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Education, Labour, and Discipline: New Perspectives on Imperial Practices and Indigenous Children in Colonial Asia*

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ABSTRACT: This article provides an introduction to the two articles in this Special Theme on education, labour, and discipline in colonial Asia. It offers a brief historiography of education to indigenous children in the colonial context provided by non-state as well as state actors. We argue that while many studies have separated the motives behind, and actions of, these different actors in relation to education and "civilizing missions", it is worthwhile connecting these histories. Moreover, apart from looking at motives, the articles in this Special Theme aim to show the value of studying educational *practices* in a colonial context. Finally, this introduction identifies several opportunities for future – comparative as well as transnational – studies into the topic of education, child labour, and discipline.

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EDUCATION, CHILD LABOUR, AND COLONIALISM

Education is generally considered a vital ingredient for the well-being and development of societies. There are clearly established positive links between the level of education, a skilled labour force, economic performance, and a healthier population. Despite considerable improvements in primary education in recent decades, however, many countries in the Global South still struggle with improving accessibility to and raising the quality of their educational systems.[1] In recent decades, scholars have debated the longer-term legacies of colonial educational policies in relation to access to education and the development of literacy in post-independence states. For French West Africa, for instance, Elise Huillery has found clear long-term negative effects of colonial investments in education on enrolment rates in the 1990s.[2] For Asia, the enduring colonial legacies of educational development have been established, leading to differentiated enrolment and literacy rates long into the post-independence period.[3]

Although a wide literature on education under colonialism began to appear as early as the colonial period, much of this has tended to take a highly top-down approach. As the next section will elaborate in more detail, the literature can broadly be divided into four different strands. Firstly, from the earliest colonial encounters onwards there were – more as well as less successful – attempts to establish missionary education, with a clear focus on the "moral uplifting" and conversion of indigenous populations.[4] Secondly, another strand of literature has focused on the introduction of primary education in the context of the "civilizing missions" of colonial governments in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such projects tended to have more secular motives, such as the legitimation of imperial rule, the introduction of "modernity", and, in the case of some French colonies, an attempt to ensure the politics of "assimilation".[5] Thirdly, historians have recently begun

1. Bob W. White, "Talk about School: Education and the Colonial Project in French and British Africa (1860–1960)", *Comparative Education*, 32:1 (1996), pp. 9–26, 22; Latika Chaudhary and Manuj Garg, "Does History Matter? Colonial Education Investments in India", *Economic History Review*, 68:3 (2015), pp. 937–961, 937.

2. Elise Huillery, "History Matters: The Long-Term Impact of Colonial Public Investments in French West Africa", *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1:2 (2009), pp. 176–215.

3. For example, Ewout Frankema, "Why was the Dutch Legacy so Poor? Educational Development in the Netherlands Indies, 1871–1942", *Masyarakat Indonesia*, 39:2 (2013), pp. 307–326; Chaudhary and Garg, "Does History Matter?".

4. Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham, NC [etc.], 2014); Larry Prochner, Helen May, and Baljit Kaur, "'The Blessings of Civilisation': Nineteenth-Century Missionary Infant Schools for Young Native Children in Three Colonial Settings – India, Canada and New Zealand 1820s–1840s", *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, 45:1–2 (2009), pp. 83–102.

5. Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, CA, 1997); Rebecca Rogers, "Teaching Morality and Religion in

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conducting empirical statistical analyses at the level of investments in education – or lack thereof – by colonial governments.[6] A fourth, more recent strand of literature, analyses colonial education through the lens of a less strict division between missionaries and state actors. These works demonstrate the complex dynamics between the missions, the state, and indigenous actors that were at play beyond their often conflicting interests.[7]

This is the historiographical tradition in which this Special Theme wishes to place itself. The articles that follow focus on practices of education in the colonial period, in which missionaries, colonial states, as well as indigenous agents played important roles. The authors, Maaike Derksen and Soni, explore the particular contexts of two territories in colonial Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the Dutch East Indies and India. The articles consider how educational practices on the ground involving indigenous children connected to the – sometimes implicit, sometimes very outspoken – aims of disciplining their minds and bodies and turning them into "(more) civilized" subjects of the colonial state and religious authorities. Mental and physical preparation for a life of labour was an important means for reaching this goal.

