







In line with larger global developments in collection research, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam is in the process of re-evaluating the history of its collections and objects. A pilot study was performed by the author on a selection from the museum's batik collection, which resulted in a new approach to collection history research.

In this bulletin, a picture of Dutch colonial culture is drawn with the help of batik. Studying the social biographies of batik textiles, more specifically the collectors, and then categorising the results, revealed the usefulness of gathering the different contexts objects live in before they become musealised. Not only did the museum learn more about the actual people behind the objects, hence about the different meanings attributed to the objects during their lifetimes, but it also became aware of the very important role batik once played in the colonial socio-cultural environment and continues to play among descendants of the participants in that society. The power of batik as a reminder of times past, which it became for a multitude of internal and external reasons that are explained in this bulletin, makes it a unique and useful instrument for describing Dutch colonial culture.



Bulletin 369

Tropenmuseum

# Collectors Collected

Exploring Dutch colonial culture  
through the study of batik

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# Preface

No museum without collectors. Civil servants, missionaries, military persons and merchants – all of them former inhabitants of the East Indies when it was still a Dutch colony – collected batik textiles. They brought the textiles home and eventually donated or sold them to the museum. The Tropenmuseum now owns a collection of more than 3000 pieces which were collected over a period of more than 150 years.

Ethnographic museums and their collections are testimonies to the contact between people from the West and (in this case) from the East. Batik textiles from Indonesia are the result of intercultural contact *par excellence*. These textiles contain stories of the persons who made them, who wore them and who collected them. We find all this reflected in the iconography. Batik textiles are documents of the times in which they were made, used and collected.

In *Collectors Collected*, Daan van Dartel shows that by looking into the histories of these textiles we gain knowledge not only of elements of Indonesian culture but also of aspects of colonial society. Batik textiles bear witness to the cultural encounter between the colonised and the coloniser. By studying the histories of these textiles, the relationships between representatives of these groups become more transparent.

Itie van Hout  
*Curator of Textiles*  
Tropenmuseum

< A lady dressed in European  
*sarung* and *kebaya*, seated in a  
rickshaw with her child, Medan,  
Sumatra, ca. 1900 (0003 7127)





# Introduction

While researching the collection of Indonesian textiles in preparation for an upcoming exhibition on batik in 2001, the curator of textiles at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Itie van Hout, selected two very rare batiks of great value (photos 1 and 2). The batik cloths are mentioned in the important book on this Indonesian textile decoration technique, *De batikkunst in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Batik art in the Dutch East Indies), written by specialists Gerrit Rouffaer and H.H. Juynboll (1900A: XIII). The batiks had been legated in 1934 to the Tropenmuseum by the late Mr Maurits Enschedé, on whom no further information was available. After careful research, however, which will be presented in chapter four, it became apparent that these textiles had been in his possession because of his work and lifestyle in the former colony of the Netherlands East Indies.

Another batik textile selected for the aforementioned exhibition has its own story to tell and shows a very specific type of patterning in comparison with other such cloths. When looking at the batik, it is as if one were flying above a village, with different structures scattered around rice fields, mountains and forests (photo 3). This type of batik pattern is highly uncommon, and it is only by considering its previous owner that one can come to understand it. This owner was Charles Sayers, an *Indische*<sup>1</sup> painter popular in the 1920s and 1930s, who owned the textile before it was donated to the museum by his widow in 1950 (photo 4). It may very well be that the art of painting is imitated in the cloth, which could account for its collecting pedigree. There are more batiks in the collection that have special characteristics, such as the cloth made of pineapple fibre instead of the usual cotton used for batik. It is unusually large, and the pattern at the head of the cloth, the *kepala*, is also unusual and contains the letter 'L'. Atypical, too, is its bluish green colour (photo 5). The only way one can understand these anomalies is by looking at the maker and at the previous owner of the textile. It was donated to the museum by a Mr. J.W. van Lansberge, who had been the highest government official of the Netherlands East Indies, the governor-general, from 1875 to 1881. Considering the letter 'L' and the size, it seems very probable that the cloth had been made especially for his retirement, since the



date of manufacture is 1881. The deviant colour provides us with a clue as to the probable maker of the batik, the first and important Indo-European batik entrepreneur Carolina von Franquemont (Van Hout, 2001:18-19).

These examples show how objects, in this case batiks, are intricately connected to the people of whose lives they were once part before entering the museum context. Museum collections consist of objects that, at a certain time and for a multitude of reasons, were considered important enough to be added to a museum collection. This process of *musealization* refers to the integration of the objects into part of the shared – Western – human value system. However, before reaching this musealized state, objects can be said to have ‘lived’ a life that started at their birth, when people used energy to create them. After that, an object may have gone through many hands and travelled across many cultures before ending up in a museum collection. These ‘*social lives of things*’ (Appadurai, 1986) or *biographies* (Kopytoff, in Appadurai, 1986:66) of objects are very important when studying museum collections and objects. All the different phases in an object’s *career* (O’Hanlon and Welsch, 2000) contribute to the nature of the object and its importance, and form its historical and social biography. One of the central meanings of a museological object is its documentary value, its function as a source of knowledge. In objects such as batik textiles, the relationships between objects and people are inscribed, and this information is needed in order to properly value the objects. By peeling layers of information from objects, a museum learns about the different contexts the objects have moved in, which makes it possible to (re)present them from as many perspectives as possible. When objects are studied in this way, they shed light on the people and the society they once belonged to, as do the following examples.

In 1933 the Tropenmuseum received a textile from Leonardus Caron. It is a typical *tobara* cloth of the Sa’dan Toraja of Celebes, the present Sulawesi (photo 6); *tobara* are the elderly noblemen of Toraja kampongs. Caron had just resigned as governor of Celebes and its dependencies. He had started his career in the Netherlands East Indies as a civil servant at the Department of Internal Governance and had worked his way up, holding several high positions in local governance throughout the archipelago. He returned to his home country in 1933, where he became a doctor of law and donated several objects to the museum. One of them was this textile, which bore a strong association with his colonial past. It shows that Caron had a soft spot for the Colonial Institute, for during the Second World War he became an employee of the Department of Ethnology, forerunner of the current Tropenmuseum.

Another fine example of the close relationship between objects and their (previous) owners is a batik cloth which was acquired by the Tropenmuseum in 1992 from a lady, Mrs Rosielle-Bergsma. It turned out that her grandmother was the renowned Mrs Carp, who owned a very popular batik factory in the colony and who is a well-documented entrepreneur of the colonial period (photo 7).<sup>2</sup>

The closest relationship between an object and the people who are part of its biography is perhaps that of object and maker. In the Tropenmuseum collection there are batiks made by Johan Thorn Prikker, an artist who used batik techniques to make distinctive functional art works in the style of the art movement of his day, the *Nieuwe Kunst* or *Art Nouveau*, of which he was an important initiator (photo 8). And then there are batiks made by Herman Baanders, who worked in the museum's laboratory in Haarlem, the Netherlands, and experimented with batik materials and techniques in order to improve them (photo 9).

Perhaps one of the most interesting batiks for the historically sensitive visitor is the one bearing a eulogistic text written in commemoration of the Douwes Dekker family. The cloth was donated in 1992 by a certain F.E. Douwes Dekker, the great-grandson of Jan, the brother of Eduard Douwes Dekker, better known as Multatuli. Multatuli was one of the first men to question the integrity of overseas governance in his best-selling novel *Max Havelaar* (photos 10 and 11).

In this bulletin, batik cloth from the collection of the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam will be used as a point of reference for discussing objects and their biographies, to underline the importance of researching these biographies for a proper representation of objects and the societies they resided in as well as a full understanding of the history of a museum and its collection.

The case study was initiated by the large exhibition on batik in 2001, *Batik – Drawn in Wax: 200 years of batik art from Indonesia*, in which the museum displayed some of the magnificent pieces from its textile collection and also attempted to unravel the social biographies of the textiles in order to show how objects are collected and how studying those objects can cast light on the people who collected them and on the relationships between these people.

Of course the exhibition could not exhibit all the batik cloths. A selection of 150 batiks was made on the basis of representational value and covered different themes such as batik as clothing, the importance of batik as a trade item, the different ethnic expressions in batik cloth, Dutch artists and their use of the technique, and curiosities such as fairy tale batiks and political textiles. The museum's large photographic collection was also included in the conceptualization of the exhibition. It concentrates on photographs from the former Netherlands East Indies and contains many examples of various ethnic peoples wearing batik.<sup>3</sup>

Another objective of the exhibition was to draw attention to the people who had brought the batiks to the museum, either the original collectors or their relatives, in order to provide a multi-perspective representation of the collection. With this approach the museum hoped to personalize the objects on show and to make it known that behind every object there is a story to tell. This way, objects from the material culture of a society serve as 'a room with a view' onto the society in which the objects once participated. Through the study of batiks and their biographies, the small world that was colonial culture thus becomes visible.

The biographical research on some of the cloths from the batik collection of the Tropenmuseum will be placed in a wider context. First, in order to fully understand the subject, a broad contextual framework is presented in chapter one. A short history of the current Tropenmuseum and its collection practice is followed by a description of the textile decoration technique known as batik. Batik as an indigenous textile technique and product is then placed within the history of the colony. Finally, factual information on the Tropenmuseum's batik collection is given. All this information forms the basis for the subsequent historical research. Chapter two, 'Colonial Life in the Netherlands East Indies', provides the basic knowledge of Dutch colonial society that is needed in order to understand chapter three, which places the collecting of batik within the context of the colonial era, integrating important theories on the subject of collecting and the history of batik, and chapter four, in which the results of the biographical research are presented in the form of three case studies of batik collectors. The final chapter summarizes the chapters, emphasizing the importance of the role of objects and their biographies for understanding the history of museum collections and the societies from which they came.

