenship both in colony and metropole? More generally, how did colonial connections affect women's identity and gender relations in the metropole?

As Merry Wiesner has recently argued, the study of colonialism and imperialism is one of the few fields that has in recent years been able to bridge the gap between gender history and global history.[6] To illustrate this point, the present chapter aims to give a bird eye's view on developments in postcolonial gender and women's studies

[3] Blom 2001, p.71-88, p. 73.
[4] van Nederveen Meerkerk 2014, p. 175-197, p. 178, 181.
[5] Spivak 1985, p. 247-272, p. 265.
[6] Wiesner-Hanks 2011, p. 357-379, p. 364.

over the past 25 years, and tries to show how this perspective has enriched women's and gender history, also for those who work exclusively on the history of Western women.

Historiographical trends

Two major strands of historiography that have developed over the past decades, leading to this new perspective on women's history have been subaltern studies/postcolonial history and gender history. In the 1980s, the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) emerged, a collective of South Asian historians criticising the way colonial history had been written until then: either by the British or by Asian elites. Many, especially Indian, historians, such as Ranajit Guha, Gyan Prakash, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, had become dissatisfied with the way "national" Indian history was written in the postcolonial period. By focusing on the role of the elites in the struggle for independence and the formation of the Indian nation after 1947, historians had neglected the important role of "the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people".[7] The SSG aimed to recover the voices of subaltern indigenous people and their obscured role in politics and social movements, by focusing on their particular cultural context and following a narrative, non-structuralist approach towards their past. Their initiative was taken up more broadly by historians of colonialism, and developed into postcolonial studies. Although "postcolonial" is a highly debated term, in this context I refer to postcolonial studies as the discipline that critically analyses the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism by taking a multidisciplinary approach inspired by postmodernism and poststructuralism.[8]

Even though many proponents of the SSG themselves did not focus on gender per se,[9] the focus on subaltern groups inevitably led to the study of colonized women. Pioneers in this field were anthropologists in the late 1970s and early 1980s, who recorded the "life histories" of women in the former colonies, including their experiences with imperialism.[10] Since then, an increasing number of "bottom up" case studies have appeared that focus on the histories of those who can be seen as the subaltern of the subaltern: colonized

[7] Guha 1988, p. 46-76, p. 55.
[8] Hasseler – Krebs 2003, p. 90-101, p. 91.
[9] Ballantyne 2003, p. 102-121, p. 108.
[10] Robinson – Chaudhuri 2003, p. 6-14, p. 6, 13 (note 2).

women.[11] This was and still is a daunting task, as colonial archives are the product of negotiations between colonizing men and indigenous men, so that the voices of native women have often been "stifled by both the colonial state and the power of patriarchy".[12] Consequently, in the 1990s, more attention was given to the role of white American and European women in the process of empire building. Instead of merely viewing all women in history as victims without agency, white women's active role as mistresses and slave-owners, teachers and social reformers came to be acknowledged. While these women sometimes actively defied and contested notions of western superiority, more often they confirmed racial differences: whether benevolent towards the indigenous population or not, white women too represented colonial authority.[13]

Such a shift in the historiography of colonized women, from an "emancipating" narrative to retrieve their voices, to more complex analyses of gender, class and ethnic relationships in colonial encounters, illustrates the second strand of literature that has been influential for the study of women in the non-western past: gender history. As briefly noted in the introduction, the late 1980s saw the emergence of the concept of gender, according to which categories of "male" and "female" were no longer considered to be fixed binaries, based on biological traits, but instead ascribed gendered roles and characteristics, that can differ substantially according to geographical and temporal context. Moreover, the development of the history of sexuality laid bare a whole spectrum of gendered identities (bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersexed, etc.), that can hardly be captured with the dichotomy of "male" and "female".[14] Furthermore, it is clear that other identities such as class, race and ethnicity, caste, and religion, interrelate and sometimes conflict with gendered identities.[15] These intersections and tensions between different identities became clear very prominently in the work of those scholars studying colonial encounters in the past, particularly historians of women and gender.