The approach chosen by our authors highlights the intrinsic ambiguities regarding the motives and practices of colonial education. For example, around 1900, when the Dutch established an ambitious new Ethical Policy [*ethische politiek*] to improve the welfare of the indigenous population in the Dutch East Indies, basic education for children other than the elite was of little concern to the colonial government. Even though 1907 saw the establishment of the first vernacular primary schools [*volksscholen*], these never reached the majority of indigenous children. The idleness of indigenous children was perceived as a much larger problem and, instead of asking how many children were in school, the very extensive report on the declining welfare of the native population of Java and Madura raised the issue of whether there was sufficient opportunity for wage employment for children.[8] For the colonial

Nineteenth-Century Colonial Algeria: Gender and the Civilising Mission", *History of Education*, 40:6 (2011), pp. 741–759.

6. For sub-Saharan Africa, see, for example, Huillery, "History Matters"; Ewout Frankema, "The Origins of Formal Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Was British Rule More Benign?", *European Review of Economic History*, 16:4 (2012), pp. 335–355; Elise Huillery, "The Black Man's Burden: The Cost of Colonization of French West Africa", *The Journal of Economic History*, 74:1 (2014), pp. 1–38. For Asia, see, for example, Frankema, "Why was the Dutch Legacy so Poor?"; Chaudhary and Garg, "Does History Matter?".

7. Rogers, "Teaching Morality"; Felicity Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire. Part I: Church-State Relations and Indigenous Actions and Reactions", *History Compass*, 10:4 (2012), pp. 294–305.

8. Ben White, "Childhood, Work and Education, 1900–2000: The Netherlands and Netherlands Indies/Indonesia Compared", *Brood en Rozen*, 6:4 (2001), pp. 105–119, 109. *Onderzoek naar de mindere welvaart der inlandsche bevolking op Java en Madoera. IXb3. Verheffing van de inlandsche vrouw. Deel VII. van 't overzicht van enz. de economie van de desa (slotbeschouwingen, derde gedeelte)* (Batavia, 1914).

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state, the issue of idleness was closely related to the threat to private property, increasing rates of criminal activities, and a more general anxiety that such developments might lead to the breakdown of empire. As a consequence of such anxieties, colonial reform projects for children whom the state categorized as "criminal" were also based on the assumed reformative potential of labour and vocational training.[9] Likewise, non-governmental actors, such as missionaries and social welfare institutions, prioritized the moral and physical disciplining of children over their intellectual upbringing, as the articles in this Special Theme will show. So far, very few scholars have touched upon the manner in which the vice of idleness was perceived by non-state actors. Indigenous actors in particular have been left out of the picture in this regard. This introduction will continue with a more elaborate overview of the main topics in the historiography mentioned above. It will then further explore the contribution of the two articles in this Special Theme. Finally, we highlight some promising directions for further research.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Missionary education

Ever since the first colonial encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, Christian missionaries have played an important role in the provision of education to indigenous children. Until the late nineteenth century, when colonial governments increasingly started to engage in this domain, Roman Catholic and Protestant missions were the only ones providing Western education in many colonial contexts. Missionary schooling was provided both in more formal institutions (e.g. schools, seminaries) and in non-institutional ways (missionaries acting as "role models", one-to-one instructional conversations, for example).[10] In some places, such as Dutch New Guinea, missionary families also took indigenous children into their homes as "foster children".[11] Much of the historiography on missionary education has described the motives of Christian agents as a deeply felt "religious responsibility" to instil indigenous people with "a few fundamental truths [and] to get them deeply rooted in the

9. Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India, 1850–1945* (London, 2005), pp. 94–96; Annelieke Dirks, "For the Youth: Juvenile Delinquency, Colonial Civil Society and the Late Colonial State in the Netherlands Indies, 1872–1942" (Ph.D. dissertation, Leiden University, 2011), pp. 230–243.

10. Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education", pp. 294–295.

11. Geertje Mak, "Huishouden in Nederlands Nieuw Guinea. Geschiedenis van geslacht op geslacht", inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Amsterdam, 6 July 2017.

