You are under arrest : epistemic arrest and the endless reproduction of the image of the colonised native

Farish Ahmad Noor

2016

Farish Ahmad Noor (2016). You are under arrest : epistemic arrest and the endless reproduction of the image of the colonised native. South East Asia Research, 24(2), 185-203.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0967828X16649043>

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/148456>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X16649043>

© 2016 IP Publishing Ltd. This paper was published in South East Asia Research and is made available as an electronic reprint (preprint) with permission of IP Publishing Ltd. The published version is available at: [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0967828X16649043>]. One print or electronic copy may be made for personal use only. Systematic or multiple reproduction, distribution to multiple locations via electronic or other means, duplication of any material in this paper for a fee or for commercial purposes, or modification of the content of the paper is prohibited and is subject to penalties under law.

Downloaded on 26 Apr 2023 21:21:26 SGT

You are under arrest: Epistemic arrest and the endless reproduction of the image of the colonised native

South East Asia Research
2016, Vol. 24(2) 185–203
© SOAS 2016
Reprints and permission:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0967828X16649043
sear.sagepub.com

Farish A Noor

S Rajaratnam School of International Studies RSIS, Nanyang Technological University NTU, Singapore

I'll fix you: Epistemic arrest and the identification of the other as the native

In the year 1907 the colonial entrepreneur and expert on tin-mining in British Malaya, CG Warnford-Lock, wrote thus in his book *Mining in Malaya for Gold and Tin*:

From a labour point of view, there are practically three races: the Malays, the Chinese and the Tamils. *By nature*, the Malay is an idler, the Chinaman is a thief and the Indian is a drunkard. Yet each, *in his special class of work*, is both cheap and efficient, when properly supervised. (emphasis mine)¹

That the complexity of Malayan society, with its ethnically diverse population and its linguistic, cultural and religious differences, could be simply reduced to 'practically three races' that in turn bore three simple essential characteristics – idleness, criminality and drunkenness – is telling of how the order of knowledge and power that had dominated and defined the colony had also reduced its native inhabitants to stock caricatures that were permanently fixed and defined. Knowing the colonised native Other meant being in a position of epistemic leverage over that Other, and thus being able to define and frame the Other in whatever terms that suited the ideological needs of racialised colonial-capitalism at the time.

-
1. Warnford-Lock CG (1907) *Mining in Malaya for Gold and Tin*. London: Crowther and Goodman, pp. 31–32.

Corresponding author:

Farish A Noor, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies RSIS, Nanyang Technological University NTU, 50 Nanyang Ave, 639798, Singapore.

Email: isbhahmad@ntu.edu.sg

Just how this process of simplification and reductionism took place has been the subject of many studies by scholars who wrote in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978).² Benedict Anderson (1983)³ touched on the role of the colonial map and census as the tools that were used to corral native societies within neat and exclusive geographical-bureaucratic compartments; while Richards (1993)⁴ demonstrated how this disparate body of confused data was incessantly sifted, filtered and divided into neat blocs of specialised, instrumental knowledge for colonial-management purposes. Kabbani (1988)⁵ and McClure (1994)⁶ both noted that this data-collection process – vast as it was in its scope and ambitions – was also one that provided the raw material that would further the interests of different, though often complementary, political projects that ultimately served the ends of Empire. Both also observed how knowledge of the Other was often linked to a myriad different desires: the desire to know, to learn, to possess, to oppress – and the delight of attaining epistemic dominance over an Other that had been reduced to the status of a static, knowable object.

Scholars like Alatas, Said, Anderson, Richards and McClure have looked at the entanglement between colonial power and its systems of knowledge-production, and have written at length about how the production of knowledge – historical, sociological, anthropological – of/on Asia was instrumental in the process of colonising that part of the world as well. My intention here is to complement their works by adding another vista of research: the production of images of the native Other that went hand-in-hand with colonial cartography and the conceptual mapping of Asia as a space to be understood and eventually colonised. My contention is that the visual depictions of South East Asians were instrumental in the process of knowing – and then classifying and ordering – the respective communities of the region, and that by a careful study of the images that were produced during this prolonged period of contact we may learn as much about the colonial gaze as we can about the object that came under the purview of that gaze.

Be still and be known: Pinning down mobile Asians

There have been reports that Asians have bodies, and that their bodies tend to move and fidget about, even while they are asleep. That later generations of colonial functionaries would find this revelation troubling had less to do with the mobility of Asians, or their reluctance to stay put, and more to do with the anxieties of Western imperialism as it developed in the 19th century, its drivers being the combined force of racialised capitalism, military expansion and creative energies released by the late industrial revolution. For the colonial powers that had extended their grasp across much of Asia, the constant movement of Asian bodies – and with it ideas, values, beliefs and subject-positions – was problematic, despite the long history of such movement as documented by Chaudhuri (1990).⁷ Chaudhuri's work on the socio-economic-

2. Said E (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

3. Anderson B (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Press.

4. Richards T (1993) *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of the Empire*. London: Verso Press.

5. Kabbani R (1988) *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of the Orient*. London: Pandora-Harper Collins.

6. McClure J (1994) *Late Imperial Romance*. London: Verso Press.

7. Chaudhuri KN (1990) *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

cultural realities of Asia before the age of European expansion and influence is instructive in several respects. He notes that long before the era of colonial capitalism that cut up the landmass of Asia into neatly-compartmentalised colonies, the peoples of Asia were in constant contact with each other, travelling from one part of Asia to another with relative ease and having a different sense of identity that was less attached to notions of racial difference and more grounded in creed, language, birth-place, language and personal loyalty to rulers. Hybridity, pluralism and cosmopolitanism were hardly novel or alien notions to Asians then, living as they did in a fluid world where the constant contact, exchange and overlapping of ideas and belief-systems was the norm for many.

The framing of Asia and Asians took off with the encounter between East and West, and with the arrival of the first European explorers, merchants and missionaries who began to venture deep into the Orient, as Europe awoke from its slumber during the Dark Ages. As Europe grew increasingly aware of another world out there beyond its own cultural-religious-political borders, its own sense of self was altered as a result.