Postcolonial gender historians, most notably in the Anglosaxon world, such as Phillipa Levine, Catherine Hall, Ann Stoler and Anne McClintock, have over the past 25 years made a case for how gender has been constitutive for the imperial project, both in the colonies *and* in the metropoles. Colonial encounters generated a "gender frontier", which at the same time led to cultural clashes and

[11] See for a recent overview: Wiesner-Hanks 2011, p. 369 (note 47).
[12] Ballantyne 2004, p. 107.
[13] Robinson – Chaudhuri 2003, p. 7.
[14] Wiesner-Hanks 2011, p. 359-361.
[15] Heerma van Voss – van der Linden 2002.

misinterpretations regarding expectations of male and female roles, and to the integration of the cultures that came into contact.[16] The most concrete example of this were of course sexual relationships between European men and native women, but gender worked in more implicit ways and on different levels. For instance, the "effeminacy" attributed to Bengal men by the British, served to underscore the masculine superiority of the colonizers and legitimize their dominance over the colony.[17]

In the following, I will give three consecutive examples of how the postcolonial perspective has provided new insights for the history of women and gender relations, and how gender has played a constitutive role in the "imperial project". First, my focus will be on the period of early colonization, which of course differed tremendously for different parts of the world: Latin America and parts of South and South East Asia were very early examples, and Africa experienced European political domination relatively late.[18] Second, I will give several examples of how gender served to legitimize the colonial project by the stereotyping and "emasculation" of indigenous men and how this contributed to nation building in Europe. Third, the influence of empire in relation to the gender roles in people's daily lives, both in the colonies *and* in the metropole, will be explored. It will be argued that gendered and ethnicized notions of the appropriate roles of men and women influenced people's options and practices in both sides of the empire. Overall, I aim to show with these examples how important gender relations were since the earliest colonial encounters, and how gender was vital in these encounters for "producing difference [and similarity] out of incommensurability".[19]

Early colonial encounters and "gender frontiers"

On several levels, gender relations constituted an important factor since the first colonial encounters. Pioneers, sailors and soldiers were usually men, who were not only in need of people to perform the domestic tasks they as boys had not generally learned at home, but also often felt the desire to engage in sexual relations.[20] This did not only translate into the actual interactions between –

[16] Wilson 2004, p. 14-45, p. 23.
[17] Sinha 1995.
[18] Of course, before actual colonization started off with the 1884-5 Berlin conference, Africa had been affected by relations with Europeans for centuries due to its involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
[19] Wilson 2004, p. 23.
[20] van Nederveen Meerkerk 2015, p. 245-253, p. 247.

predominantly male – white Europeans and native women. More in general, colonial encounters created "gender frontiers", in which "two or more culturally specific systems of knowledge about gender and nature met and confronted one another, forcing the invention of new identities and social practices".[21] These confrontations of different gender systems presented the problem of understanding the different expectations on either side regarding the roles of men and women, not only to the historical actors, but also to the historian. The confusion about, as well as the deliberate utilization of, differences in gendered identities often worked both ways. So, for instance, the fifteenth-century Italian navigator Ca' da Mosto designated African men who washed and spun cotton as womanly, and many Spanish *conquistadores* in Latin America remarked upon the "cowardice" of indigenous men, who allegedly "fled like women" at their arrival. In turn, American Indians at times ridiculed and insulted their English and Spanish opponents by calling their behaviour "womanlike".[22]

Apart from such outright juxtapositions, gender frontiers often led to renegotiations of men's and women's roles, both for the colonizers and the colonized.[23] New identities and social practices were formed, not only in the colonies, where direct encounters between two cultures took place, but also in the metropole.[24] An example of the former are the new opportunities and freedoms white European women pioneers experienced, for instance in the Americas, where they often had greater sexual and economic freedoms than in Europe.[25] Also, sexual relations and intermarriage between European men and native women in different parts of the globe led to a redefinition of the expected gender roles both parties had experienced in their own cultures. As Amussen and Poska have argued, "[t]he desperate reliance of many European men on indigenous women for survival belied any overarching imposition of female subordination".[26]