# I Tropenmuseum batik in colonial perspective

## The Tropenmuseum

The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam is the former Colonial Museum, which was located in Haarlem and opened its doors in 1871, but soon became too small to hold its collections and moved to its current location in 1926.<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, most of its objects came from the Dutch colonies, of which the Netherlands East Indies were the largest and most important. Although it started out as a product museum aimed at gathering and documenting economic production modes and products, which was in line with the larger Dutch colonial policy, ethnographical objects soon entered its collection.<sup>5</sup>

The Tropenmuseum has always depended heavily on donations in building up its collection, which explains the coincidental character of the presence of many of the objects. The collection was put together by a diverse group of people that included missionaries, civil servants, employees and artists. Scientific expeditions and large colonial expositions all donated objects to the museum, as well as private individuals and businesses. Among these people were many famous and influential personalities as well as members of indigenous royalty (Van Duuren, 1990:21). A large and rather interesting part of the older collection was donated by Artis, the Amsterdam zoo, when Artis decided to de-accession its ethnographical collections in 1910.

Sometimes objects were acquired on commission by the museum. It would ask European residents of the areas concerned to collect objects, or it would send out professionals to collect in the field. In the 1950s, for example, the Tropenmuseum had Mr C.M.A. Groenevelt, who went to live in Hollandia in New Guinea at the museum's request, where he resided for ten years and collected a large part of the Oceanic collection. In the Middle East, Josephine Powell collected for the museum in the 1960s and 1970s. Later on, special collection journeys for upcoming exhibitions were, and still are, undertaken. Besides all this, purchased objects were added to the general museum collection.<sup>6</sup>



Many of the acquisitions were textiles, and today the Tropenmuseum has a globally renowned textile collection from the former Netherlands East Indies. Batik cloth forms a part of this collection and the museum houses about 3,000 batiks.

## Batik

Batik is a resist-dye technique in which motifs are generally applied on both sides of a cloth with hot wax. Once it has cooled, the wax adheres to the cloth and the cloth is immersed in a dye bath. After dyeing, the wax is scratched or boiled away. The motifs that had been drawn in wax will now have the natural colour of the cloth, whereas the rest will have been dyed. This process is repeated over and over, depending on the number of colours desired. With each new colour bath, the parts previously coloured will be covered with wax so they cannot be coloured again by the new dye bath. The wax is applied by hand with a 'canting' or with a stamp, a 'cap'. The former has always been done by women, the latter mostly by men (photo 12).

The main function of batik was and still is clothing. Traditionally the most common garment is the *sarong* a tubular skirt worn by men and women from the north coast of Java. Its more official counterpart is the originally Central Javanese *kain panjang*, hip wrapper (photo 13). Women used to wear and some still wear a breast cloth around their torso, *kemben*, and shoulder or carrier cloths, *selendang*. Then there are large ceremonial cloths, *dodot*, and head cloths for men, *iket kepala*, and Islamic women, *kudung*. Later, cut and sewn batiks were used as clothing as well as these primarily rectangular cloths.

Batik clothing functioned as an identity marker; people could 'read' from the type and the colours and motifs of other peoples' clothes what town and social class they came from. The different ethnic groups, i.e. Javanese, Chinese and Indochinese, Indo-European and Muslim Javanese (photo 14), had their own colours and motifs as well as specific types of clothing that were not used by other groups. There were two major batik styles on Java. In Central Java, where sultanates ruled the area, batiks were made in dark colours such as brown and blue, combined with white and cream. Many of the motifs were originally prohibited for commoners to wear. On the north coast, a whole different style of batik was developed under the influence of early trade connections along the coastline.

## The Colonial History of Batik

When the Dutch came, first as traders of the V.O.C. (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Dutch East India Company) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and two centuries later as rulers, their presence rapidly became visible in new batik motifs and colours.<sup>7</sup>

Floral decoration, for example, became very popular, and old motifs were mixed with new ones to create a new type of batik: *batik belanda*, Dutch batik. European and Indo-European (people of mixed decent) women wore these batiks in their often beautiful homes, combined with the mostly white *kebaya*, a blouse-like garment (Gelman Taylor, 1988:196) (photo 15). Their husbands started to wear *celana*, a sort of cotton leisure pants with batik motifs.

In around 1845 the first European batik workshop was opened by Carolina von Franquemont, and in the 1870s, when the colonial economy became accessible for non-governmental commercial initiatives, other Dutch and Indo-European batik workshops followed. Batik as a decorative technique also became popular among Europeans on objects other than clothing such as table cloths and wall hangings, with which people decorated their homes (photo 16). Wives of government officials preferred to wear handmade batiks, which were considered status symbols. Because of this, a heavy competition between batik workshops existed around in 1900 in places such as Bandung, the 'Paris' of Java (NRC Handelsblad, 1980:6). In the Netherlands at the turn of the 20th century, Dutch artists were inspired by batik as a technique and by its patterns as part of a general new wave of *Orientalism* in European art. It was used by applied art movements to revive Western art, which had been neglected in favour of industrial mass-produced decorative objects (Wronska-Friend, 2001:106). Artists such as Carel Lion Cachet, Gerrit Willem Dijsselhof, Johan Thorn Prikker, Chris Lebeau, Agathe Wegerif and Bertha Bake designed room screens, book covers and wall paper, among other objects having to do with interior design and functionality, and were part of the *Art Nouveau* or 'Nieuwe Kunst' movement of that time.<sup>8</sup> This movement looked for inspiration in batik techniques and motifs, and all these developments resulted in a growing appreciation of batik as a form of art.<sup>9</sup> Rouffaer, the academic expert on batik back then, also saw the arts and crafts of people on Java as the best example of the fusion of utility and aesthetics, and said they could function as a source of inspiration for the contemporary Western applied arts (ibid.:107).

Meanwhile, in the laboratory of the Colonial Museum in Haarlem, extensive testing was being done on dyes and waxes by Herman Baanders and later by his successor, Meta Weerman, in order to improve and develop Dutch batik techniques. Batik thus was seen as a means to revive Western crafts, and batiks made with the new dye techniques were called 'Haarlemsche' or 'Nederlandsche (Dutch) batik'.

In short, batik as a form of art became very popular in the 1900s, in the Netherlands as well as in the Netherlands East Indies. From these developments and from Indonesian collections in museums, one can deduce that batik must have been very present in the lives of European and Indo-European people in the Netherlands East Indies and the Netherlands itself. Batik can thus be considered an expression of Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone: '...the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations...' (in Clifford, 1997:192).

## Batik at the Tropenmuseum

The collection of batiks in the Tropenmuseum offers an overview of all these developments. There are batiks of all sorts present such as traditional court batiks, the more colourful north coast batiks, *batik belanda*, Chinese and Indochinese batiks and works of the artists of the *Nieuwe Kunst* movement. Besides these cloths there are several samples for explaining the batik technique, *wayang* puppets that wear batik cloth, and utensils for batikting such as 'caps' (stamp blocks, mentioned above) and the pen-like 'cantings'. With the addition in 1996 of a large collection acquired from private collector Harmen Veldhuisen (photo 14), the Tropenmuseum's batik textile collection is now one of the most extensive and comprehensive in the world.

The period during which the museum acquired the batiks that were exhibited in 2001 covers almost its entire history and runs from its Haarlem period (from about 1890 until 1926) right into the 1990s. Apart from the Veldhuisen collection, however, most of the cloths were acquired from the 1910s until the end of the 1960s. This can probably be explained by the history of the colonial period and the lives of most *'Indischgasten'*,<sup>10</sup> most of whom repatriated to Holland at an older age. People whose batiks came to the Tropenmuseum in the 1920s and 1930s lived in the Netherlands East Indies from about the 1870s, when the influx of Dutch people increased, and donated or sold their collections to museums after repatriation to the Netherlands. The colonial period ended in 1942, when the Japanese invaded Indonesia and many Dutch people were held in camps. When they returned to the Netherlands, they donated or sold their batiks to the Tropenmuseum, among many other institutions. Some collections were donated to museums during the war, sometimes by people who were being persecuted in order to keep them from being seized by the Germans, who were notoriously fond of antiques and art objects.<sup>11</sup>

In order to come to a full understanding of batik, the collecting of batik, and its place in colonial society, this society first needs to be described.

## 2 Colonial Life in the Netherlands East Indies

Museum collections from the Netherlands East Indies were gathered by different kinds of people, mainly during the period between the 1870s and 1930s, also known as *tempo doeloe*, a term generally used for 'good times past'.<sup>12</sup> This period is often thought of as such by people who, after having repatriated to their home country, reminisced about their times spent overseas. It is during this period that most batiks now in the Tropenmuseum collection were collected.

In the Netherlands East Indies, a governor-general, assisted by a Council (*Raad van Indië*) ruled the archipelago from the headquarters in Batavia on Java. They had to answer to a Ministry of Colonies in the home country. In Batavia, different departments were headed by their own directors, who in turn functioned as the link between the governor-general and the commissioners (*residenten*) of the different provinces. In these provinces there was also a specific hierarchy of Western authorities. Dutch governing principles were based on indirect rule, and old indigenous ruling structures were used to gain support of the local populations.