Here we need to bear in mind one important fact: Europe's framing of itself against an Oriental/Asiatic Other was never a simple, singular instance of dialectics at work. For Europe itself was never fully-constituted as a *sui generis* given, and its emergence as a place and a civilisation with an identity to call its own was also contested at many stages of its history, as Bartlett (1993) has noted.⁸ The European powers did not transform themselves into modern imperial entities overnight.

How Asia was framed and understood by the first generation of Europeans who ventured there – the Spaniards and Portuguese – would leave a lasting impact on the rest of Asia for centuries to come. In South East Asia the semantic traces of this encounter can still be found today, as in the case of the *Moros* of Southern Philippines who were named thus after the *Moors* who were the mortal enemies of the Spanish and Portuguese who had driven them out of the Iberian Peninsula. Reading the early accounts of the Europeans who visited this part of Asia, we are struck by the frankness with which they described their violent encounters with the Muslims of South East Asia: Antonio Pigafetta, who recorded the voyage of Magellan, dryly noted down the place names of Muslim settlements that they put to the torch, as if he was filling out a Key Performance Index form on 'heathens I have killed today'.⁹

Europe's conception of Asia and Asians was developed bit by bit through narrative accounts such as that by Pigafetta and other travellers like him, but with the development of the printing press and the evolution of modes of graphic representation, the books that were being produced in Europe began to embrace the use of illustrations as well. Woodcuts, and later metal-plate engravings, would grow increasingly popular as a means to illustrate the lands and peoples who lived beyond the borders of Europe; and this paper focuses on how these images of Asia and Asians would later help configure the idea of Asia and Asian identity up to the 20th century.

The images that accompanied the written works of European explorers were important for a number of reasons. Firstly, they provided additional visual 'proof' of another world that existed beyond Europe where the climate, customs and peoples of the Asian continent were indeed

8. Bartlett R (1993) *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

9. Pigafetta A (1975) *Magellan's Voyage: A Narrative Account of the First Navigation*. London: The Folio Society.

different from Europeans. These differences could be further amplified via the images which would focus on the differences, rather than the similarities, between Easterners and Westerners. Secondly, by firing the imagination of Europeans who had never, or could never, travel to Asia, they provided a means through which Asia could be imagined and experienced vicariously through the eyes of others. And thirdly, due to the simple fact that these were *Western* images of the *East*, they may have carried the added element of believability, as they were made *by Europeans for Europeans*. Visual depictions of life in Asia were done in a manner that was culturally perspectivist and solipsistic: the Asian Other was being *visually captured and brought back home* to be viewed at leisure. Centuries before the advent of public spectacles such as the colonial expositions of Paris and London, Asians were already being frozen in time and reduced to two-dimensional images that would be repeated incessantly. This paper chronicles the development of such images and tropes and how they would later become the bricks in the columbarium of Imperial knowledge. We begin with some of the very first images of South East Asia, as Theodore de Bry vicariously explored the cosmopolitan world of Banten, Java, in the 16th to 17th centuries.

Capturing pluralism and diversity: Asian icons in the images by Theodorus, Johann Theodore and Johann Israel De Bry (1601)

In 1601 Johann Theodore and Johann Israel De Bry published the work *Icones Sive Expressae Et Artificiose Delineationes Quarundam Mapparum, Locorum Maritimorum, Insularum, Urbium, & Popularum: Quibus & Horundem Vitae, Naturae, Morum, Habituumque Descriptio Adiuncta est: Veluti Haec Omnia, In India Navigatione Versus Orientem Sucepta, diligenter Obseruata, Adeoque Tribus Hisce Indiae Orientalis Descriptae libris inserta sunt*.¹⁰ It was a landmark text in many respects, and it offered some of the very first images of life in South East Asia that were available to readers in Europe. Its author, Theodorus de Bry (1528–1598), worked with his two sons Johann Theodore (1560–1623) and Johann Israel (1565–1609).¹¹

After the death of Theodorus in 1598, his writings and engravings of the East Indies were compiled and published in the form of the *Icones Indiae Orientalis* that was put together by his sons Johann Theodore and Johann Israel. At the time, much of maritime South East Asia was still relatively unknown to Europeans, and one of the most important commercial centres was to be Banten, located in Western Java. Thirteen of the plates (plates I–XIII) in the work feature images and maps of India and Madagascar. Plate XIV (*Habitus Moresque Insulae Svmatra Incolarvm*) looks at Sumatra, and is accompanied by a short description of the dress and manners of the Muslim ruler of Sumatra.¹² The description of Banten (and other parts of Java) commences at plate XV and continues to XXXI. For the reader who is familiar with the images of native Americans in de Bry's earlier work on America, the images of daily life in the East Indies could not be more striking in contrast. De Bry's judgemental tone that was found in the pages of his work on America

10. de Bry JT and de Bry JI (1601) *Icones Sive Expressae Et Artificiose Delineationes Quarundam Mapparum, Locorum Maritimorum, Insularum, Urbium, & Popularum: Quibus & Horundem Vitae, Naturae, Morum, Habituumque Descriptio Adiuncta est: Veluti Haec Omnia, In India Navigatione Versus Orientem Sucepta, diligenter Obseruata, Adeoque Tribus Hisce Indiae Orientalis Descriptae libris inserta sunt*. Frankfurt.

11. Anthony G (1992) *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, Cambridge: Belknap Press for Harvard University Press, p. 128.

12. de Bry and de Bry (1601: Vol. I, p.d.3, Plate XIV).

is nowhere to be found in the *Icones Indiae Orientalis*. For here de Bry was forced to concede that the world of the East Indies was one where Asian communities had developed their own system of commerce, governance, religious praxis and culture to a level that rivalled Europe.¹³ In the plates that follow, de Bry offers a comprehensive view of Banten's plural society and records the presence of Javanese, Malays, Indians, Arabs, Persians, Burmese, Chinese and other Asian communities living together and engaged in commerce.¹⁴

Though the images in de Bry's work point to an Indies that was seen through a Eurocentric lens, they also point to the complexity of South East Asian society and highlight the fact that this was a region that could not simply be reduced to essentials. What stands out in the images made by de Bry is the manner in which these differences – cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious – were ordered and placed, side-by-side, in the form of a *catalogue of differences* where these distinctions were neatly labelled and categorised. In the plates, de Bry offers a range of cultural-ethnic types. For example, Muslims are identified by the turbans they wear; the Burmese merchant from Pegu holds in his hand a Burmese fan; a Chinese merchant wears a 'Chinese hat' while another carries a 'Chinese umbrella'. De Bry had certainly captured difference, but difference was *ordered* in the process. A further ordering would later be introduced by subsequent explorer-merchants who would actually go to live and work in South East Asia. In their writings – and the images that accompanied them – the ordering of South East Asian society would continue in earnest.