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heart".[12] Although authors have certainly paid attention to the mutual dependency of missions and colonial governments in their quest to educate colonial subjects, much of the literature distinguishes sharply between their motives. According to this distinction, missionaries strived for the moral and religious uplifting of the population, whereas the secular authorities were more interested in educating "a section of colonial society to become good subjects of that society".[13] In their extensive study of Christianity in the Dutch East Indies, for example, Aritonang and Steenbrink state that the civilizing attempts by missionaries were not an end in themselves, but a means to establish the Kingdom of God.[14]

Indeed, the interests of missionaries and colonial authorities often collided. In many colonial contexts, for instance, colonial governments were wary of missionary activities that could cause tensions among the population, especially in areas with a significant non-Christian – Muslim or Hindu – population. In order to avoid resistance and conflict in such regions, both British and Dutch authorities restricted or even prohibited missionary education in Islamic parts of their empire, such as northern Nigeria or large parts of Java and Sumatra.[15] In the French Empire particularly, the authorities propagated the principle of *laïcité* (secularism) with regard to education for the metropole as well as for the colonies, not always to the liking of missionaries.[16] In the conclusion to his book about conflicts between Catholic missionaries and *républicains* in French colonial territories around the world, J.P. Daughton has stressed that "indigenous populations did not face a unified colonial presence but one fraught with inconsistencies, conflict, and contradictions".[17]

Many more examples can be given of the conflicting interests of secular and religious agents with regard to colonial education. However, over the past few years, it has become increasingly clear that religion and politics in the colonies were not just oppositional, but intertwined. As Felicity Jensz has noted, scholars have not yet sufficiently investigated how missionaries and their indigenous students increasingly became agents of the colonial state's civilizing

12. Catherine Hall, "Making Colonial Subjects: Education in the Age of Empire", *History of Education*, 37:6 (2008), pp. 773–787, 778.
13. Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education", p. 296.
14. J.S. Aritonang and K. Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden [etc.], 2008), p. 146.
15. Frankema, "The Origins of Formal Education", pp. 352–353; Maaike Derksen, "'On their Javanese Sprout We Need to Graft the European Civilisation': Fashioning Local Intermediaries in the Dutch Catholic Mission, 1900–1942", *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 19:1 (2016), pp. 29–55, 33.
16. Philippe Delisle (ed.), *L'anticléricalisme dans les colonies françaises sous la Troisième Republique* (Paris, 2009).
17. J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880–1914* (Oxford, 2006), p. 263.

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projects.[18] The articles by Maaike Derksen and Soni are a valuable step in the right direction, as they provide an integrated analysis of private and public, as well as European and indigenous actors in colonial education.

The colonial state, its civilizing mission, and primary education[19]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, colonial authorities increasingly became involved in the provision of education for indigenous children. Although the British by no means developed a uniform system throughout their empire,[20] colonial education did become institutionalized. And around the turn of the century, several departments of education were established in the British, Dutch, and French empires. Consequently, in many cases, missionaries lost their privileged positions as providers of Western education.[21] Providing indigenous children with basic education was not a goal in itself for the European imperial powers that ruled over them. In fact, for a long time the endeavours of colonial administrations focused primarily on education for the elites, while the lower classes in indigenous society were targeted largely by missionary education. Whereas historians initially concluded that that education merely served to train clerks for the colonial administration,[22] the role of education has more recently been reviewed as being linked to the "great moral agenda of colonialism".[23] Both for the British Indian and the Dutch East Indies contexts, it has been established that educating indigenous children served to legitimize the colonizers' imperial rule. Western knowledge was juxtaposed to traditional, irrational, and "backward" types of indigenous knowledge, and thus represented modernity and rationality, which served to justify Western hegemony over the colonized peoples.[24]

18. Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education", p. 297.
19. In the context of this introduction, we define primary education as those schools at the lowest level in educational systems, typically providing education to children up to the age of twelve or younger. For a first step towards a transnational approach to higher education in colonial Asia, see Sara Legrandjacques, "Interconnexions universitaires. Pour une approche transimpériale de l'enseignement supérieur en Asie coloniale, années 1850–1930", *Les Cahiers Sirice*, 20:1 (2018), pp. 29–48.
20. Clive Whitehead, *Colonial Educators: The British Indian and Colonial Education Service* (London [etc.], 2003), p. 5.
21. Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education", p. 297.
22. See, for example, Satadru Sen, "The Politics of Deracination: Empire, Education and Elite Children in Colonial India", *Studies in History*, 19:1 (2003), pp. 19–39.
23. Catriona Ellis, "Education for All: Reassessing the Historiography of Education in Colonial India", *History Compass*, 7:2 (2009), pp. 363–375, 364.
24. For India, see, for example, Michael Mann, "'Torchbearers Upon the Path of Progress': Britain's Ideology of a 'Moral and Material Progress' in India. An Introductory Essay", in Harold Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (eds), *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London, 2004), p. 8; Ellis, "Education for All", p. 365. For the

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Public education in colonial contexts has been studied by scholars since the colonial period. I.J. Brugmans's *Geschiedenis van het onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië*, for example, was published in 1938, a few years before Dutch rule there came to its violent end. In the preface, Brugmans, himself a civil servant in the education department of the colonial government, described education as "a cornerstone of colonial politics".[25] Brugmans's contemporary Furnivall, who made a comparative study of educational policies in South East Asia, was nevertheless quite critical about the implementation of Dutch educational policies.[26] Later authors have also looked predominantly at education as an integral part of the politics of colonial governments. Examples of such an outlook in the context of the Dutch East Indies are Jan Lelyveld's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation and Francien van Anrooij's work on the educational politics of Governor General D. Fock.[27] This approach also prevailed for a long time among those writing about other colonial contexts, such as French Indochina.[28]

Expenditure on colonial education and long-term implications

Neither the colonial government in British India, nor that in the Dutch East Indies ever intended to establish a comprehensive school system for all children. In India, the British envisaged a system in which Indians would be encouraged to establish and maintain their own schools, perhaps supported by some government grants.[29] Although the Dutch did establish village schools in the context of the Ethical Policy, implementation was very slow, partly because local villagers bore the bulk of the costs themselves.[30]

Indeed, Dutch engagement with primary education was notoriously poor, leading to very low enrolment rates. While in the Netherlands, in 1905, around ninety-five per cent of children between six and twelve years went to school, no more than five per cent of all indigenous children received several years of

Dutch East Indies, see, for example, Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben, "Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890–1950", in *idem* (eds), *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief. Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890–1950* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 7–24.

25. I.J. Brugmans, *Geschiedenis van het onderwijs in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Groningen [etc.], 1938), preface.

26. John S. Furnivall, *Educational Progress in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1943).

27. J.E.A.M. Lelyveld, "'…Waarlijk geen overdaad, doch een dringende eisch'. Koloniaal onderwijs en onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië 1893–1942" (Ph.D., University of Utrecht, 1992); Francien van Anrooij, *Groeiend wantrouwen. Onderwijsbeleid in Nederlands-Indië onder gouverneur-generaal D. Fock (1921–1926)* (Amsterdam, 2000).

28. Van Thao Trinh, *L'école française en Indochine* (Paris, 1995); Pascale Bezançon, *Une colonisation éducatrice. L'expérience indochinoise (1860–1945)* (Paris, 2002).

29. Whitehead, *Colonial Educators*, pp. 5–6.

30. White, "Childhood, Work and Education", p. 110.

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official education.[31] The Ethical Policy did lead to the establishment of more schools, but towards the end of the colonial period, in the 1930s, less than a quarter of children in the Dutch East Indies were enrolled in primary schooling.[32] This directly related to the low investments in education in the Dutch East Indies. Compared with the Philippines, for instance, per capita expenditure on education was five times lower in 1908, and still 3.5 times lower in 1929. Moreover, most of the colonial government's investment went to schools for children with European legal status and for ethnic Chinese children.[33]

Although the Dutch perhaps fared a little worse than other colonial powers in South East Asia, the scant financial attention paid by the colonial state to primary education was by no means a Dutch prerogative. Although the British did slightly better in Malaya and Burma, enrolment rates were also quite low there. The French paid even less attention to their colonies in the region, as the poor performance of French Indochina school attendance in the 1930s shows.[34] In British Africa, too, expenditure on primary education fluctuated between a mere three to six per cent of total government expenditure.[35] The French probably did even worse in West Africa, where investments in education were very low, and the fiscal burden for public provisions such as education was put mostly on Africans themselves.[36]