Alliances between early colonizers and indigenous women ranged from sex slavery to prostitution, domestic service, concubinage, marriage and genuinely affective relationships. In Southeast Asia, indigenous elite families not seldom arranged – often temporary – marriages between their daughters and European traders, which were indispensable for their prestige. Moreover, because women were most active in retail trade, such arrangements could

[21] Wilson 2004, p. 23.
[22] Amussen – Poska 2012, p. 342-363, p. 344-345, 352, 356.
[23] See for examples of the latter: Sinha 1995, p. 34; Stoler 1992, p. 514-551, p. 517.
[24] Wilson 2004, p. 15, p. 23.
[25] Amussen – Poska 2012, p. 352, 359.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 355.

lead to considerable advantages for the wives themselves.[27] But also in the case of more long-lasting relationships, indigenous women could obtain considerable agency by engaging with white men. For instance, Javanese women who married a Dutchman had to convert to Christianity and obtain a Christian name, but they were freed from slavery, and the way they raised their children was generally according to their traditions.[28] Similar mutual advantages have been noted for the Americas, where Spanish and French men marrying Indian women improved "both the woman's access to European goods (and therefore her status in her kin group) and the man's economic connections".[29]

In many ways, these forms of association suited the colonial project. The transport to and maintenance of European women in the colonies was considered to be more expensive, which implied that lower officials and soldiers could be paid a smaller stipend if they had a local companion. Affective relationships with indigenous women would also mean that white men were more likely to remain in the colony. Moreover, these women performed domestic tasks that otherwise had to be paid for. Generally, children of European fathers were given the nationality of the metropole, although legislation differed in various empires.[30] In the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, all imperial powers came to agree that intermarriage was a "hindrance to the imposition of European patriarchy".[31] From then on, the migration of European women to the colonies in the Americas and Asia was actively stimulated. Prostitution, cohabitation or mixed-race marriages, earlier conceived as solutions to a problem, now came to be seen as a threat to the imperial project, as interracial sexual contact would lead to the "degeneration" of the "white" race.[32] Mixed-race children especially became the object of intensive concern, symbolizing empires' anxieties of what constituted the "true" Briton, French or Dutch person. In this way, the increasing debates on "race purity" in the colonies were intrinsically interwoven with the formation of national identities in the various metropolitan centers.[33]

Clearly, as the imperial project progressed, and more white Europeans settled in the colonies, their lives became even more

[27] Watson Andaya 1998, p. 11-34, p. 14.
[28] Gelman Taylor 1983, p. 17.
[29] Amussen – Poska 2012, p. 355.
[30] See e.g. for a comparison of French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies on this issue: Stoler 1992.
[31] Amussen – Poska 2012, p. 358.
[32] Stoler 1992, p. 550.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 517.

intertwined with those of the native people. Gender and race formed important markers of difference in these "tense and tender ties" that developed.[34] A very important locus where such intimate relations formed was the colonial household, in which both native men and women were employed or enslaved as domestic workers. The use of male domestic servants in white European households was common throughout colonial Africa, but also occurred in Asia and even in US, where there was a shortage of white women willing to migrate to the Western Frontier.[35] Colonizers consciously utilized gender to designate African or Asian domestic workers as "others". Not only were stereotypical gender roles reversed by employing male domestic workers, but what is more, white men and women called them "houseboys", or depicted them as feminized eunuchs, as in the case of male Chinese domestic workers in the Pacific, thus overtly questioning their masculinity.[36]

This process of setting native men apart by depicting them as feminine or childlike, served to claim the "superiority" of white Europeans, and thus legitimized the colonial dominance over indigenous people, both male and female. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of "guardianship" over colonial people, who were not yet (or would never be) ready for self-government became increasingly important.[37] This leads us to the important issue of the role of gender in controlling and maintaining control over colonized people by stereotyping and "othering" native men.