One such merchant-scholar was Johan Nieuhof, whose arrival in Java came at a time when the Europeans were no longer looking at South East Asians as heathen enemies to be put to the sword, but as human capital that could be put to productive use.

13. The section on Banten begins with plate XV: *Qvae Ratio Conditiove Portvum Et Navivum Stationis ad ciuitatem Bantam*, which features a map that is detailed and points out the shoals and rocks that blocked the entry to the port-city at that time. From the outset, de Bry identifies Banten as a Muslim polity and this is clear in the two subsequent plates, plate XVIII: *Solemnitas Nuptialis Bantam* and plate XIX: *Qvo Ritv Habitvve Dvces Sev Capitanei Per Viam publiceincendant*, which feature images of a local wedding as well as a detailed depiction of the ruler of Banten. The ruler is shown walking beneath a parasol and he wears a turban on his head – a common motif at the time that signified the Muslim faith of the subject in question. The political system in Banten is depicted in some of the plates that follow, notably plate XX: *Milites In Bantam*, plate XXV: *Qvo Ritv Bantani Concilia Militaria Agant* and plate XXVI: *Rusticorum, Qvi Pridemivxta Civitatem Bantam*. The first offers a description of the armed forces of Banten, and a brief description of the soldiery there. The second offers a glimpse of a political council, where the Sultan presides over his court. Interestingly, the text that accompanies the illustration notes that also present at this political assembly were Malays (from the Malay Peninsula), Arabs and Turks (*Malayos, Turca, Arabes*).
14. The theme of ethnic pluralism is captured in the plates that feature the various communities that were present in Banten, such as plate XXI: *Extraneorum Mercatorum In Bantam*, plate XXII: *Mercantorum Extraneorum In Bantam*, plate XXIII: *Mercantorum Ex China In Bantam* and plate XXIV: *Chinensium In Bantam Superstitio Et Idolatria*. In the account of Chinese merchants of Banten, the author notes that life for the Chinese community in Banten was freer than elsewhere, and that Chinese women were able to engage in commerce in the public domain. The extent to which these communities had been able to integrate and settle in Banten is emphasised further in plate XXIV, which features the image of Chinese inhabitants praying at a local Chinese temple, engaged in what de Bry described as 'superstition and idolatry' (*Superstitio Et Idolatria*).

Difference and diversity in the logic of the company: The ordering of Batavian society by the East India company-man Johan Nieuhof (1682/1704)

Nieuhof's globetrotting began in childhood, as he was born along the Dutch-German border in Uelsen. He later took up a post in the Dutch West Indies Company and was sent to Brazil to scout for information for the company, after which he made several journeys to China and the East Indies. After transferring himself to the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) he was based in Batavia, Java and was then sent to China as part of the trading embassy there. His stay in China was marred by allegations of corruption, relating to some pearls of dicey provenance that had come into his possession, and he was later removed from the company as a result. In 1672 he was reported missing on the island of Madagascar and little is known of his fate. Despite the controversies that hounded him to the end of his career, Nieuhof was one of the first European explorer-merchants who studied the societies that the Dutch traded with. Along with his brother Hendrik Nieuhof, he produced hundreds of images of Brazil, China and the East Indies that were among the most detailed depictions of the peoples in those parts of the world, as well as visual studies of plants, animals and landscapes.

Nieuhof's images of South East Asia were put together in his impressive (1682) work, *Zee- en Lant-Reise door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien, behelzende veele zeldzaame en wonderlijke voorvallen en geschiedenissen. Beneffens een beschrijving van lantschappen, dieren, gewassen, draghten, zeden en godsdienst der inwoonders: En inzonderheit een wijtloopig verhael der Stad Batavia*.¹⁵ The work was unrivalled at the time thanks to the extraordinary amount of detail that went into its writing, with much of the information in the work culled by Nieuhof himself who was a company-man who liaised directly with the communities he traded with.

Though Nieuhof's visual plates were peerless in terms of their detail and accuracy, his own written account of the land and peoples of South East Asia did occasionally slip into the domain of the fanciful. In his account of Malacca and its society, he gave a vivid account of the Malays there, notably the women who obviously caught his eye.¹⁶ But he also wrote about a curious race of *Kakerlakken* people who apparently were naturally-born night owls who could only work at night.¹⁷ Discounting the possibility that Nieuhof was describing graduate students who tend to sleep all day and party all night, we are left with no further information as to who or what these curious *Kakerlakken* were. We are equally clueless about the mysterious people of Batufabar (Batusabar), who lived somewhere between Riao (Riau), Johr (Johor) and Sinkapura (Singapore) who were, according to Nieuhof, 'Lafcivious, Lyers, great Diffemblers and Proud beyond meafure' and whose skin was 'light Blue' in colour.¹⁸ (Unfortunately Nieuhof's readers were not able to gauge how blue were the blue Batusabarans as chromolithography had not yet been invented.)

15. Nieuhof J (1704) *Voyages and Travels into Brasil, and the East-Indies: Containing, An Exact Description of the Dutch Brasil and divers Parts of the East-Indies; Their Provinces, Cities, Living Creatures, and Products: The Manners, Customs, Habits, and Religion of the Inhabitants: With A most particular Account of all the remarkable Passages that happened during the Author's stay of Nine Years in Brasil; And also, A most Ample Description of the most famous City of Batavia, in the East-Indies*. London: Awnsham and John Churchill.