Many of the Europeans residing in the colony were officials working either for the government or for the national trade company, the V.O.C. In the early years of Dutch imperialism in the region, around 1816, middle- and upper-class men went alone.<sup>13</sup>

The Dutch government thought that accompanying wives would interfere with the work and social action of the men, hindering rapid integration into local society.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, concubinage was stimulated because it was supposed that indigenous mistresses would increase the knowledge of local language and society. Because of this social arrangement, a new type of culture was created called the *Indische* culture, which refers to a mixed culture but not necessarily to a mixed ethnicity, with Indonesian and European characteristics. Men started to live with their housekeepers and were soon influenced by them in all aspects of life, from food and interior design to clothing, language and ideas about raising children. The use of leisure time and the forms of art enjoyed were Asian rather than European. However, when a man had acquired enough status and income he was expected to marry a 'European' woman. His indigenous wife would then be sent back to her village.



Children of mixed descent were called *Indos*. A man could choose to recognize his illegitimate offspring, which put them higher on the hierarchical ladder where Europeans were on top, followed by Indo-Europeans, women who had married Europeans, legitimized children of European fathers and finally illegitimate children, with the common local population at the base. Hierarchy thus was racially established along paternal lines at birth; whatever the ethnicity and position of the father was transferred onto his children.

Fathers would often send their European and Indo-European sons to the Netherlands to receive a proper education. From about 1800 to 1870 power was in the hands of these men, who had had their upbringing and education in the Netherlands.

Daughters, however, stayed in the colony and became, to put it rather disrespectfully, the main 'method' for newcomers to climb the hierarchical ladder. The road to power and to becoming a member of established, Indo-European society was reached through marriage with the 'daughter of'. The highest positions in the Dutch governance system were reserved for men with good family relations. 'Daughter-of' brides 'circulated' after the death of or divorce from their husbands, and with every new husband, their 'curriculum' improved, which made them even more attractive as potential wives. These marriages, however, were often of convenience, and many men kept their Indonesian mistresses. When a man returned to Europe, he often divorced his wife, and possessions were divided (Legêne, 1998:270).

Although attempts had been made by several governors-general, such as Imhoff and De Klerk (see Gelman Taylor's chapter four, 1988), to stimulate 'Europeanness', the situation changed dramatically with the abolition of the cultivation system<sup>15</sup> and the subsequent government approval of business ventures in the Netherlands East Indies in around 1870.<sup>16</sup> A new path to wealth arose, that of the private enterprise, and it was no longer just the happy few with good relations who could climb the social ladder. European women began to join their husbands or came to the Netherlands East Indies independently and brought European culture along with them. Mainstream *Indo culture* disappeared<sup>17</sup>, which fit into a larger government civilization offensive called the Ethical Policy.<sup>18</sup> Between 1910 and 1930 there were enough Dutch immigrants to give life among the colonial elite a mostly Dutch shape, although 70 per cent of legitimate Europeans were born in the Netherlands East Indies. 'True' Dutchmen now obtained the highest positions and defined 'good taste' and fashion. The immigrants mainly went to the larger cities and established European quarters. Because of new developments in communication, infrastructure and modes of transport, Europeans had more contact with each other and with their motherland. The influence of Europe increased and corporate life and forms of entertainment became more European as well. The symbols of status were no longer the traditional Indonesian betel box and a row of servants, but the piano and the French language. It was no longer the *babu*, or indigenous babysitter, who raised the children but European-speaking (and preferably European-born) governesses (Gelman Taylor, 1988:175).

The lives of men and women in these colonial circles were very different. Men worked hard every day of the week, had many official duties and worked late in offices located in their rather large houses.<sup>19</sup> In the evening they sometimes went to a local *sociëteit*, a men's club, but usually to discuss official business. By looking at their activities, one can very easily conclude that most of them were chiefly interested in gaining a good position, status and money, and repatriating to Holland as rich and successful men as soon as possible.

The wife dealt with the household. Not that she actually performed household duties, but she divided the work among the servants and supervised them. She often left the upbringing of the children to the *babu*, though this changed, as stated above, when the influence of these indigenous babysitters was no longer appreciated. Her life often was one of boredom. Netherlands East Indian life was not rich in social events, and it was only every now and then that man and wife went out for a proper bit of entertainment. Life evolved around the house, where people visited each other during the day and early evening. Many of the colonial photographs show these gatherings (photo 17). In the evenings people read and wrote letters (Van den Doel, 1996:185). According to Schulte-Nordholt, who wrote a book based on letters from his mother, the woman had to maintain a European household with typical 'Dutch cosiness' as well as to engage in social intercourse with other women and the indigenous nobility. In the meantime she had many anxieties, felt lonely because her husband was always working and longed for the letters 'from home' (1999). There were several amateur acting clubs, and even French and Italian theatre companies performed when travelling through the area. There was hardly any enthusiasm, however. Feuilletons appeared in newspapers, and Netherlands East Indian literature did develop, however hesitantly. People were tired after a long day of hard work and stayed at home most of the time. Cultural life was not really alive in the colony.

Colonial society itself, however, was a radically performative culture; it was theatrical in that there were correct forms of dress for specific occasions, of housing and of comportment, and there were staged ways of doing things (Gosden and Knowles, 2001:13/14). Material culture was central to this 'theatre', and that is why objects played a very important role in colonial times. Roles and status were marked in material terms – in clothing, for example – to provide regularity and predictability. Dress was used to maintain the hierarchical relations between white residents and indigenous populations, and women and men were expected to uphold this colonial 'dress code', at least in public. Clothing functioned as the material signifiers of the colonizer's 'civilization' and contributed to image-making, through which racial and cultural differences were legitimized (Thomas, 1994).

Within the confines of the colonial household, however, it became apparent that the 'dress code' was not always adhered to and was of an ambiguous character. Although wearing local dress such as sarungs or sleeping trousers indicated the less approved status of being '*verindischt*' – 'indigenized' into the local 'mixed descent culture' of the Netherlands East Indies – it was still part of the theatrical show of the colonizer,

who used her sarung or his leisure pants with batik patterns to indicate her/his love for the country and to show how comfortable and satisfied she or he was living there. As stated by Thomas, negative ideologies of racial denigration were important, but there also was a range of romanitized, sentimental and exotic images of others (1994) that resulted in an ambiguous attitude towards local people and culture.

Barringer and Flynn express the same idea in saying that although they were considered backward and therefore in need of Western reform, non-Western objects simultaneously had the attraction of the exotic (1998:3). In a performative culture, objects are important in bringing about social effects, and this is what batik did with respect to the local population as well as the colonizer's culture.<sup>20</sup>

This means that when going out, Europeans dressed in official colonial clothing. Men wore their white suits whereas women adhered to the latest fashion from Europe when going to the occasional theatre performance, musical concert or other social happenings (photo 18).<sup>21</sup> Exceptions were Eurasian men with European status, who did wear Indonesian clothes when they went out to Indonesian occasions, to facilitate their contacts with Indonesian people. For a woman with European ancestors however, wearing Indonesian clothes meant a step down the social ladder (Gelman Taylor, 1988:196). In their private homes, men often wore their *celana* with a *kebaya*. Their wives were dressed in batiked *sarongs* with white *kebaya*'s, the colour of the latter indicating their European status, up until the Second World War. In almost every novel of those times, these clothes are mentioned.<sup>22</sup> Many images from the second quarter of the 19th century also show European immigrants relaxing in their Indonesian-style clothes (photo 20).

From the above one can conclude that by about 1900 the Netherlands East Indies contained a paradoxical European and Indo-European society. People with European status wanted to maintain their 'Europeanness'. On the other hand, as a result of historical circumstances, they were very much at ease with their *Indische* nature as well. It was in this context that batik was collected and brought back to the Netherlands, both because of its role in colonial life and because of the growing appreciation of this indigenous craft among the colonizers.

### 3 Collecting batik in Dutch colonial society

In the early years of the Dutch adventures overseas in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, national interests were mainly directed at language and the natural environment for trade, later also for purposes of conversion. Hence it was mostly employees of the V.O.C. who collected objects and natural specimens as souvenirs or rarities to take home or to trade with other people they encountered in order to make money. When in 1816, after the British interregnum, the Netherlands became more interested in the governance of the archipelago and its treasures, government officials started to assemble objects, sometimes into collections. Their objectives were more economical or utilitarian, but in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, interest in local arts and crafts grew and many types of collectors came into existence. It is from these times that the greatest number of collections – and the best documented – were acquired by museums.

Gosden and Knowles see collections as a small but vitally informative window onto colonial society (2001:7), for colonial culture was a profoundly material culture, based on the flow of materials. When looking at colonial collections in Western museums, there are three aspects of collecting which should be kept in mind. First, collecting is never an isolated activity; in this case, broader colonial processes were at work and colonial society provided the framework of relations through which collectors necessarily operated. This explains why some types of objects were more frequently collected than others, a result of colonial relations which prohibited the collecting of those other objects because of certain interests. In the case of batik, the reasons for collecting depended on circumstances within the colony but partly also on broader influences. In the home country, the Netherlands, in around 1900, the Ethical Policy was introduced which was meant to ‘uplift’ the local population of the colony. As mentioned before, researchers and artists started to experiment with batik techniques and materials and wrote lengthy essays and books on the subject, considering it worthwhile to document the art extensively (Rouffaer, 1900a; Jasper, 1916). All this must have greatly influenced the valuation of batik and consequently affected the practice of collecting in the colony.