Likewise, public spending in British India was very low, although there were marked variations across the colony.[37] Only in the late nineteenth century did the British colonial administration realize that the neglect of mass education had backfired, in the form of a glut in the employment sector and the resulting fear of nationwide discontent. As a result, the state intervened to restructure mass-based primary education in the subcontinent.[38] As in other contexts, colonial investments in primary education in India are found to have had persistent effects on post-independence literacy. This clearly shows the importance of studying the historical roots of colonial educational policies. On the other hand, the effects of colonial rule seem to have lasted

31. Many indigenous children did receive religious education at Islamic schools, but those were often looked down upon and seen as a potential threat by the colonial authorities. Frankema, "Why was the Dutch Legacy so Poor?".
32. Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Women, Work and Colonialism in the Netherlands and Java: Comparisons, Contrasts, and Connections, 1830–1940* (Basingstoke, 2019), p. 243.
33. Frankema, "Why was the Dutch Legacy so Poor?", p. 317.
34. Furnivall, *Educational Progress*, p. 111. Gail P. Kelly, "Colonialism, Indigenous Society, and School Practices: French West Africa and Indochina, 1918–1938", in Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly (eds), *Education and the Colonial Experience* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984), pp. 9–32.
35. Frankema, "Why was the Dutch Legacy so Poor?", p. 315.
36. Huillery, "History Matters"; Kelly, "Colonialism, Indigenous Society, and School Practices".
37. Chaudhary and Garg, "Does History Matter?", p. 943.
38. Aparna Basu, "Indian Primary Education, 1900–1920", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 8:3 (1971), pp. 284–297, 284–286; Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik, *A History of Education in India During the British Period* (Bombay, 1951).

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only up until the 1970s, indicating that, apart from colonial institutions, postcolonial policies significantly mattered as well.[39]

While all of the works listed above have been important in giving us a clear image of governmental politics surrounding colonial education, these narratives have often amounted to an enumeration of laws and political decisions, which did little to give insight into the everyday experiences of school children. Recent research has shown that "the inculcation of industrious work habits" was integral to educational programmes in many contexts.[40] It is this relationship between education on the ground and children's transformation into disciplined labourers that this Special Theme aims to explore further.

EDUCATION, LABOUR, AND DISCIPLINE IN IN COLONIAL ASIA: TWO CASE STUDIES

In order to capture educational practices more accurately, it is important, the authors in this Special Theme argue, for historians to make two crucial interventions. Firstly, historians of colonialism and empire with an interest in education would do well to consider the important role of non-state actors in providing education to indigenous children in colonial territories. This is a direction that, to date, has been fruitfully explored by, in particular, scholars of gender and women's history. Historians of girls' education have paid more attention to non-state actors than to other actors, because the state often focused on the education of (elite) boys. It was in the interests of the colonial government to educate boys for administrative positions in the civil service.[41] Girls' education, by contrast, was usually directed towards the domestic sphere, an area that the colonial state considered to be beyond its reach. There were, however, exceptions to this rule. In French West Africa, for example, the government established *grandes écoles* for girls from elite families who were, in the eyes of the French, destined to become enlightened mothers and wives.[42] Groups interested in the reform of indigenous domestic spheres, such as Christian missionaries, often initiated this type of education.[43] Scholars interested in this religious aspect have recently also turned to other religious communities. Shenila Khoja-Moolji, for example, has focused on

39. Chaudhary and Garg, "Does History Matter?", p. 960.
40. Rogers, "Teaching Morality", p. 744.
41. See, for example, Sen, "The Politics of Deracination".
42. Pascale Barthélémy, *Africaines et diplômées à l'époque coloniale (1918–1957)* (Rennes, 2010).
43. Patricia Pok-kwan Chiu, "'A Position of Usefulness': Gendering History of Girls' Education in Colonial Hong Kong (1850s–1890s)", *History of Education*, 37:6 (2008), pp. 789–805; Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly (eds), *Divine Domesticities: Christian Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific* (Canberra, 2014); Derksen, "'On Their Javanese Sprout'", pp. 29–55; Kirsten Kamphuis, "Giving for Girls: Reconsidering Colonial Civilizing Missions in the Dutch East Indies through Charitable Girls' Education", *New Global Studies*, 12:2 (2018), pp. 217–234.