Gender and the indigenous man

As noted above, from the earliest colonial encounters, Europeans "othered" indigenous men, stereotyping them as feminine or childlike – in other words: unmasculine. When the imperial project as well as colonial settlement advanced in many parts of the world, gendered constructions of difference became increasingly linked to empire building. As indigenous men were supposedly "weak" and "feminine", this indicated their incapacity to rule themselves. Consequently, in Catherine Hall's analysis, it was up to the Europeans "to introduce systems of law and social reform which would "improve" the indigenous population".[38] It is indicative that the weakness of native men was expressed in terms of their relationships to native women.

[34] Stoler 2001, p. 829–865.
[35] van Nederveen Meerkerk 2015, p. 247.
[36] Urban 2015, p. 296-322.
[37] Blom 2001, p. 76.
[38] Hall 2004.

In her excellent study *Colonial Masculinity*, Mrinalini Sinha has carefully scrutinized the British colonizers' discourse and attitudes towards Bengali men. She analyses how native men were depicted as weak and effeminate compared to Englishmen, but at the same time barbaric, suppressing their own wives, by violence, confinement to the home and the custom of child marriage.[39] Similarly, Dutch colonial observers in the Dutch East Indies frequently noted that the Javanese woman "drudge and toil as long as her powers allow her to",[40] whereas her "coolie" husband would restrict his industriousness to a minimum.[41] Thus, the ways in which native men treated their wives to the colonizers formed living proof of the fact that they were inapt to govern themselves, and that they needed guidance from "modern" and "civilized" colonial powers.[42]

Apart from such more general observations about the unmasculine indigenous men, the fact that in their daily lives colonial settlers were confronted with men performing tasks that in the European context were often considered "female" strengthened such ideas. Domestic labour throughout the tropical Empire was predominantly male.[43] The proponents of using men as domestic workers lauded them for their ability to perform heavy manual labor that neither a female domestic servant nor the mistress of the house could do as well. Viewed from the side of the men taking on domestic work, they often preferred this over even harder labor, as was for instance the case in the South-African mines.[44] All of these cases resulted in a complicated mix of gender expectations, in which on the one hand the "masculinity" of African and Asian domestic workers was implicitly and explicitly questioned. On the other hand, as I will show below, their virility and strength were employed for heavy tasks, as well as feared by white settlers.[45]

White settlers – both male and female, especially in the African context, generally referred to their black domestic workers as "boys", regardless of their age. This designation of course implied a patronizing and paternalistic attitude towards male domestic workers, who were in racial and gendered terms denoted as childlike, even if they were adults, and hence, unmasculine. However, this stereotyping in practice encountered grave ambiguities. The particular tropical

[39] Sinha 1995.

[40] *Onderzoek naar de mindere welvaart der Inlandsche bevolking, IXb3, Verheffing van de Inlandsche vrouw*, Batavia, 1914, p. 1.

[41] Levert 1934, p. 247.

[42] Hall 2004, p. 51; Wilson 2004, p. 21.

[43] Bush 2004, p. 77-111, p. 95.

[44] Ally 2015, p. 254-270, p. 263.