Secondly, indigenous values have also promoted the collecting of certain types of objects. This local agency, which includes the actions of white residents as well, is often overlooked by museums. Locals moulded their collections in ways that often went unrecognized by accounts in which agency was exclusively attributed to collectors.

Thirdly, there is the collector's own – intellectual – agenda and his or her personal choices, which reflect the broader thinking on the culture the objects come from as well as his or her own cultural baggage. This personal aspect of collecting is also the most difficult to recover when doing collection research.

It is essential that the originating set of relations, as embodied by an object, be reflected on in order to understand which objects were collected, the processes of collecting and their use in museums. Objects embody the intention of the maker, the culture and interests of villagers, the goals of the collector, various concerns of other local agents, national policies and the competitive interests of the international museum world (O'Hanlon and Welsch, 2000:227).

In the same line of thought, Gosden and Knowles describe the types of collectors who were present in New Guinea between the 1880s and the Second World War, and their findings can easily be applied to the former Dutch colony. There were many amateur collectors who collected as a hobby to save mementoes of their time spent in the colony, or who collected objects for sale to supplement their income. Then there were the professional collectors who sold their objects to museums and private persons around the world, and finally there were museum collectors. Both latter types were highly influenced by the institutions they collected for and the school of anthropology these adhered to (2001:9; 53).

In any case, the relation of an object with the past is central to the act of collecting. Objects can function in terms of memories and associations (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, in Pearce 1994:149). As *memories*, they can refer to general mementoes not associated with a particular occasion, but they can also remind us of specific happenings. Objects can be heirlooms, thus handed down in families, and souvenirs, symbolizing a specific place. As *associations*, objects can function ethnically and religiously, relating to the specific background of people. An object can be associated with larger entities of objects, such as collections, and finally they can function as gifts, which makes the object special to the owner. As Susan Pearce states, 'Many objects in museums have specific connotations that are extremely personal, giving the object the value and emotional tone of a souvenir, nostalgic, backward looking and bitter-sweet. It remembers "better times" in a romantic way, it sums up an important event in the individual's life and it validates a personal narrative. The object becomes a message-bearing entity.' (1994:20)

In the case of the batik that was collected in Dutch colonial times, this characteristic of objects is very important. In the work of research it has become apparent that the 'memories' category, with all its subgroups, is most important when trying to explain why people collected batik. Batik was a very common item in colonial (Indo)-Euro-

pean households. Men and women both wore batik cloths and used batik textiles to decorate their houses. Batik functioned as an intermediary between the Europeans and their new world. When repatriating to their home country, it was quite logical for them to take batik back home as a memento of the Netherlands East Indies in general, and as recollections and souvenirs of more specific occasions and places. In the case of Ms. Clifford, presented in chapter five, the batiks were probably family heirlooms. An important function of batik was as a popular gift item during colonial times. Batik cloth, as well as jewellery, was considered an investment, and it still is. Batik cloths keep their value and are status symbols. They are presented at marriages, birthdays and childbirths, and are given as meaningful presents to well-respected people, as had been done in colonial times (Veldhuisen, 2003, oral information). But this evocative memory function does not fully explain why people collect in the first place; it explains why people feel connected to certain objects and the role objects play in people's lives, but it does not tell us why certain people collect specific items and others do not. This is where a person's personality and social situation step in. A collector begins with his sensory experience of natural and cultural phenomena. His perception of things is different from that of another person, and this difference is the basis for ideas about what to select and what to reject. Selection lies at the heart of collecting, which involves both a view of inherited social ideas of the value that should be attached to a particular object and impulses that lie at the deepest level of individual personality (Pearce, 1992:8-9). Selection is the crucial act of collecting, no matter what the collector's reasons were. What he or she has chosen bears a direct intrinsic relationship to the body of material from which it was selected because it was and still is an integral part of it. In short, it is the effect on the psychological state of the collector which accounts for people's collecting practices.

Personal reasons for collecting can be found in aesthetic pleasure, the acquisition of historical or scientific knowledge, and in the idea that possessing certain objects confers intellectual or material prestige to their owners (Pomian in Pearce, 1994:163). Obtaining immortality through leaving objects to museums seems another reason for some people to collect, as is the rather unglamorous reality of boredom, in which case collection-making is used as an emotional outlet, which may very well have been the case for some people in the Netherlands East Indies whose lives often consisted of work, loneliness and homesickness.

Next to the intrinsic qualities of objects and their effects on people, it is argued that collecting can be an aim in itself or an innate characteristic. Freud even takes it into the realm of oral and anal retention, where collectors develop such an acquisitive obsession that they do not want to or even cannot part with their objects (Münsterberger in Pearce, 1994:209), an intricate subject that exceeds the aims of this bulletin.

Another aspect of collecting which might be relevant with respect to batik textiles, and certainly worth mentioning, is the gender aspect of collections. Researchers have looked into the gender aspects of collecting and have investigated topics such as the

presence of typical male and female characteristics in the type of objects collected, and in the use of objects and collections. Their conclusion is that although evidence suggests that there were and are as many women collectors as men, it is true that the former are relatively absent from formal collection records such as museum acquisition data and corresponding museum registers. This has been attributed to the domestic sphere in which women are said to have predominantly formed their collections. These collections do support notions of personal identity and are as much extensions of the self as male collections, but they are not closely defined and separate from normal living, nor do they embody a vision or philosophy (Pearce, 1995:208). In one of the case studies in chapter four, however, there is an example of at least one woman, the honourable Ms Clifford, who did not collect in such a manner and who did leave an extensive collection to different museums.<sup>23</sup> Pearce thinks much collecting has a gender character and that it is likely that the kinds of material collected reflect gender stereotypes, e.g. gun collecting as a typical male activity, because gender itself is constructed through collecting (1992:63). However, the fact that many men in the former Netherlands East Indies collected batik, which as a textile and clothing item could be considered a 'female object', vitiates this hypothesis. Much more research therefore needs to be done on the gender aspects of collections. In case of contemporary collectors like Veldhuisen, however, it may have been – and still may be – the recognition as a scholar or connoisseur that caused men to collect batik, a well-respected type of object around the 1900s and in museums today.

When researching museum objects such as batik, it is not only the objects that become familiar. When looking at objects and their social biographies, it is also not only individual persons who become more alive. The relationships between people and their movement within a specific culture also become more transparent. Batik, because of its physical, social and cultural properties, functioned as a social characteristic of Dutch colonial society in what is today Indonesia. By studying batiks and the people who were part of their lives, we can trace the social environment of those people and of the batik itself. It is this social environment as drawn by batik which will be discussed in the form of three case studies in the next chapter.

# 4 Collectors collected

Different types of people returned from the colony with many objects such as batik, which later became part of the Tropenmuseum collection. Research showed that the collectors who contributed to the exhibition selection can be classified into a variety of categories according to the context in which their batiks had been collected.

Under the general header of colonialism, these people can be divided into four categories. First and foremost, people went to the colony in order to *govern* in one way or the other. Government officials, from the highest rank of governor-general to lower ranks such as registration clerks, employees of trade offices and members of staff of state enterprises, all went to the East Indies to establish a well-governed and especially profitable colonial society.

A second reason people ended up in the colony, especially after the abolition of the '*cultuurstelsel*' when entrepreneurial possibilities arose, was *commercial*. An immense market opened up for people who were interested in moving beyond the Netherlands, and many people left their homes and families to go abroad and seek their fortune. With the *Art Nouveau* movement, batik became a popular source of inspiration for Dutch artists, who made beautiful objects with batik techniques, patterns and colours. In the Tropenmuseum collection there are several of these functional art objects, such as table cloths, wall hangings, book covers and newspaper holders which were bought by people in the home country but were also used by Dutch or *Indische* people in the colony.

Finally, with the growing understanding of the skill involved in the production of indigenous arts and crafts as well as interest in their beauty, scientists started to do research and write extensive articles and books on batik as an art form and intricate decoration technique. Many batiks in museum collections were collected by people who looked at batik in a scientific way. Some of these people were related to scientific institutions such as universities and museums whereas others became autodidact specialists on the subject.<sup>24</sup>

As was to be expected, most collectors could be classified in the governance category. Out of 56 collectors, 20 collected batik in the context of governance,

11 for commercial reasons, 10 in name of art and 12 people collected batik in a scientific context.<sup>25</sup> The acquisition dates show a continuity in all four categories, with perhaps a slight concentration of scientific collecting during the first 30 years of the 20th century, which supports the fact that at that time scientific interest in batik was at its highest. The period in which the museum acquired the batiks exhibited covers almost its whole history and runs from 1890, its Haarlem period, right into the 1990s, with a peak between 1910 and the end of the 1960s, the period of most repatriations.<sup>26</sup> As far as gender is concerned, more men than women brought back batiks, which is also understandable since there were far more men than women in the colony (see appendix).