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the discursive production of "respectable" educated Muslim women in colonial Pakistan through discussions between mostly upper-class local women.[44] To a more limited extent, charitable organizations and European bourgeois women who felt attracted to this cause also organized educational initiatives for girls.[45]

Besides highlighting the diversity of colonial educational landscapes, historical research on non-governmental educational initiatives also serves to demonstrate the multidimensionality of colonial civilizing missions. Apart from other connections, for instance those between different missionary societies, this shows the entanglements between colonial governments and other actors. For example, as Derksen demonstrates in this Special Theme, the colonial government of the Dutch East Indies and the Roman Catholic mission worked closely together in their "civilizing mission" in Dutch New Guinea. Soni's contribution points to the importance of indigenous civilizing missions directed towards their own social group, which occurred parallel to but also sometimes in contrast with the civilizing efforts of colonial actors.[46] Here, our authors follow an important recent development in the scholarship of empire, namely the inclusion of non-state actors in the analysis of colonial civilizing missions.[47]

Moreover, there is a pressing need for wider recognition of the importance of labour in colonial schools. As both Derksen's and Soni's articles show, educational actors used labour as well as education to instil discipline in indigenous children. This intersection between children's education and their labour is the main intervention of both contributions. In much of the historiography, child labour and schooling are juxtaposed and presented as opposites. Historians tend to discuss the two concepts as if they were mutually exclusive: children could either go to school or be economically productive as labourers.[48] In reality, however, waged or unpaid work and schooling could coexist in the everyday life of children. This is still the case, as Ben White has observed, in

44. Shenila Khoja-Moolji, *Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia* (Oakland, CA, 2018).

45. Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies 1900–1942* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 74–117; Rebecca Rogers, *A Frenchwoman's Imperial Story: Madame Luce in Nineteenth-Century Algeria* (Stanford, CA, 2013).

46. See, for example, Fischer-Tiné and Mann, *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission*; Carey A. Watt, "Philanthropy and Civilizing Missions in India c.1820–1960: States, NGOs and Development", in Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann (eds), *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development* (London [etc.], 2011), pp. 271–316, 280.

47. Bloembergen and Raben, *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief*; Esther Möller, *Orte der Zivilisierungsmission: Französische Schulen im Libanon 1909–1943* (Göttingen, 2013); Kirsten Kamphuis, "Indigenous Girls and Education in a Changing Colonial Society: The Dutch East Indies, c.1880–1942", (Ph.D., European University Institute, 2019).

48. For example, Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Labor Migration and Urban Child Labor During the Colonial Period in Zambia", in Kristoffel Lieten and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (eds), *Child Labour's Global Past, 1650–2000* (Bern, 2011), pp. 595–611, 598, 602.

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contemporary South East Asia, where, "many [children] combine work and school; for some […] work is the only way to stay in school".[49]

This binary between work and school is thus artificial. It hinges on the idea of separated public and private spheres, while many children worked in the home or on family farms. The category of labour, we therefore argue, should be addressed more extensively in the historiography of education and colonialism. The conceptual division between labour and education is not helpful in understanding the realities of particular groups of indigenous children's lives in colonial contexts. Instead, we argue that education and labour in the colonial context involved conflicting and self-reinforcing mechanisms for disciplining indigenous children.

In sum, our Special Theme aims to demonstrate the usefulness of zooming in on educational practices on the ground. The contributing authors highlight how ideas about education, labour, and discipline were constantly changing. This shows that colonial civilizing missions were far from static, uniform discourses. The articles firmly establish the link between education, labour, and discipline in colonial Asia or, more precisely, in the Dutch East Indies and British India.