[45] van Nederveen Meerkerk 2015, p. 248.

climate, types of food, and diseases often brought white European settler women to distress, and they relied heavily on their male servants, sometimes developing very close relationships with them, at other times much to their dislike. It is clear that settlers depended heavily on their black servants. Also, tensions could develop between white settler wives and indigenous male servants who had run former bachelor households "pretty well without any feminine influence".[46] This sometimes resulted in outright power conflicts, in which black servants at times actively juxtaposed their own cultural values and skills, for instance in cleanliness or food-preparation, to the – in their eyes – shiftless attempts at homemaking of their mistresses. Domestic workers took pride in the fact that they often "knew better", and this rendered them a form of agency that transcends the stereotypical power relations of master-servant and colonizer-colonized. This was for instance forcefully expressed by the "houseboy" Mzee in Interbellum Tanganyika. When his mistress told him he sliced his lemons wrongly, he replied: "I know that some people do it that way, but I do it this way".[47]

Anxieties about the use of male domestic labour in settler colonies also surfaced prominently in the late nineteenth-century US Western Frontier and Australia. Throughout the Anglophone Pacific, there was a shortage of (female) domestic workers in this period, and consequently Chinese migrant labourers were attracted to do this type of work. While proponents called them "the most tractable servants", able to do both householding tasks and more physically straining work such as woodchopping, opposition also arose against hiring male Chinese as domestics.[48] Opponents pointed to the medical and sexual threats that their introduction into white kitchens and bedrooms entailed. Some Chinese migrants, for instance, had been diagnosed with leprosy, and this was widely reported in anti-Chinese pamphlets and periodicals. Moreover, sexual dangers were involved, since Chinese servants were very close to the white ladies of the house, allegedly performing all kinds of intimate duties for them, such as bathing and clothing them.[49] Whereas such concerns related to the assumed virility and sexual vigour of Chinese men, who abused the vulnerability of the white settler woman, simultaneously a quite opposing view of the Chinese domestic worker was coined: that of the unmasculine, sexless "eunuch". Based on a racist evaluation of the Chinese body, that was often smaller and less pilose than that of white men, Chinese servants were, in colonial rhetoric, denied the

[46] As quoted in Bush 2004, p. 92.
[47] As quoted in Pariser 2015, p. 271-295, p. 280.
[48] Urban 2015, p. 297.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 307-311.

possibility that they had similar masculine sexual desires as other men had.[50]

In all of the above examples, ranging from colonial India to Africa and the Pacific, gender formed an important tool to discredit colonized men as "unmanly", "feminine" and/or childlike, which served to legitimize their subordination – and that of their wives and children – to the white race. As we have seen, however, such attitudes and discourses were not uncontested by native men, nor were they static over time. In fact, towards the end of the colonial period, with the rise of nationalism in many colonies, colonial masculinities were reconfigured, as male activists "reclaimed control over the domestic sphere as central to nationalist ideology and to the revalidation of culture and related gender identities."[51] In the process of these nationalist struggles, as well as decolonization following soon after, not only were masculine identities of colonized men strengthened, often at the cost of a further reduction of indigenous women's agency.[52] Furthermore, such redefinitions of colonial masculinity also affected the self-image of the colonizers, in the context of nationalism and decolonization and postcolonial migration to the metropole.[53] This all brings us to the reciprocal effects of colonial encounters and gender identities on both colony *and* metropole.

Gender and the reciprocal effects of colonial connections

In their inspirational work, Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper have emphasized the many ambivalences of colonial rule, and pointed to the importance of recognizing how colonialism not only shaped the histories of the colonies, but just as much those of the metropoles. While the effects of such mutual influences on the metropole have often been indirect or even obscured, such "tensions of empire" are directly relevant for both the history of former colonies and former colonizers. Therefore, we need to "examine thoughtfully the complex ways in which Europe was made from its colonies".[54] When we (re) read the historical archival material from this perspective – placing colonial history not solely in the context of domination and subordination – a more dynamic historical narrative emerges, characterized

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 309, 322.
[51] Bush 2004, p. 100.
[52] Note, for instance, that the role of indigenous women in anti-colonial and nationalist struggles, have largely been obscured in post-colonial national historiographies. E.g. in Indonesia: Robinson 2009, p. 58; India: Bush 2004, p. 101.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[54] Cooper 2005, p. 3.