16. Nieuhof (1704: 215).

17. Nieuhof (1704: 215).

18. Nieuhof (1704: 216).

Notwithstanding the few errors that besmirch his work (Nieuhof mistakenly dates the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese as 1610)¹⁹ and his occasional lapse into fantasy, Nieuhof's account of life in the East Indies was comprehensive. His main focus was the port-city of Batavia where he was based as a VOC company officer between 1648 and 1654, and in his account of the city he gives a vivid description of its many features including the town house (p. 305), spin-house (p. 306), slaughter-house (p. 306), stables (p. 306), children's hospital (p. 307), house of artisans (p. 308), rice magazine (p. 309), rice market (p. 309), fish market (p. 309), bird market (p. 310), fruit market (p. 310), city armoury (p. 311), pest house (p. 313) and the environment around the city (p. 314). It is interesting to note that Nieuhof's work is accompanied by several large double-page engravings of Dutch-constructed buildings in the city, such as 'The Tygers Graft of Batavia', 'The Church of the Cross of Batavia' and 'The Hospital for Children of Batavia' (inserted between pages 304–305 and 306–307) as well as single-page engravings of 'The Hospital for the Sick' (p. 305), 'The Hall for the Sale of Stuffs and Cloth' (p. 307), 'The Chinese Hospital' (p. 308), 'The Lodgings of the Artisans belonging to the Company' (p. 309), 'The Latin School' (p. 310), 'The Brickworks' (p. 312), 'The Pest House' (p. 313), 'The Place where they Whiten their Linnen' (p. 314) and 'Fort Rys-Wick' (p. 315).

The view we get of Batavian society, as seen through the eyes of Nieuhof, is a cosmopolitan one: He noted that 'Chinefe doctors' were working at the Chinese hospital,²⁰ while 'Negroes' were selling fruit at the fruit market, alongside 'Moors', Indians and other Asian communities that had settled there.²¹ Earlier in the same work, in his account of his journey to the coast of India, his text is accompanied by one of the first – and rare – images of a Eurasian-Indian mestizo woman.²² Such hybrid, liminal personalities also figure in his account of Batavia and the East Indies, where he devotes a passage to the '*Mardikers* or *Topaffers* (Topazers)' who were a 'mix of Indian nations' and whose dress was similar to the Dutch and other Europeans (see Figure 1).²³

Nieuhof's work was, and remains, known for its truly exceptional plates – that were reproduced in subsequent editions and translations of the work, including Churchill's English edition published in 1704. Apart from the full-page plate of the Indian-Eurasian Mestizo woman and the Batavian Mardiker family, Nieuhof also included several full-page engravings of other ethnic types, including 'A Malayar (Malay) Captain', 'The Habit of a Malayar and His Wife in Batavia', 'A Soldier of Amboina', 'A Merchant of Java', 'A Javanese Man and Woman', 'A Makafer (Makassarese) and his Wife as they are habited in Batavia', 'Tymorian (Timorese) Soldiers', 'Makafsar Soldiers as they Blow Poison'd Darts' and 'A Bougis (Bugis) or Bokjes'. Perhaps the most amazing full-page plate of all is that of 'A Negro Peddler and His Wife', which may be the very first image of an African man and his family living in the East Indies at the time.²⁴

Yet despite the detail that he put into his work – both in terms of his written data and of the images that accompany the text – there remains one community that is missing from his visual account of life in the East Indies: the Dutch. That the Dutch are missing in Nieuhof's plates is

19. Nieuhof (1704: 213). Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511.

20. Nieuhof (1704: 307).

21. Nieuhof (1704: 310).

22. Nieuhof (1704: Plate: 'A Meftice (mestizo) Woman', facing page 251).

23. The word '*Mardiker*' comes from the Malay word '*Merdeka*' and referred to 'freemen' who were often of mixed ethnic background. They were also called 'Topazers' for they were identified with the Topaz stone. Nieuhof (1704: 316).

24. The plates are inserted into the text between pages 314–315 and 316–317.

Figure 1. The ‘Mardiker’ family in Nieuwhoff’s work. Nieuwhoff’s images captured the diversity and fluidity in Batavian society in the late 17th century. The Mardiker family shown here were Eurasians who were granted a status almost on par with the Dutch.

hardly surprising, considering the fact that he was, after all, writing a report of the East Indies that was meant for consumption back home in Europe. Nieuwhoff was less interested in what his fellow Dutchmen looked like, for he only had to look in the mirror to see a sample himself, but was keen to demonstrate the achievements of the Dutch East Indies Company – hence the architectural studies of Dutch-built schools, forts, hospitals and canals that featured so prominently in his work.²⁵ These images also reinforced the fact that Batavia was a *Dutch space* – unlike Banten that was the subject of de Bry’s work, and which was a local *Javanese* polity before it came to be eclipsed by Batavia half a century later.

25. The civilising role of the Dutch in Batavia is a theme that Nieuwhoff returns to again and again. When writing about the schools that the Dutch had built in the city, he noted that all the books in Batavia had been brought all the way from Holland (p. 310) and that the Dutch had also opened a new printing press in the city.

The Eurocentric gaze that is evident in Nieuhof's work, and his choice of subjects, is clear enough to see. His images repeat the logic of ethnocentric perspectivism in the manner that they rank different ethnic types according to a Eurocentric standard of civilisation. The Eurasian Mardiker is shown wearing European dress, standing before what appears to be his private estate somewhere in the vicinity of Batavia. He holds a cane that suggests some degree of autonomy and authority, and his wife stands beside him, presenting his child for him (and others) to see. In the background his farm estate is clearly seen, and in the right background can be seen an animal-pen with clean and happy hogs smiling away at the prospect of being served for dinner later. By contrast, the 'Soldier of Amboina' plate features a full-frontal portrait of the warrior in question with sword and shield in hand, and a severed human head lying on the ground by his feet – that is being further mutilated by two nondescript native boys who exhibit obvious delight with their new bloody toy. The contrast between the two plates is striking. The property-owning, European-dressed Eurasian Mardiker is shown in his happy state, confident and at ease *without* weapons and in an environment that is ordered and prosperous. The Ambonese warrior, on the other hand, is depicted as bare-footed, set against a somewhat wild though picturesque landscape, and has clearly cut off some unfortunate's head. If the Dutch had built hospitals and schools for the children of Batavia,²⁶ the warriors of Ambon seemed content to let their kids play with decapitated heads instead.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that Nieuhof's depiction of the Ambon warrior obscures the fact that Ambon was indeed the site of violence in the past, but the violence that was perpetrated there was done not by the Ambonese but rather the Dutch, whose victims were the English. (Nowhere in his text does Nieuhof mention the infamous 'Ambon massacre' where English merchants were captured, tortured and murdered by the Dutch in their bid to control the spice islands, as Nieuhof's work focused more on Dutch achievements in the present than on their misdeeds in the past.)²⁷