### Lily, Johanna and Maurits

It is now about time to introduce some individuals who are somehow connected to the batik cloths now present in the Tropenmuseum collection. Their lives and personal circumstances, placed in a broader social and cultural framework, ultimately have led to the musealization of their belongings, and it is important to realize that this personal connection between people and their objects is valuable for museum documentation and representation and for understanding collection histories.<sup>27</sup>

#### Lily

One of the people who left an interesting collection of batiks to the museum is the Honourable Miss Clifford, daughter of a baron who was the first in his family to go to the Netherlands East Indies. The name Clifford is encountered many times in research on the genealogy of the former colonial society, and they all are related to a certain Clifford who supported William the Conqueror in 1066 in his battle for England.

The line of descent split into several branches, one of them being that of George Clifford. George Clifford had a large estate in the western Netherlands near Heemstede called *De Hartekamp*, where he commissioned the famous Linnaeus to supervise his collection of rare plants. His descendants all held important functions within the Dutch society. A later member married into another well-known *Indische* family, Van Limburg-Stirum. One of their sons was the man who went to the Netherlands Indies on his own. This man, also named George, became an oyster dealer and travelled throughout Asia, which can be deduced from the collection he left to his daughter Anna Cecile, better known as Lily. Her mother, Theodora, was from yet another typical *Indische* family, Lammers van Toorenborg. Her father had been resident of Surakarta in Central-Java, a rather high position, and apparently did not object to his daughter marrying an oyster dealer, probably owing to his title!



Lily and her sister Aurélie were born in the Netherlands in 1884 and 1887. Lily's father died in Malang on Java when she was 11 years old. At that time, she, her sister and their mother were living in Europe again. Their mother remarried Jonkheer Carel Nicolaas Storm van 's Gravesande, a relatively well-known etching artist, about a year later. Three years later Aurélie died in Berlin, where the family then lived. It remains uncertain whether the girls have ever been in the Netherlands East Indies with their father. They may have lived there in their childhood years, with their father hardly ever being at home and travelling through Asia. It is probably thanks to the marriage of Theodora with Carel Nicolaas we now have a painting of Lily as a pretty 18-year-old woman (photo 21), made by none other than the famous *Indische* painter Jan Toorop, a colleague of her stepfather.

Lily Clifford worked as a private secretary and was a teacher of modern languages. As mentioned above, it remains uncertain whether she ever had been in the colony as a child, though certainly not during her later years, since her subsequent addresses are all in Germany. At the end of the First World War she moved to The Hague in the Netherlands, the residence of the Dutch well-to-do and many old '*Indischgasten*', people who had returned from the Netherlands East Indies. During her life she acquired many objects from her stepfather, mainly paintings and etches from his hand, but also work by other artists such as Toorop, a bronze statue of herself by Wenckenbach and some ethnographical objects.<sup>28</sup> Besides some Japanese lacquered boxes, plates and dishes, which she definitely did not collect herself at the place of origin, there are several batik cloths.

These batiks are mostly Indo-European style sarungs (photo 22) as well as some table cloths, typical everyday items for a Dutch woman, or a woman of mixed descent (*Indo*). In addition to these there are some Chinese style sarungs and a few sarungs with traditional Javanese patterning.

Unfortunately there is still no information on how Lily got hold of the textiles and other objects. Only one living relative could be found, but this person only knew her from vague stories, and if she ever kept diaries at all, which is likely for a woman of her time and social class, their whereabouts are unknown. Presumptions abound, of course. Perhaps her father or mother collected the objects during their stay in the colony. Her father, in his work as an oyster dealer, may have travelled throughout Asia and fallen in love with the Japanese lacquer work. Her mother could have used the batiks as clothing or in her house, and perhaps some were given by friends and relatives. But the collection may very well have been given to Lily by other people, or she may have purchased the objects herself, browsing through the collections at auctions and antique shops in places in Europe such as The Hague.

## Johanna

During auctions or while browsing in antique shops, Lily may have met an elderly woman by the name of Johanna Carolina Hooegeveen, born Van Walcheren, in Batavia on July 14<sup>th</sup> in 1854. The Hooegeveen and Van Walcheren families both had a colonial history in the East Indies. Johanna was the daughter of the director of the Billiton mining company, the largest tin mining company in the archipelago. In 1876 she married 24-year-old Surabaya-born Hendrik Johannes Hooegeveen, who worked his whole life for the Dutch trading company, the Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij, which took him all over Java and Sumatra. In 1903 he became President of its eastern office, the *Factorij*. The couple lived in Batavia but regularly went back to the Netherlands for several reasons, among them Hendrik's illness. In 1909 they went back for good, and Hendrik was honourably discharged from his functions. At his death in 1924 Johanna donated several objects to the Tropenmuseum on his behalf, among which were batik textiles.

An interesting fact is that Mrs Hooegeveen also had her portrait painted by Jan Toorop (photo 23). Another insightful detail which came up in the research is that Johanna's niece, M.E. van Walcheren, was married to Eugene Sayers. He was the brother of Charles Sayers, a popular painter at that time whose rare batik is mentioned in the introduction and to whom the Tropenmuseum devoted an exhibition in 2004.<sup>29</sup> Needless to say, it was a small world of high-class Europeans who interacted during colonial times. Many people were related in one way or another, were acquainted somehow or had heard about one another, which is not surprising given the social 'tradition' mentioned above of gaining status through marriage and similar alliances. The Hooegeveen collection in the Tropenmuseum includes a large collection of weapons consisting of European rifles and indigenous Indonesian weapons, as well as a couple of swords from Japan. A collection of metal objects was donated along with these objects, as well as several Javanese objects that form a *sirih* set. *Sirih* is chewing tobacco from Indonesia, which was also used extensively by Europeans, women as well as men. There are oil lamps in the shape of mythical entities from Surabaya and several models of houses, rice sheds and mosques from Padang, West Java (inv. series no. 214, acquisition date 1924). Some time later that year, a large wooden gong stand with a bronze gong and wooden bat (inv. no. 228-1a/c) were donated.

In 1925 Mrs Hooegeveen-van Walcheren donated 60 textiles from all over Indonesia (series number 238), again in her husband's name. From Gorontalo and Limboto on Sulawesi come cloths with another textile decoration technique, *ikat* (on the weft). There are five Sumatran Toba-Batak textiles of rare large dimensions and a silk textile with gold thread from Sumatra's east coast, as well as silk Acehnese trousers with gold thread embroidery and three silk chequered textiles from Bali. Besides these, 17 Javanese batik sarongs were donated, which were from the north coast (places such as Semarang, Pekalongan, Lasem) and from Central Java's royal courts. One of these

was made by M. de Ruyter on commission for a wedding (photo 24). In addition, three cotton table cloths with European motifs of flowers and birds were acquired by the museum (photo 25). Finally, a cloth with front pieces for lady's slippers is part of the Hooegeveen collection.

In line with Susan Pearce, one could say that the weapons collection is of a very masculine character and was assembled by Hooegeveen himself on his many travels in Indonesia and other Far Eastern countries during his work for the *Factorij*. One would think that the rather feminine textile collection had been collected by his wife, but she insisted on the collection being accepted in the name of her late husband and states in a letter to the museum that all objects were collected by him, sometimes with great effort. It is very possible that many of the textiles were given to him by acquaintances, friends and business relations, since textiles were a well-respected gift in local and colonial society.

### Maurits

When speaking of textiles functioning as popular gifts, two rare batiks of considerable value now in the Tropenmuseum collection must be mentioned. The batiks are from Semarang and are both tubular skirts, sarongs, partly painted and partly batiked and worked with *prada*, gold leaf. The iconography and combination of decorating techniques make them unusual. They depict *wayang* puppets, one cloth in a rather 'cartoonish' style, where small rectangles with images tell a story which can be read when the garment is worn in the proper way (inv. no. 903-15, see photo 1).<sup>30</sup> The other textile shows two large wayang figures and may very well have been made by the first Indo-European batik entrepreneur Carolina von Franquemont (van Hout, 2001:144; see photo 2).

Both cloths were part of a legacy made to the museum in 1934 by Mr Maurits Enschedé (photo 26). Maurits, a descendant of the famous Enschedé family of book printers who also printed the first Dutch and Javanese banknotes, was a solicitor and went to the Dutch colony following his lawyer brother in 1879, whom he also succeeded as a government attorney in Surabaya. Maurits married Eva Schalkwijk while on leave in Rotterdam in 1887. They had a daughter in 1890 who sadly died soon after her birth. Eva, probably never able to overcome this tragedy, died one year later in Surabaya. Maurits never remarried and soon went back to the Netherlands, where he bought a house in The Hague, as did most *Indischgasten*.

Not much is known about Maurits's work and life in the colony, but information from his nephew on his way of life back in the Netherlands may give us an idea of what his life had been like in Surabaya:

"His household was run by his servant Francien de Bukviel, who died at the age of more than 100 years in the 1970s. Besides Francien there was a second servant,

Cornelia – Kee – de Jonge, along with the gardener/butler Anton and a maid Dina Verboom (siblings).

Maurits was a punctual man with regular habits. In spring and summer he wore grey suits, in autumn and winter black. He often entertained guests in the weekend, and every Saturday the same group of friends came to have a drink. They discussed the international political situation, the *Indische* cultures – especially sugar and rubber – the Exchange and everyday life. One of these people was a K.N.I.L. colonel, Van der Schoot, an acquaintance from the *Indische* years. When I came to visit my uncle, I had to be there at five, for as the youngest I had to keep glasses filled. I always listened well and learned a lot. I had to read out loud from the newspaper NRC. Maurits loved to stay at home, but also travelled by train, tram and taxi. He often went to Amsterdam for meetings at the Colonial Bank, of which he was president-commissioner, at the petroleum company Moeara Enim, etc. He visited family members, most of all his sister Maria Vitringa in Bilthoven, and many others. Every year on his birthday, February 26th, Maurits had an open reception from nine in the morning. The first guest was always former minister Kan, who came to wish him well. Maurits always took note of the guests, and every visitor received a nice printed thank-you card after their visit.”