by tensions, anxieties and paradoxes, collaboration and resistance.[55] Examining these tensions and *mutual* influences will not only lead to a better understanding of the metropolitan as well as the colonial past, but it can also help more fully explain the postcolonial remains of these complex relationships.[56]

Recent scholarship has provided abundant evidence of the reciprocal effects of colonial relations with regard to gender and race. Above, I have already mentioned the debates on mixed-race children, which not only concerned a problem of who should, and who should not, be regarded as "European" in the colonies, but also reflected what constituted national identity in the metropole. Another illustration is that feminists fighting for political rights in the metropole around the turn of the twentieth century, utilized a rhetoric that claimed their superiority to their "lesser" colonial sisters. Indeed, based on this "othering" early twentieth-century white metropolitan feminists felt justified to emancipate oppressed colonized women from what they believed was "a barbaric, patriarchal Asian culture".[57] Still later, in the years after the Second World War, when the European Empires gradually eroded, gender was again crucial in redefining national identities "at home". In the British case, for instance, the struggle for independence transformed the image of the colonized male, and simultaneously the loss of Empire created a crisis in British masculinity. Moreover, the insecurities and cultural clashes postcolonial migration to the (former) metropole entailed, became fundamental to redefining national identities even for those Britons who had never been overseas personally.[58]

Until the present, such analyses of "entangled", "connected" histories, or "transfer" history, have focused very much on cultural and political exchanges: identity, citizenship, nation-building. Far less attention has been given to the socioeconomic transfers that influenced both colonies and metropoles. Even if economic relations formed a factor of relevance in the background, socioeconomic developments themselves, let alone gendered labour relations, have so far much less been studied from this perspective.[59] This constitutes a fundamental lacuna, as labour relations and in particular women's position in the household and in the labour market, signify not only economic, but also important social, cultural and at times political developments.

[55] See e.g.: Stoler 2009.
[56] Stoler – Cooper 1997, p. 1-56, p. 33.
[57] Bush 2004, p. 98.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[59] Ballantyne 2010, p. 429-452.

Already before the nineteenth century, the emergence of Eurasian trade relations involved important changes not only in Asia, but in Europe as well, such as changes in consumer demands that may in turn have been at the basis of transforming production relations.[60] A case in point is the "industrious revolution" that would have occurred in Western Europe preceding the Industrial Revolution, which induced important changes in the allocation of household labour, driven by the wish to consume more and different (exotic) products among large segments of the population.[61] This shift in labour allocation presumably not only concerned the input of extra labour time on the expense of leisure, but also the increased involvement of women's and children's labour in the market economy.[62] At the same time, the earliest colonial encounters likewise – and often more directly – impacted on labour relations outside Europe, for instance with forced labour on plantations and in mines. The importance of indigenous women's labour, and the way colonial encounters changed traditional gendered labour relations, is increasingly being acknowledged in the historiography.[63]

One example from my own recent research project, exploring the relationships between changes in labour allocation in the Netherlands and its most profitable colony, the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia),[64] clearly shows how gendered labour relations, both in the colonial and the metropolitan context, were inextricably connected to colonial policies. In 1830, the Dutch colonial authorities implemented the Cultivation System on Java, the largest and most populous island in the Dutch East Indies. The idea behind this was to "transform" lazy Javanese peasants, who only worked for subsistence, into industriousness farmers, producing tropical export crops such as sugar, coffee and tea for the (Dutch colonial) market.[65] In order to achieve this, Javanese peasants were required to cultivate at least 20% of their land with cash crops, for which the colonial state granted them a (very modest) monetary compensation. This system of forced cultivation, which would be in use until it came under severe attack in Dutch public opinion in the 1860s, not only resulted in huge annual profits for Dutch traders and the treasury,