A typological ordering of sorts can be detected in the engravings of Nieuhof, where more sedentary, mercantilist communities are depicted in a manner that presents them as more civilised or closer to a civilised ideal than others. Right up at the top of the ranking is the image of the Mardiker and his estate, along with the plates 'The Habit of a Malayar and His Wife in Batavia', 'A Merchant of Java', 'A Javanese Man and Woman' and 'A Negro Peddler and His Wife'. In these plates we see couples or families living together, and enjoying varying degrees of wealth and comfort under the rule of the Dutch. By contrast, the plates 'Tymorian Soldiers', 'Makafsar Soldiers as they Blow Poison'd Darts', 'A Bougis (Bugis) or Bokjes' and the 'Soldier of Amboina' depict the native communities of the East Indies in their 'natural state', beyond the pale of Dutch rule – engaged in acts of wanton ferocity with poisoned darts, blowpipes, spears, swords flying in all directions. The racial-ethnic ordering in Nieuhof's typology is clear, and by virtue of being of

26. Nieuhof (1704: 306–307, 310).

27. The 'Ambon massacre' was later brought to light with the publication of the (1624) tract *A true Relation of the Unjust, Cruel and Barbarous Proceedings against the English at Amboyna, in the East Indies, by the Netherlandish Governor and the Council There*. Milton (1999) wrote of the account thus: 'An account of the proceedings in Ambonya was published in a 1624 pamphlet entitled *A True Relation of the Unjust, Cruel and Barbarous Proceedings Against the English at Ambonya*. With no detail of the tortures left to the imagination, this grisly account became a bestseller in England and ran into dozens of editions, with reprints being made even years after the event. Such was its effect on the English public that many clamoured for war against the Dutch. Even in Holland the account caused a stir and the States General professed itself horrified by its details' (Milton G (1999) *Nathaniel's Nutmeg: How One Man's Courage Changed the Course of History*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, pp. 324–325).

mixed Eurasian descent the Mardikers/Topazes were, as far as Nieuhof was concerned, the community that most closely resembled the Europeans who were by default regarded as the most honoured, dignified and civilised among the lot.²⁸

In Batavia the Asian natives all lived under the tutelage and patronage of the one community that was not native to the region, the Dutch. Nieuhof made that abundantly clear when he wrote that:

The inhabitants of *Batavia* confit either of the Citizens, or such as are Servants of the Company, being of divers Nations; among whom the *Dutch* exceed the rest both in Riches and Dignity, most places of Honour and Profit being in their Hands.²⁹

And the fact that the Dutch exceeded the rest ‘both in riches and dignity’ and held control over ‘most places of honour and profit’ was for Nieuhof both a self-evident and natural fact that he neither questioned or challenged, as he was himself then a functionary of the Dutch East Indies Company, and was presumably among those happily placed at the highest level of society and therefore able to view the kaleidoscope of Batavian social life through his Eurocentric, panoptic gaze. All these communities, living as they did under Dutch law and political authority, were expected to abide by the rules set by the Dutch and to serve the Company in times of crisis. The complex and cosmopolitan world of Nieuhof’s Batavia was an *ordered* one, and the order was imposed and maintained by the company he worked for.³⁰

So popular and influential was Nieuhof’s work that it would later be republished and translated into several languages. But more popular were the plates that he and his brother Hendrik produced, that would later be copied and reproduced by other writers and artists across Europe. In the decades to come, the images from Nieuhof’s *Zee- en Land-Reise door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien* would be imitated by many other European engravers, and would find themselves in numerous works on South East Asia, such as De La Harpe’s *L’Histoire Generale des Voyages* (1780) and after.³¹ But it is also interesting to note that some of Nieuhof’s images proved more popular than others. The complexity of South and South East Asian society that was captured by the images of the Mestizo woman, the Eurasian Mardiker and the Negro peddler of Batavia would be forgotten, while the blood-curdling image of the head-chopping Ambon warrior would linger.³² And in time

28. In his work Nieuhof (1704: 310) noted that apart from European children who were sent to the European schools in Batavia, the only other community whose children demonstrated the same capacity for learning was the Mardikers/Topazes.

29. Nieuhof (1704: 313–314).

30. Nieuhof’s account of Batavia included a tally of all the communities that resided there, in the 1660s–1670s. As he noted: ‘Among the Foreign Nations residing here, there may, according to computation, be raised 6,720 Fighting Men, viz. 400 *Topaffers*, or *Mardiiken*, under two captains, within the city, besides 710 without the city under three Captains; making in all 1110; of *Regantiins* 70; *Amboynefes* 600; *Malayars* 201; *Chinefes* 1,200; Moors 200; Of the *Javanefes* within their Quarter within the New Gate, 750; Near the burying place of the *Chinefes* 1,500; In their Quarter beyond the New Fort 800; And of *Bafilians* beyond the fort 300’ (Nieuhof, 1704: 317).

31. De La Harpe M, Prevost (ed.) (1780) *Abrege de L’Histoire Generale des Voyages*. Paris: De Thou.

32. Nieuhof’s image of the Ambon warrior was reproduced under the title ‘Insulaire D’Amboine, arme pour la guerre’ in De La Harpe (1780) and appears in volume IV, plate 29, facing page 213. Also in the same volume is the image of the Javanese couple in Batavia, under the title ‘Homme et Femme de Ifle de Java’ in volume IV, plate 28, facing page 162.

the dilettantism of Nieuhof would give way to studies – both written and visual – of a more serious and arresting nature.