(Notes by Mr C. J. Enschedé, in his *Herinneringen aan Mr. Maurits Enschedé* (1856-1934), memories of Mr Maurits Enschedé (1856-1934), 1991).<sup>31</sup>

Throughout his life, Maurits was very interested in the education of young men from good families. He took them to Italy, among other places, and this resulted in many good friends in later life. In letters written to C. J. Enschedé, whom Maurits supported financially as well as being a father figure, Maurits seems a man who really had his act together. He was a well-off and well-respected man who was very fond of company, and he knew what he wanted to achieve. He loved status and the customs surrounding it. He was good to his protégées but strict as well, and expected their gratitude.

After a period of ill health, Maurits Enschedé died rather suddenly in 1934 at the age of 78. Many highly placed persons were present at his funeral, among them representatives of the Colonial Bank, Moeara Anim, and the banking firm Doyer and Kalff, on whose boards Maurits had served as commissioner, and of the Groningen Museum. Maurits Enschedé left many objects to various museums in the Netherlands. He had been an honorary member and very generous patron of the Groningen Museum from 1904 until his death. He left the museum a sum of money together with some 100 art objects such as antique furniture, porcelain, earthenware, silver, glasswork and several paintings.

To the Tropenmuseum, Enschedé legated objects from what is today Indonesia, China, Thailand and Tibet (inv. nos. 99, 112, 211, 306, 736 and 903). The Enschedé collection comprises several pieces of furniture such as tables and chairs from Batavia, two Batak divining instruments, some lamps and lanterns, several statues, metal

tobacco boxes, weapons, ornamented bowls, Chinese altar cloths and other textiles, among which are the two aforementioned rare and important batiks (photo 27). Other textiles are two Karo-Batak cloths from northern Sumatra (903-7; -8), a tubular skirt with interwoven figures from Silungkang, West-Sumatra (903-14) and an Indian wrap cloth with motifs in imitation gold thread (903-41).

Unfortunately, exact information on Enschedé's collecting career is not available. Deductions can be made based on his tendency to socialize with and entertain people of the upper class, who could have presented him with these objects as gifts. At least such a guess can be made for the two rare Semarang batiks, since the specialist of the time, Gerrit Rouffaer, speaks of both sarungs having been given to the wife of a high-ranking civil servant who lived in Semarang. Enschedé bought the batiks in The Hague, but whether he obtained them directly from the aforementioned lady is not known. Her identity remains obscure.

It is certain that Maurits Enschedé collected himself. Since he also was a patron of the Groningen Museum, to which he legated many art objects, he must have been an active collector. Collecting was a popular activity practised by many people of higher status in the Netherlands East Indies. It may be, however, that Maurits collected many of his objects while back in the Netherlands, as he had done with the batik textiles. It seems he was very interested in furniture and other 'interior objects', since he legated such items to both the Tropenmuseum and the Groningen Museum.

It is very probable that the furniture had been part of his own home in Surabaya and in The Hague. Some of the textiles in his collection were quite magnificent, for even specialist Rouffaer, who must have seen many, many batiks, describes one of the pieces owned by Enschedé as 'the most beautiful batik I have ever seen' (Rouffaer and Juynboll, 1900b).<sup>32</sup> This batik is not in the collection of the Tropenmuseum, and the museum is very interested to know its whereabouts. Fortunately, the museum does have the privilege of caring for the other important objects collected by Enschedé.

# 5 A Room with a View that is Batik

As we have seen in the previous chapters, there is more to batik than meets the eye. Museums should try to look beyond the more obvious function of batik textiles as clothing and identity markers. Batik was part of the material culture of colonial society. It played a role in the 'theatre' that was staged by the colonials, and as such gained an important role in the lives of these people. Women and men wore batik at home, and in earlier times women also wore their *sarong* and *kebaya* outdoors, which can be seen in many photographs of that period. Batik was a way of showing that one was at ease in the new country, with its people and customs, but at the same time this token of being *verindischt* was not appreciated by the dominating European culture. As such, batik played an important part in interpersonal relationships between colonizers and between the colonizer and colonized. Depending on who they were dealing with, people did or did not wear their batik clothes in order to express the part they were playing on the colonial stage.

Batik was also given as gifts, another function that has historically been proven to be of great importance. In indigenous society, batik was often given as a serious and well-respected gift. Batik and jewellery both were, as they still are, seen as future investments which could only increase in value. At official and less official occasions, Dutch government officials received batik as gifts from their indigenous counterparts, and this practice, especially after the introduction of *batik belanda*, was soon adopted by Europeans and Indo-Europeans as well.<sup>33</sup>

In around 1900, batik as a decorative technique in the Netherlands was being researched and scientifically improved to provide members of the upcoming art movement *Nieuwe Kunst* with the best dyes and waxes possible for their arts and crafts products. Batik was no longer seen as an inferior indigenous craft but as a skilled art form which even could be used to improve the rather unimaginative and underdeveloped Dutch applied arts of the time. At about the same time, scientific works appeared on Indonesian batik by Rouffaer and Juynboll and later by E. Jasper and M. Pirngadie, which can also be interpreted as an indication of the appreciation of batik as an art.<sup>34</sup>



All this had its influence on the collecting practices of people in the Netherlands East Indies. Thus, besides an object's internal qualities such as material, form and function, broader external influences also play a large part in what people eventually decide to collect. In the case of batik, colonial society and its societal effects were very important in the appreciation of batik as a collectible. The fact that people were 'surrounded' by batik, wearing it during the day, decorating their houses with batiked objects, receiving and giving batik gifts, etc., definitely contributed to the practice of collecting batik. In addition, the mere fact that batik is a textile and could easily be transported probably also contributed to the numerous batiks that were taken to the Netherlands after repatriation from the Netherlands East Indies. The collecting of batik largely depended on the function of objects as souvenirs or memorabilia. To the people who lived sometimes a large part of their lives in the Netherlands East Indies, batik had so many connotations with that life that it became one of the most obvious items to bring back home. It may have reminded them of their East-Indian past in general, or of more specific moments that were important to them. Whatever the exact association, batik, which even has a certain smell and feel, performed its duty as a tangible memory and was one of the most popular vehicles for taking *tempo doeloe*, a positive concept of good times past, back home.

A useful conclusion from the research is that batik, usually divided into different categories according to technique, provenance, etc., was collected by people who can also be categorized into four large categories, i.e. governance, art, commerce and science. From the study of a particular batik textile, *an object*, more information on historical circumstances can be deduced. Batik, as part of colonial culture, had an important role in establishing close relationships between the imperialist nation and its colony. From this sort of material cultural research, the intricate relationship between motherland and colony, and between and even within the societies of the inhabitants of both, becomes visible. All collectors of batik had a relationship with the colony in some way or another; some had lived there, others inherited objects from ancestors who had had an *Indische* past, and even collector Veldhuisen, a contemporary Dutchman, has a close relationship with the former colony starting with his marriage to a Javanese woman. This relationship also accounts for the different nature of intercultural collections, such as batik, in comparison with collections of traditional indigenous objects such as Dayak objects, which were not a big part of the *Indische* life. People nowadays still own batiks which they inherited from their ancestors or from other people who once were part of colonial life in the Netherlands East Indies, and this presence of the former colony in the mind of the former colonizing nation and its inhabitants, and vice versa, will probably last for a long time, partly thanks to batik.

Colonial society in the Netherlands East Indies was, as one would say in the Netherlands, an '*ons kent ons*' – like known like – culture, especially for people acting in the higher circles of society. Men often met each other at their homes or in the

‘men only’ clubs of the larger villages, whereas women visited each other during the day to discuss daily matters. Inevitably people in some way or another knew who was who in this small world.

Research on the batik collection of the Tropenmuseum substantiates all this. When tracing the history, or life, of the batik textiles now in the Tropenmuseum collection, relations between people become visible and a window upon colonial society is opened. People organize themselves around objects and objects organize people. As such, material studies research can contribute to the understanding of the history and relationships between its participants.

The important questions to ask when studying collections in museums are when and how collections were formed, by whom and why these people chose to assemble these objects. The answers to the first question lead to insight into the collection procedures intellectually appropriated at the time, such as the collection policy of the museum, including its used method of anthropology. They also define the types of exploration and expeditions, and explain the attitudes of Europeans, at home as well as abroad, towards indigenous cultures. The answer to who formed it, shows which sex, social classes and kinds of corporate groups have been involved in collecting. In the case of batik, it was mainly middle- to upper-class men and their characteristic groupings in clubs and societies who engaged in collecting, which reflected the intellectual climate of their time. We should be aware of this when studying collections to better understand the biases inherent in our museum collections (Pearce, 1992:116).

What is important to remember is that when objects enter a museum after the process of musealization they have had a life before that and even keep on living. When objects enter a museum they undergo a thorough documentation procedure in which information on the makers, users, the originating culture and other cultures they may have been in, as well as on intermediaries in the collecting process and, of course, on the collectors needs to be recorded for proper representation.