[60] Berg 2015, p. 1-6 p. 4; de Vries 2015, p. 7-42.
[61] de Vries 1994, p. 249-270; de Vries 2008.
[62] van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008, p. 237-266.
[63] E.g. Gelman Taylor 1983; Amussen – Poska 2012; Ally 2015.
[64] Funded by the Dutch National Science Foundation (NWO-Vidi) *Industriousness in an imperial economy. Interactions of households' work patterns, time allocation and consumption in the Netherlands and the Netherlands-Indies, 1815-1940*. https://www.elisenederveen.com/research_project/industriousness-in-an-imperial-economy/.
[65] Schrauwers 2001, p. 298-328.

but it also fundamentally altered household labour relations in Java. Traditional gendered divisions of labour in subsistence agriculture (mainly rice cultivation) were changed because men had to devote more time to export crop production, and women and children had to increase their workload in food production. Moreover, even if the colonial authorities did not intend to, many women were also increasingly working as wage labourers, for instance in tea leaf cultivation.[66]

The majority of shipments of export crops from Java to Amsterdam was handled by the Dutch Trading Company, a semi-private company that gained a favourable trading position by the Dutch state. Apart from the exports from Java, this company was also made responsible for the major share of imports of Dutch factory-made textiles into the Dutch East Indies. By conquering the Javanese market, that was growing in terms of population as well as monetization, the Netherlands, which was comparatively late to industrialize, aimed to get a boost in mechanized textile production. Indeed, the Netherlands swiftly industrialized, especially textile areas in the East and the South of the country. Dutch factories increasingly employed women and children as cheap wage labourers, to be as competitive as possible in the national and international market. While building on a tradition of female and child employment in the cottage industry, labour relations in the households nevertheless drastically changed, as the spheres of the home and the workplace were increasingly separated.[67]

Mechanization in the Netherlands not only led to changes in the physical workplace, but also in the division of labour between men and women. Whereas hand spinning had traditionally been a job performed mainly by women and children,[68] the spinning mills instead mainly employed adult men, who were generally assisted by boys. Women and girls were nevertheless also amply employed in the new factories, for tasks such as burling, darning and roving.[69] This was reflected in the labour force participation of unmarried women. The percentage of women who stated an occupation at marriage in the town of Enschede, one of the major textile centres of Twente, after a steep decline in the first decades of the nineteenth century, showed a remarkable increase from the 1840s onwards, rising up

[66] Arsip Nasional Jakarta (ANRI), inv. no. 1621, *Cultuurverslag Preanger Regentschappen* 1862.

[67] Brouwer – van Eijndhoven 1981, p. 83-116, p. 83-84.

[68] See e.g. van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008.

[69] van Nederveen Meerkerk – Heerma van Voss – Hiemstra 2010, p. 363-398, p. 379-380.

to levels of 75% towards the end of the century.[70] Married women, on the other hand, who had been very important in protoindustrial textile production, were not particularly welcome in the factories, although norms and values differed regionally.[71] Of course, many of these changes may have occurred if there had been no colonial links, but surely with a much different scope and timing. Some factory owners expressed their awareness that they could afford to pay their labourers relatively high wages due to colonial connections, as "the prosperity and development of our colonies is vital for our industry and thus benefits our labourers as well".[72] In the same period, Dutch textile manufacturers jointly launched an initiative to transport 4,000 of their factory workers by train to a National Exhibition of Colonial Industry, where they could see with their own eyes the finished *batiks* (traditional Javanese wax-painted cloth) for which they had produced the semi-finished white cloth in the Netherlands.[73]

This brings us to yet another connection between Dutch and Javanese changing labour relations. Many historians have contended that the Dutch imports of textiles ruined traditional Javanese textile production.[74] Closer scrutiny, however, shows that this image needs to be refined. While hand spinning swiftly declined over the nineteenth century, imported factory yarns were both very suitable for hand weaving, and less time-consuming for Javanese women, who could free labour to operate the hand loom. Local demand for indigenous textile products such as sarongs and head scarfs continued to stimulate hand weaving as a side activity for women until the 1920s, both for households' own consumption and for the market. Also, about 50% of all European imports were semi-finished bleached cloth. The factory-printed European calicoes for a long time faced severe competition from new indigenous printing techniques (*cap batik*) from the 1860s onwards. The Javanese prints were of much higher quality than the European ones, and any native who could afford it, would prefer locally made printed cloth. Remarkably, this response to the Dutch imports, like in the case of agriculture, also involved a shift in traditional gender relations: for the first time, indigenous men became increasingly involved in the printing of textiles (*cap batik*), which had traditionally been an elite women's

[70] Boter 2014, p. 10.