Begone, fuzzy epistemic borders! Colonial typology at work in the images of Raffles (1817), Marryat (1848) and Hardouin (1872)

In 1882, Blackie and Son published *The Comprehensive Atlas and Geography of the World, Compiled and Engraved from the Most Authentic Sources*.³³ Tucked into its pages was a single full-page chromolithograph entitled 'The Malay Race', and the caption beneath it read: 'Malay Race. Natives of Borneo: 1. Saghai Dyak N. E. Coast. 2. Loondoo Dyak. S. W. Coast. Natives of Java: 3. Priest. 4. Lady. 5. Gentleman.' The coloured print was typical of its time, featuring stock images of South East Asians assembled together to be viewed by a European public. The 'Saghai Dyak' and 'Loondoo Dyak' are shown in their war-dress, while the 'Priest', 'Lady' and 'Gentleman' in their respective costumes. The publishers of the work assured their readers that the images were 'engraved from the most authentic sources', but failed to note what or who those sources were. What remains unstated in the lithograph is the fact that all the images were copies of images that were done earlier; and which were to be found in the works by Raffles, Marryat and Hardouin. At a time when copyright laws may not have been enforced stringently, such casual reproduction of images from one text to another was not only commonplace, but the norm.

That 'Dayaks' and 'Javanese' could be summarily lumped together under the general category of 'Malay' is something that historians of colonial power and epistemology would be familiar with by now, though ethnologists and sociologists would cringe at the audacity of such flagrant oversimplifications. However, the ease with which such impromptu categorisations were done was assured by the manner in which the native communities of South East Asia had, by the 19th century, been stripped of their particularities as well as their hybrid, complex character. During the time of de Bry and de Bry (1601) the pluralism and cosmopolitanism of South East Asian society had been captured pictorially, albeit within the framework of differences; and during the time of Nieuhof (1682, 1704) there was still some concession to the complexities within and between these communities – as seen in his depiction of the mestizos and Eurasians that adorned the pages of his work.

By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, however, the form and content of Western colonial-capitalist ideology and praxis had shifted to a more rationalist, instrumental and functional register and the colonial functionaries who governed the colonies of South East Asia were less interested in fanciful tales of exotic Easterners with their curious manners. Evolving in tandem with other advances in both communications and military technology, the late colonial period witnessed the era of the gunboat and modern racialised capitalism being imposed upon the plural societies of the region.

The dry, factual approach to South East Asian studies began with the publication of William Marsden's *A History of Sumatra* that appeared in 1783,³⁴ and which was republished again in 1811 – coinciding with the British invasion of Java. Britain's invasion of Java and its occupation of

33. Blackie WG (1882) *The Comprehensive Atlas and Geography of the World, Compiled and Engraved from the Most Authentic Sources*. London: Blackie and Son Publishers.

34. Marsden W (1783) *The History of Sumatra – Containing An Account of the Government, Laws, Customs, and Manners Of the Native Inhabitants, With A Description of the Natural Productions, And A Relation of the Ancient Political State Of that Island*. London: Printed for the Author.

the island from 1811 to 1816 provided the opportunity for British company-men and scholars to study the island and its people in earnest, and one of the results of this occupation was the landmark work of Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, that was published in 1817.³⁵

Raffles' *History of Java* was regarded as an exceptional work in its time. The two-volume study of Java was meant to contain all that was known and could be known about Java and the Javanese; though some of Raffles' contemporaries – like John Crawfurd – were not impressed by Raffles' claims. What is of interest to us here, however, are the plates that accompany the work – that included dozens of architectural studies, studies of material culture, native script, portraits and crucially the 10 full-page aquatint figure studies of ethnic types by the artist William Daniell.³⁶

Daniell's plates focused primarily on the native communities of Java, and introduced a new element in the distinction and identification of native types in South East Asia: that of *class*. Among the plates were 'A Javan of the Lower Class', 'A Javan Woman of the Lower Class', 'A Javan Chief in his Ordinary Dress', 'A Penganten Maiden, or Bride', 'A Penganten Lanang, or Bridegroom', 'A Ronggeng, or Dancing-Girl', 'A Javan in War Dress' and 'A Madurese of the Rank of Mantri (Minister)'. Additionally, there is the image of 'A Papuan, or Native of New Guinea, 10 Years Old' which was later adapted and added to the work by John Crawfurd that was published later in 1820. Unlike the plates by Nieuhof that were more comprehensive and representative in the manner that they feature other non-Javanese communities (such as the Chinese, Indians, Moors, Eurasians and Mestizos), Daniell's plates for Raffles' work totally neglected the presence of other non-Javanese communities that were then settled in Java and across the East Indies. Like Nieuhof, Daniell's plates likewise made no allusions whatsoever to the Eurocentric gaze of the British functionaries and scholars who contributed to the work.

In the prints by Daniell the natives of Java are presented in a static, frozen manner, their postures artificial and contrived (unlike other images that he and his uncle Thomas Daniell produced on the same subject, that were done prior to the British occupation of Java and before he was commissioned to draw the images that were used in Raffles' book).³⁷ As in the case of the plates by Nieuhof, the Daniell plates that came with *The History of Java* proved to be more popular than the book itself. Though Raffles' work was republished and translated into several languages, the European public were clearly taken by the coloured aquatints more than the text. In time, a special edition was published by Henry Bohn and John Murray in 1844, that comprised *only* the images from the book, and *none* of the text that Raffles hoped would launch his career as a scholar-explorer.³⁸ And not only were Daniell's plates republished in England, but also abroad: Danvin and

35. Raffles TS (1817) *The History of Java*. London: Black, Parbury and Allen, booksellers to the Hon. East India Company, and John Murray.

36. William Daniell was the nephew of the famous painter Thomas Daniell. His reputation grew after his visit to India along with his uncle, after which he published some of his first drawings of India under the title *Voyage to India*. During his time in India he met up with other European painters who were employed by the East India Company, then based in Calcutta, and developed his own style. Though none of the aquatints in Raffles' *History of Java* are signed (as was customary then), they have all been attributed to him.

37. For the sake of comparison, see for instance: Daniell W and Daniell T (1810) *The Malays of Java*. Engraved by the artists. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme. (Lithograph).

38. Raffles TS (1844) *Antiquarian, Architectural, and Landscape Illustrations of the History of Java*. London: Henry G. Bohn, Black, Parbury, and Allen, and John Murray.