The different levels of information embedded in batik are essential to its proper understanding. It is an object, a cloth decorated by means of an indigenous technique, seen as a piece of daily household goods or as an art form and used by locals and newcomers alike, with different meanings for both. But batik was also an instrument to help create – and for us now to recreate – colonial culture, as well as a very powerful souvenir. It continues to play this role today, when descendants of *Indische* people still own many batiks that offer them a way to keep in touch with their ancestors and the social environment they lived in. This must be what the study of objects is all about.







1

Batik cloth with Panji story,  
Tropenmuseum, acquired from  
Mr M. Enschedé, 1934 (903-15)

2

Batik cloth with large *wayang* figures,  
Tropenmuseum, acquired from  
Mr M. Enschedé, 1934 (903-16)



3  
Batik cloth with rice fields and houses,  
shown as if painted from above,  
acquired from O. Sayers, 1950 (809-215)



< 4  
Painter Charles E.H. Sayers  
in his workshop, ca. 1926  
(0004 8579)







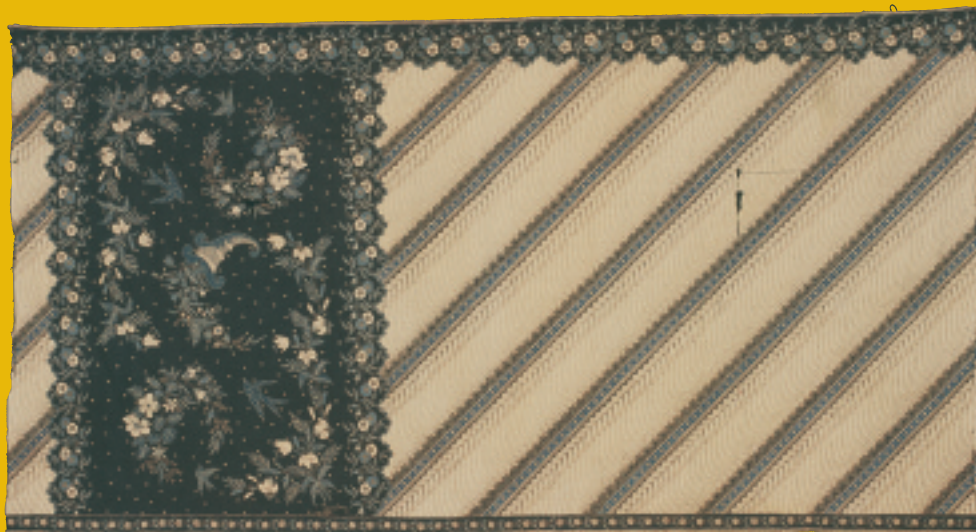


< 5

Pineapple fibre cloth of unusually  
large size, acquired from retiring  
Governor-General Lansberge, 1881 (H-91)

6

Detail of a *tobara* cloth of the Sa'dan  
Toraja, present-day Sulawesi, with motifs  
in batik-like technique, acquired from  
L.J.J. Caron, 1933 (835-1)



7

7  
*Batik belanda* by famous entrepreneur Carp, acquired from Mrs A. Rosielle-Bergsma, 1992 (5479-4)

8

Tablecloth made by Art Nouveau artist Thorn Prikker and acquired from him in 1899 (H-3311)

9

Batik sample by Herman Baanders, made in the colonial laboratory in 1900 (H-3332)

10

Commemorative cloth, made for the Douwes Dekker family, relatives of the famous Dutch writer Multatuli, alias Eduard Douwes Dekker, acquired from F.E. Douwes Dekker, 1992 (5437-4)









11

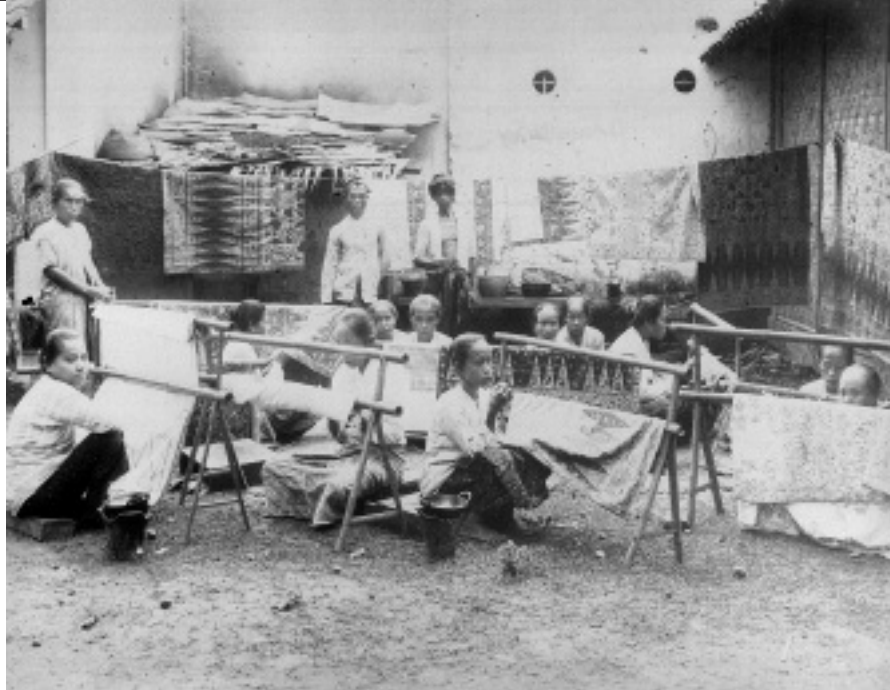
Camille Hugo Douwes Dekker family,  
 painted by Henriette Schoenmakers,  
 mother of the former owner,  
 F.E. Douwes Dekker, shown here  
 as a baby, 1992 (5437-2).

> 12

Women making batik with cantings  
 and cloths hanging to dry, 1903  
 (0000 9257)

> 13

Indonesian woman wearing batik  
*kain panjang*, ca. 1947 (0004 0289)





14  
Muslim jacket, acquired from  
H.C. Veldhuisen, 1996 (5663-18)



15  
Indo-European woman paying for  
groceries, wearing her *sarong* and  
*kebaya*, date unknown (1000 3029)



16  
Newspaper holder made with batik  
technique, donated by the Society  
for the Establishment of an Ethno-  
graphical Museum in Amsterdam,  
1912 (15-627)

> 17  
The Dutch Pietermaat family has  
two friends for tea, ca. 1905 (0000 4378)

> 18  
New Year's Eve with friends in the  
Dutch East Indies, 1933 (0002 9318)







19

A family goes out in their carriage,  
ca. 1890 (0000 4757)



< 20

A woman, dressed in *sarong* and *kebaya*, waters  
the plants in her garden, ca. 1905 (0000 4400)

21

Miss Lily Clifford, painted by Jan Toorop, 1902  
(collection of the Haags Gemeentemuseum /  
Municipal Museum of The Hague)



22  
Batik cloth with fantasy motifs and  
Dutch flags, legacy of the Honourable  
Miss A.C.A.J. Clifford, 1960 (2899-21)





23  
Portrait of Johanna Carolina Hoogeveen  
by Jan Toorop, 1922 (collection of the  
Haags Gemeentemuseum / Municipal  
Museum of The Hague)



24  
Batik cloth by M. de Ruyter, with  
*wayang* scenes and two white doves,  
probably made to order for a wedding,  
acquired from the late Mr Hoogeveen,  
1924 (238-42)



25  
European-style table cloth, acquired  
from the late Mr Hoogeveen, 1924  
(238-57)

26

Mr Maurits Enschedé with  
his godson Maurits, 1928  
(photo acquired from the latter)



27

The two Enschedé batik cloths,  
as depicted in the book on batik  
by Rouffaer and Juynboll, 1900A





# Notes

- 1 The term *Indisch* refers to European people born in the colony, but also to people born of mixed parents. It is more a cultural than an ethnic term, and the *Indische* culture had its own specific characteristics (see chapter two).
- 2 For more on Mrs Carp and other well-known batik entrepreneurs see *Batik Belanda 1840-1940*, by Harmen C. Veldhuisen, 1993.
- 3 For more information on the exhibition see the exhibition catalogue *Batik. Drawn in wax: 200 years of batik art from Indonesia in the Tropenmuseum collection*, edited by Itie van Hout (2001).
- 4 The Netherlands was the first in the world to have such a specific *colonial* museum.
- 5 The Dutch government originally exploited the colony as a source of income only and did not bother with local society. It was only much later, after the British interregnum from 1811-1816, that imperialism became an aspect of the Dutch colonisation process.
- 6 For more information on the history of the Tropenmuseum collection see David van Duuren's *125 jaar verzamelen* (125 years of collecting), KIT, Amsterdam 1990. (Dutch).
- 7 The same happened with Chinese immigrants, who had a strong influence on batik motifs as well.
- 8 'One of the main postulates of the movement stated that beauty and artistic qualities should permeate everyday life, with human surroundings being purposefully designed and aesthetically shaped' (Wronska-Friend, 2001:106).
- 9 The same appreciation of the didactic and formal qualities of indigenous objects had appeared a few decades earlier in Great Britain, where indigenous Indian techniques were promoted for the purpose of reforming design in order to increase national economic performance. When the Kensington Museum was established in the 1850s, the idea of promoting good design and increasing general standards in arts and crafts education was central to the intention of the founders. Objects from the colony were used as symbols of responsible custodianship and proper authority, the responsibility of the imperial nation (Barringer, 1998:12). This is similar to the ideas behind the Dutch Ethical Policy.
- 10 *Indischgasten* is an invented Dutch term referring to the people who have lived in the former colony.
- 11 In the archive of the Tropenmuseum there is evidence of batik cloths being hidden in a bank vault to keep them from the German soldiers.
- 12 The term *tempo doeloe* is actually not confined to this specific time period but has always been used by people to refer to their period of residence in what is today Indonesia.
- 13 During the British interim rule under Raffles (1811-1816) the British men did take their women along with them, which accounts for the overall 'Britishness' of colonial society during their interregnum. They thought of Batavia's Dutch as awkward and vulgar and considered the racial background of their