[71] Janssens 2009, p. 87-114, p. 94.

[72] *Arbeidsenquête Twente* (1890) 223. Acknowledgments to Corinne Boter for providing this quote.

[73] Legêne 2010, p. 132-133.

[74] E.g. Boomgaard 1981, p. 16-17; Lindblad 1994, p. 89-104; van Zanden – Marks 2012, p. 92-93.

craft (*batik*).[75] These handicraft products in turn were not only consumed by the Indonesian people, but also became increasingly popular among (especially female) Dutch settlers in the East Indies, and in the Netherlands among repatriates as well as those who had never set foot in the colony.[76]

As these examples from the recent literature as well as from my own empirical work show, colonial relations not only influenced the gendered identities, relationships, and daily lives of the colonized and the small number of white settler colonizers. More generally, colonial connections sometimes explicitly, but often more implicitly, influenced the self-image, the household labour relations, as well as the consumption patterns of those inhabitants in the metropole, male and female, even if they had never travelled far outside their home town. The recent focus of gender historians on colonial influences on metropolitan women has also encountered some criticism, stressing the danger of again shifting the attention to white women.[77] However, if we attempt a true reciprocal analysis, we envisage to include both the voices of the most obscured women, the colonized, and those of their white European counterparts, who were sometimes victims, but at other times quite patronizing or even oppressors in the colonial or the metropolitan context. Such analyses will lead to a better understanding of the dynamics and mechanisms behind gender systems and how colonial encounters altered those, both in the colonies and in the metropoles. In this sense, I agree with Amussen and Poska that exactly the study of gender relations "provides a fruitful starting point for trans-imperial analysis".[78]

Conclusion

As I hope to have convincingly argued in this chapter, the post-colonial perspective has greatly enriched the field of gender and women's history over the past 25 years. First of all, it has tried to uncover the voices of indigenous women, which inevitably required an interdisciplinary approach, most notably a liaison with anthropology, as the colonial archives seldom record those "subaltern of the subaltern". Second, historians of imperialism and colonialism have widened the scope of women's and gender studies, which until three decades ago focused mainly on the history of women

[75] van Nederveen Meerkerk 2017.
[76] Legêne 2010, p. 132.
[77] Robinson – Chaudhuri 2003, p. 7.
[78] Amussen – Poska 2012, p. 344.

in "the West". Not only the colonial period, but also experiences of women and the workings of gender in the postcolonial world have gained increasing attention over the past few years, for instance in the field of migration history.[79] Gender, together with race/ethnicity and class, has formed a constitutive element of empire formation, and moreover has continued to shape relationships worldwide in the postcolonial era. Third, the recent approach of "entangled" or "connected" histories has moreover shown the relevance of gendered colonial and postcolonial influences in both the colonies and the metropoles. Whereas a rising number of studies in this field have appeared that have focused on issues such as culture, identity and politics, towards the end of this chapter I have made a case for including socioeconomic, and especially labour, relations into such analyses. Labour forms a crucial element in the daily lives and subsistence of people around the world, but also has symbolic and political meanings, that have been highly gendered throughout history. Therefore, the – as of yet understudied – mutual influences of empire on colonial and postcolonial labour relations forms a highly relevant research topic for years to come.

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[79] See e.g. Marchetti 2014. For good overviews of the literature see e.g.: Wiesner-Hanks 2011; Hoerder 2015, p. 61-112.

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