Fortier reworked and reproduced the images for French readers in 1836, in de Riezi's *L'Univers Pittoresque*.³⁹

Daniell's plates marked a shift of sorts in the manner in which native communities were presented to European readers/audiences. While background details were important in the images of de Bry and de Bry (1601) and Nieuhof (1682, 1704) – as in the case of the Eurasian Mardiker and his wealthy estate that features prominently in the background – in the plates by Daniells the background and context of each subject drops out as less relevant. The individual native type is moved to the foreground instead, and disconnected from the socio-economic-cultural realities of his/her environment (see Figure 2). This process of disentanglement from context and habitus would continue in other works to come, such as Frank S Marryat's *Borneo and the Indian Archipelago* (1848).⁴⁰

While the works of Marsden, Raffles and Crawfurd were of a scholarly nature, the writing of Frank Marryat was laced with traces of adventure and suspense. Himself the son of the seaman Captain Frederick Marryat, author of many seafaring adventure stories, it is not surprising that he chose as his subject the pacification of the coastline of Borneo and the life of James Brooke, the self-proclaimed 'White Rajah' of Sarawak who had embarked on a unilateral 'war against piracy' in his own backyard. Marryat's work offers an account of the survey conducted by the HMS Samarang as it charted the waters off Borneo, all the way to Hong Kong. The operations were then directed by Sir Edward Belcher, and Marryat's work depicts the life, customs, society and history of Borneo, including some studies of the native Dayak, Llanuns and men of Brunei and Sulu.

Marryat's work was accompanied by 22 colour-tinted chromolithograph plates and several black and white vignettes. The coloured plates in the work were by FM Del and printed by M and N Hanhart Lithograph Printers Ltd., and they included a range of subjects such as scenes of Bruni (Brunei), Kuching, Mount Kinabalu, as well as scenes of Hong Kong and the Philippines.

While the landscape images were lively and animated, what stands out in contrast are the full-page figure studies of native types, including the 'Saghai Dyak', 'Loondoo Dyak', 'Serebis Dyak', 'Malay Chief of Sooloo' and the 'Ilanun Pirate'. All of the full-page figure studies are presented with *no* background whatsoever, totally removed from any landscape or social context. Each is presented like a solitary object in a museum display case or models who were made to pose in an empty studio. The hyper-realism of the figure studies is evident in the extraordinary detail that went into the rendering of their costumes and the weapons they carried. And yet there is no indication whatsoever of the cultural-linguistic differences between any of the ethnic groups, their political economy or respective histories. Unlike Nieuhof's images of genteel Batavian society with their connotations of urbane sociability, the ethnic types from Borneo that are to be found in Marryat's work are *all male warrior-types*, underscoring the theme of his work as a 'scholarly adventure' with the aim of pacifying Borneo and ridding its coastline of barbarous natives (see Figure 3).

Of interest in Marryat's work is that the author himself was acutely aware of the images' arresting power and the dangers of misrepresentation. Himself an amateur artist, Marryat had attempted many a drawing in his career and found the illustrations in books on travel and exploration wanting. He alluded to this in his foreword to the narrative, where he wrote:

39. Domeny De Riezi MGL (1836) *L'Univers Pittoresque: Oceanie Ou Cinquieme Partie Du Monde. Revue Graphique Et Ethnographique*. Paris: Firmin Didot Freres.

40. Marryat FS (1848) *Borneo and the Indian Archipelago*. London: Longman, Brown and Green, and Longmans.

Figure 2. The Javanese dancer from Raffles' work. The Javanese depicted in Raffles *History of Java* were ordered according to their social status and class as well.

The engravings, which have appeared in too many of the Narratives of Journeys and Expeditions, give not only an imperfect, but even erroneous, idea of what they would describe. A hasty pencil sketch, from an unpractised hand, is made over to an artist to reduce to proportion; from him it passes to the hand of an engraver, and an interesting plate is produced by their joint labours. But, *in making this up*, the character and features of the individual are lost, or the scenery is composed of foliage not indigenous to the country, but introduced by the artist to make a good picture. *In describing people and countries hitherto unknown, no description by the pen will equal one correct drawing.*⁴¹ (emphasis mine)

Just how such *correct drawings* could be produced may be gleaned from the bare yet detailed images of native pirates that accompany his work. The fact that the plates 'Saghai Dyak', 'Loondoo Dyak', 'Serebis Dyak', 'Malay Chief of Sooloo', 'Ilanun Pirate', etc. have no background whatsoever forces the viewer to focus solely on the subjects of the plates, with little else to distract. But the plates have also removed these native types from their socio-cultural context, and all that can be seen and read from them are the details that are presented to the discerning eye: the spears, swords,

41. Marryat (1848: v–vi).

Figure 3. The Ilanun pirate from Marryat's work. Marryat's work was accompanied by images of Borneo seafarers, most of whom he regarded as pirates. It is interesting to note that all the images in his work were of native warrior-types.

daggers and other assorted weapons that adorn their bodies. And if the only conclusion that the reader could arrive at by looking at these masculine warrior images was that the natives of Borneo were violent and barbarous to the core, then such a conclusion would also fit neatly within the universe that Marryat had created in his account of Borneo and its people, that was presented as a den of brigands and cutthroats – a theme which he elaborated upon at length in the rest of his narrative.⁴²

42. Marryat's narrative is sprinkled with accounts that support the warlike impression lent by the plates in his work: He mentions Dayak children walking about wearing necklaces of human teeth around their necks (p. 15) and their sharpened, razor-like teeth (p. 79); the head-hunting ways of the Dayaks 'whose customs are nearly those of the American Indians' (p. 81); the people of Sooloo (Sulu) who 'patronise piracy of every description' (pp. 41–42); the Ilanun pirates and the bounty on their heads (p. 54); and the tribes of Borneo in general who were 'but colonists for piratical purposes' (pp. 60–62) – in contrast to his portrayal of his host James Brooke, whose 'kindness was beyond all bounds' (p. 18).