- women shocking. This European way of thinking was taken over by the Dutch when they returned in 1816, but it did not last for long, mainly because of the intensity of relationships with the indigenous people (see Gelman Taylor, 1988: chapter four).
- 14 Of course, some who held higher positions in the governing system ignored this rule and took their wives along with them anyway; governors-general, for example, were often accompanied by their European wives.
  - 15 This *cultuurstelsel* meant that the local population had to grow cash crops for the colonial economy and give part of their manpower to the Dutch government in exchange for government approval of land use.
  - 16 In the second half of the 18th century, the 'Indische Enlightenment' took shape through the foundation of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap voor de Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences). The Dutch government ordered its employees to collect objects for its museum, and the society functioned as a discussion club for well-to-do gentleman who had been born and raised in the Netherlands. The society tried to maintain a sense of 'Europeanness', and its members exhibited very Dutch behavior. However, it was an isolated, rather private enterprise, which only provided for a small coterie. It was of no great influence (Gelman Taylor, 1988:119-121).
  - 17 Indonesian nationalist ideas among the Indonesian elite who had been accepted by the Indo culture were also accountable for the disappearance of the mestizo culture (Gelman Taylor, 1988:198).
  - 18 This policy had as its aim the elevation of Indonesians and their culture to the level of the higher European culture and its values. The exploitation of the colony was to cease and to be replaced by the moral obligation to educate the peoples of the colony. The Netherlands East Indies were to be seen as a child that had to be morally educated so it could occupy a more autonomous position in the world (Van den Doel, 1996:153).
  - 19 The *Indische* character of colonial society was also expressed by the houses in which Europeans lived. These houses could be admired especially in larger cities such as Batavia, Semarang and Surabaya, and had little in common with houses in Europe (Van den Doel, 1996:181-182). None of them had multiple storeys and all had outside verandas, several rooms and a large yard. Those Europeans who did not do very well ended up in small houses in *kampongs*, villages, with the Indonesian population (such as the illegitimate son in the famous book by Louis Couperus, *Stille Kracht*, The Silent Force).
  - 20 As Gosden and Knowles indicate, 'performances were attempting to make real something no one was sure existed' (2001:15).
  - 21 Perhaps typical of Dutch frugality, people often went '*nontonnen*', which means they went for a ride in the evenings and stayed seated in their carriages outside to listen to concerts (photo 19).
  - 22 In the famous *Max Havelaar* by Douwes Dekker and *De Stille Kracht* by Louis Couperus, for example. Victor Ido, a well-known Indo writer and poet, also mentions batik clothes in his writings and fragments in the *Indische Post*, a weekly newspaper in Batavia.
  - 23 According to sources in Pearce, women who have collected in the 'grand manner' are said to have done so because they were more masculine (aggressive, more competitive and with material ambition, 1995:203), in my view a stereotypical statement in need of more research and supportive scientific information.
  - 24 The selection of batiks on show in the 2001 exhibit and discussed here is covered by the categorization above, but one can imagine that a religious component could be added. Missionaries are known to have engaged in widespread collectioning throughout the world and are an important source of ethnographical collections.
  - 25 No information was available on three of the collectors, hence their absence from these categories.
  - 26 The ethnographical collection of what is today the Artis zoo became part of the Tropenmuseum collection in 1910 and included batiks as well.

- 27 These are not representative of the four categories mentioned but are determined by the batiks concerned and by the simple fact that information on these people was available.
- 28 The etchings, paintings and statue are all in the collection of the Municipal Museum in The Hague.
- 29 *Indisch portrait: Charles Sayers (1901-1943), painter and collector*, held in the Tropenmuseum from October 2004 to January 2005. An accompanying book was written by Koos van Brakel (2004).
- 30 Itie van Hout wrote an extensive article on this cloth discussing the depicted story of prince Panji (Van Hout, 2001:136-145).
- 31 Prof. C. J. Enschedé (1911-2000), was a professor of criminal law in Amsterdam and justice at the High Court. Christiaan Just never saw his parents during his later childhood (from ten years of age) and was raised by a Mrs Bakker. When she could no longer take care of Just it was a distant relative, Mr Maurits, who took pity on him. He took care of him financially and sent him letters with plans and ideas. He wanted Just to study law and then to go to the Netherlands East Indies. Sadly, he died before Just finished his university degree. However, he left him enough money so that Just could move on without ever having financial problems. I received Maurits's biography, written by Christiaan, and the photograph above from Mr Maurits Enschedé from Aerdenhout, one of three brothers. They are the sons of F.E.D. Enschedé, who was a nephew of Maurits, F.E.D.'s joint guardian. It was F.E.D. who drew Maurits's attention to the problems of their distant relative Christiaan Just. (for more on C.J. Enschedé, see <http://www.knaw.nl/publicaties/pdf/991145.pdf>)
- 32 Rouffaer considers this batik, made by a Central Javanese woman, probably from the royal courts, to be one of amazing artistry (Notulen Bataviaasch Genootschap, XXXVIII, 1900).
- 33 Many retiring K.N.I.L. officers, for example, were given batik cloths, which functioned as memorabilia and hence referred to their past as officers in this army (see the catalogue by Stürler Boekwijt, 1998).
- 34 *De Inlandsche Kunstnijverheid in Nederlandsch Indië*, part III, 'De batikunst', 1916.
- 35 Lebeau, Thorn Prikker and Baanders did not actually collect batiks but made them (two as artists, one as a scientist) and then donated them to the museum.

# Appendix

Categories of acquisition sources, based on  
the contexts in which the batiks were collected <sup>35</sup>

Acquisition date	Collector, donor or seller	Governance	Commerce	Art	Science
1873	Musschenbroek, Mr S.C.I.W. van				
1881	Lansberge, Mr J.W. van				
1899	Thorn Prikker, Johan				
1900	Baanders, Mr H.A.J.				
1901	Weerman, Meta				
1903	Lebeau, Mr Chris				
1903	Thorn Prikker, Johan				
1904	Lebeau, Mr Chris				
1912	Ver. Stichting Museum Volkenkunde Amsterdam				
1916	Jasper, Mr J.E.				
1916	Wijck, Mr H.C. van der				
1925	Hoogveen, Mr H.J.				
1927	Adam, Tassilo				
1928	Soerjodiningrat, Pangeran Ario				
1930	Eerde, Prof. J.C. van				
1930	Suyck, Mr H.L.				
1930	Swart, Mrs A.				
1932	Boeatan				
1933	Boeatan				
1933	Caron, Mr L.J.J.				
1933	Reinders, G.W.				
1933	Sayers, Mr Charles E.H.				
1934	Bertling, Prof. C.T.				
1934	Enschede, Mr M.				
1934	Ned. My. Voor Nijverheid en Handel				

Acquisition date	Collector, donor or seller	Governance	Commerce	Art	Science
1934	Wiemans, ms. M.				
1935	Kleyn, ms. G.H.				
1935	Koolemans Beynen-Cramer, mrs. E.				
1935	Suchtelen, Ms M. van				
1938	Kroessen-Baroness Nahuys, Mrs C.L.H.				
1941	Kleyn-Eschauzier, Mrs C.				
1942	Bouman, Mr P.H.Q.				
1947	Tillman, Georg				
1949	Ingenegeren, Mrs				
1950	Aalderink, Mr J.				
1951	Steinmetz, Ms M.L. and Ms W.K.				
1952	Bertling, Prof. C.T.				
1952	Gesterkamp, Mrs J.C.				
1952	Pijnacker Hordijk, Mr W.F.C.C.				
1952	IJzerdraat, Mr B.				
1953	Lier, Mr van				
1955	Sastromuljono, Mrs R.A.				
1959	Langewis, Mr J.				
1960	Clifford, Mrs A.C.A.C.				
1962	Eillebrecht, Mrs				
1962	Jager Gerlings, Mr J.H.				
1965	Pauw, Mrs J.P.				
1967	Abdurachman, Mrs R.A.				
1969	Heyting, Ms				
1970	Kleiweg de Zwaan, Prof. J.P.W.				
1970	Veenstra-Blume, Mrs A.A.A.				
1974	Hulsinga-Geertsema Beckeringh, Mrs C.				
1978	Petrus-Herwig, Mrs				
1981	Hulk-Piek, Mrs				
1983	Vas Diaz, Mr H.				
1990	Vloten, Mr M. van				
1992	Douwes Dekker, Mr F.E.				
1992	Rosielle-Bergsma, Mrs A.				
1996	Veldhuisen, Harmen				
Total		20	11	10	12

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# Colophon

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