Apart from this shared aim, the articles overlap in many other ways. Firstly, both Derksen and Soni focus on indigenous children in a historiography that has traditionally put more emphasis on the experiences of mixed-race children, as for instance in the work of Ann Laura Stoler.[50] Taking some of the most marginalized people in colonial societies as the focus of their research, our authors chose a bottom-up approach: their main interest is in the experiences of the indigenous children in question. Both authors also highlight the challenges, mainly at the level of source material, that come with this approach. They have found different solutions to this issue. Derksen has turned to the voices of indigenous "intermediaries", while Soni has been able to find snippets of individual life experiences, thus casting new light on children's employment trajectories. Both authors demonstrate how much historians can do with limited source material, a challenge well-known among historians of childhood.[51]

49. Benjamin White, "Constructing Child Labour: Attitudes to Juvenile Work in Indonesia, 1900–2000", in Rebecca Elmhirst and Ratna Saptari (eds), *Labour in Southeast Asia: Local Processes in a Globalised World* (London [etc.], 2004), p. 78.

50. Ann Laura Stoler, "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia", in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), pp. 198–237.

51. Kristine Alexander, "Can the Girl Guide Speak?: The Perils and Pleasures of Looking for Children's Voices in Archival Research", *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, 4:1 (2012), pp. 132–145.

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Furthermore, in their work, Soni and Derksen try to decentralize the colonial state. They instead stress the diversity of actors in the colonial educational landscape and the interactions between non-governmental institutions and the state. It is striking that institutions of different religious denominations – be it Protestant, Catholic, or Hindu – essentially had the same objectives: teaching work discipline to indigenous children. This undermines the idea that predominantly Protestantism was labour-oriented. It also shows that ideas about an innate aversion to work, which according to many colonial stereotypes was rampant among indigenous people in many contexts, were not always rooted in racial differences, but that class and caste were also of vital importance. As Soni shows, Indian actors also believed that certain groups in India needed to be taught discipline.

Another prominent feature of both articles is the many tensions that educators in colonial Asia dealt with. Firstly, there was a constant tension between labour and education. Children were expected to acquire basic knowledge and skills, but not to become "too educated" lest they came to refuse physical labour. The children in the Indian orphanages Soni focuses on, for example, were encouraged not to see themselves as "too accomplished". Needless to say, there was a very strong class element to this particular debate as well. Other tensions included the time balance between school and work – education, of course, limited a child's number of productive hours – and money. While school was a financial burden, child labour raised income; on the other hand, skilled labour often brought in more money.

The "profitability" that missionaries, orphanage directors, and others identified when they looked at certain groups of indigenous children shows clear parallels with the European context. In the early modern period, numerous initiatives by parishes, diaconates, as well as urban governments were undertaken to instil a work ethic and industriousness among the poor strata of society. To this end, workhouses were erected where young boys and girls learned to spin or to do other low-skilled work. Orphanages of both religious and civic signature, as well, put children to work in order that they might receive vocational training in combination with some hours of elementary education in writing and catechism. In all cases, the objective of employing children as cheap labour was on the minds of the initiators, even if the profitability of most of the projects to raise funds for the institutions involved proved to be disappointing.[52]

52. For example. Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, *De draad in eigen handen. Vrouwen en loonarbeid in de Nederlandse textielnijverheid, 1581–1810* (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 177–179; *idem* and Ariadne Schmidt, "Between Wage Labor and Vocation: Child Labor in Dutch Urban Industry, 1600–1800", *Journal of Social History*, 41:3 (2008), pp. 717–736; Elisabeth Engberg, "Useful and Industrious: Fostering and Rural Child Labour in Nineteenth-Century Sweden", in Lieten and Van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Child Labour's Global Past*, pp. 331–342.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

For centuries, in many regions of the world, labour has been a tool for disciplining, and the European colonies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were no exception. However, the links between labour discipline, education, and the colonial civilizing mission have so far been understudied. By bringing in different – state, religious, and indigenous – actors as well as by focusing on the actual educational practices involving local children, historians will be able to gain deeper insights into the complex dynamics of civilizing missions and the role labour played in them. This Special Theme, of course, deals only with two case studies in colonial Asia: British India and Dutch New Guinea. Additional case studies, involving different colonies within the British and Dutch empires, for instance in British Africa or in the Caribbean, as well as comparisons with other imperial powers, such as French Indochina or French Africa, would be illuminating. As many historians have noted, comparative historical research is an excellent method for discerning patterns of similarity as well as for establishing explanations for differences.[53]

Secondly, it would be interesting to see how labour tied in with practices of child removal in settler territories in North America and Australia. There is a very rich literature on the brutal colonial practices of child removal in such contexts, which victimized generations of indigenous children.[54] Recently, scholars such as the Australian historian Shirleene Robinson have also started to explore how such practices were connected to ideas about labour and discipline. Robinson has shown how the labour of Aboriginal children was "presented as a means of reforming a population that was designated a 'problem' under colonialism".[55] Through the "reformatory potential"[56] of labour, indigenous children were expected to become part of a "servile workforce".[57] To date, historians have tended to see indigenous childhoods in settler and non-settler colonies as two separate domains. As Christina Firpo has observed in her book on mixed-race children in French Indochina, however, some

53. Philippa Levine, "Is Comparative History Possible?", *History and Theory*, 53:3 (2014), pp. 338–344.

54. See, for example, Fiona Paisley, "'Unnecessary Crimes and Tragedies': Race, Gender and Sexuality in Australian Policies of Aboriginal Child Removal", in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (London [etc.], 1999), pp. 134–147; Sarah de Leeuw, "'If Anything is to be Done with the Indian, We Must Catch Him Very Young': Colonial Constructions of Aboriginal Children and the Geographies of Indian Residential Schooling in British Columbia, Canada", *Children's Geographies*, 7:2 (2009), pp. 123–140; Kristine Alexander, "Childhood and Colonialism in Canadian History", *History Compass*, 14:9 (2016), pp. 397–406.

55. Shirleene Robinson, "Resistance and Race: Aboriginal Child Workers in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Australia", in *idem* and Simon Sleight (eds), *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British World* (Basingstoke [etc.], 2016), pp. 129–143, 130.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

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practices surrounding childhood in non-settler colonial areas "bear striking resemblances" to child removal programmes in white settler colonies.[58] As Robinson's work shows, the theme of labour, education, and discipline offers an opportunity to investigate these resemblances.[59]

Finally, comparisons with European contexts as well as transnational approaches will be informative. As several scholars of missionary education and gender in colonial contexts have already shown, some educational actors did not originate from the colonial "motherlands": Danish missionaries were active in South India, while the German Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft worked among the Batak population in the Dutch East Indies.[60] It would be worthwhile investigating how such transnational interactions played out outside the missionary context. Additionally, it would be especially interesting to see how metropolitan powers dealt with labour discipline in relation to education in the motherland as compared to the colony. Studies comparing the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, for instance, have shown that state investments in education as well as enrolment rates in primary education diverged tremendously between metropole and colony.[61] There are strong indications that education and labour were not entirely separate entities in the metropole either. Recent research by victimologist Jan van Dijk has pointed out that between 1860 and 1978 thousands of young Dutch girls were systematically forced to perform labour in the Catholic institutions of the Good Shepherd. This case has received extensive media attention, leading to great public indignation as well as legal claims by victims for compensation. Interestingly, the Order's lawyer argued on behalf of the congregation that putting minor girls to work "was congruent with the prevailing pedagogical opinions of the time".[62] It is the task of historians to put such "pedagogical opinions" under critical scrutiny and to expose the traces that the children subjected to them have left in the archive. This Special Theme hopes to contribute to this.

58. Christina Elizabeth Firpo, *The Uprooted: Race, Children, and Imperialism in French Indochina, 1890–1980* (Honolulu, HA, 2016), pp. 5–6.
59. Robinson, "Resistance and Race".
60. Karen Vallgårda, *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission: Education and Emotions in South India and Denmark* (Basingstoke, 2015); Sita T. van Bemmelen, *Christianity, Colonization, and Gender Relations in North Sumatra: A Patrilineal Society in Flux* (Leiden [etc.], 2018).
61. Van Nederveen Meerkerk, *Women, Work and Colonialism*, p. 244.
62. "Zusters Goede Herder weigeren schikking in zaak dwangarbeid", *NRC*, 11 March 2019.

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