The reproduction of such images of colonised natives continued all the way to the end of the 19th century, after which lithographic plates gave way to the camera and photography held sway. One of the best works that appeared by the end of the century was Hadouin-Ritter's *Java's Bewoners in hun eigenaardig karakter en kleeder-dracht* (1872) that also featured a foreword by the travel-writer MTH Perelaer.⁴³

Hardouin was responsible for the 16 plates in the work – 14 of which were chromolithographs and two of which were individually hand-painted – while the somewhat romanticised account of Java was given by Ritter. By then – the 1870s – Dutch colonial rule across Java was all but complete, and the warring days were long over. As in the case of British Malaya, British Burma, the Straits Settlements, French Indochina and Spanish Philippines, huge swathes of South East Asia had come under colonial rule; and with colonial rule the ethnic compartmentalisation and classification of South East Asian societies had been carried out in earnest. The pirates and head-hunters that filled the pages of works by Marryat and Mundy were pacified by the regime of the colonial census (Hirshman, 1986, 1987) and the threat of an unannounced visit by a colonial gunboat.⁴⁴

Ritter-Hardouin's plates comprised ethnic types that were neatly categorised according to religious-ethnic differences: The Arab, the Chinese (a priest and musician are represented) and various Javanese of different social rankings are assembled together but each is treated individually, in short chapters that weave a fictional narrative about their imagined lives. And as in the case of the illustrations by Daniells, Bel-Marryat and others before, these images were likewise reproduced in other illustrated books, postcards and tourist knick-knacks and mementoes that were brought back by European visitors to colonial Java, who had 'known' about the natives there even before they arrived to the colony. In 1882, Hardouin's images ended up in Blackie and Son's *Comprehensive Atlas and Geography of the World, Compiled and Engraved from the Most Authentic Sources*⁴⁵ that we had looked at earlier, along with the images of the Dayaks found in Marryat's work, by which time the static image of the South East Asian native Other had stuck.

Colonialism, with its order of knowledge and power, had finally – albeit momentarily – halted the free movement of Asians across the continent and semantically arrested the meaning of South East Asian identities. In the policy papers and security reports that were produced by scores of British, Dutch, French and Spanish colonial functionaries, the latent fear was that of the fluid and mobile Asian. Snouck Hurgronje, in his confidential despatches back to The Hague, warned of *mobile* Indonesian Muslims who travelled to the Arabian Peninsula and counselled the monitoring of such itinerant 'Hajis' whom he feared had ventured beyond the control of the colonial state and its surveillance capabilities. And in the bid to regulate and control all aspects of native South East Asian society, complementary regimes of colonial education, urban planning, healthcare and social policing were introduced to keep all the different communities together yet apart, under the overarching control of the omniscient colonial state (Manderson, 1990).⁴⁶ The net result of these

43. Hardouin EA (illus.) and Ritter WL (text) (1872) *Java's Bewoners in hun eigenaardig karakter en kleeder-dracht. Nach der natuur geteekend. Voorwoord van M. T. H. Perelaer*. Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff.

44. Hirshman C (1986) The making of race in colonial Malaya: Political economy and racial ideology. *Sociological Forum* 1(2); Hirshman C (1987) The meaning and measurement of ethnicity in Malaysia: An analysis of census classifications. *Journal of Asian Studies* 46(3).

45. Blackie (1882).

46. Manderson L (1990) Race, colonial mentality and public health in early twentieth century Malaya. In: Rimmer PJ and Allen LM (eds) *The Underside of Malaysian History: Pullers, Prostitutes and Plantation Workers*. Singapore: Malaysia Society of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Singapore University Press, pp. 193–213.

different regimes of power-knowledge working in tandem with each other was the creation of the native stereotype, underscored by essentialist accounts of native traits and psychologies that were invented by the colonial scholars, writers and artists who viewed them.⁴⁷

The arrested native: Visuals in the service of empire

Gunboats alone do not build empires, no matter how strong their guns may be. The late colonial era witnessed not only the demonstration of punitive force in many parts of the South East Asian archipelago, but more importantly the development of its order of knowledge as well. Part of this enterprise was the creation of images of the colonised natives of the region.

It is interesting to note that as European colonialism advanced and developed across South East Asia, the recurring image of the native Other also grew more useful as it was reproduced and disseminated in a variety of mediums – from colonial postcards to travel advertisements, from the packaging of colonial products to colonial-era school books. This begs the obvious question: why were the *same* images being repeated again and again? When we consider the difficulties faced by the likes of Schouten and Nieuhof in the 17th to 18th centuries, who had to make the arduous and dangerous journey all the way to the East Indies and back, we are struck by the originality of their work. By the late 18th and 19th centuries maritime travel was much faster, safer and more frequent. Colonial navies and armies had pacified the seas and domesticated the lands, and the improvements in communications technology as well as the printing press meant that it was easier to produce images for books.

Yet it seems that with the development of modern colonial-capitalism there was less need for better, nuanced knowledge of what the native Other looked like. The reproduction of the same images, in different works and different editions of those works, meant that the image of the native Other had *stuck*, and that all that was required from then on was to reproduce it again and again, in order to reinforce the idea of the fixity and arrest of the Other as signifier-trope. The writers, scholars and propagandists who took and used the images of Nieuhof, Raffles, Marryat and Hardouin did so with the knowledge that they were merely reproducing stock images of native stereotypes – pigtailed, rattan baskets, *kerises* and all. And these images were being reproduced in works that were being written at a time when the colonial census and the colonial museum were also working together to reproduce such stereotypes in official documents, policy papers, administrative reports, etc (see Figure 4).

Pinning down the native communities of South East Asia and classifying them according to a Eurocentric typological register was perhaps the easiest way to negate the fuzziness of South East Asia's political, cultural, linguistic and confessional borders that often overlapped and interpenetrated with casual ease, as Chaudhuri (1990) has noted. In the same way that the geography of South East Asia was first mapped out, and later dissected and parcelled out among the colonial powers, so too were the communities of South East Asia divided up and ranked according to an alien typology that came with its own attendant hierarchy of 'superior' and 'inferior' races. The rendering of the native Other in pictorial form was but a small though significant part of this process, for it further reinforced the notion that there were indeed native types that were visually

47. Alatas SH (1977) *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass.

Figure 4. A late 19th century image from a bi-lingual (French and German) work, depicting the natives of Southeast Asia, with images that were taken from the works of earlier authors like Nieuhof, Hardouin and Raffles.

discernible and identifiable. And this would continue until the advent of photography, that would usher in the era of the colonial postcard.

In the case of colonial engravings and colonial photography, the unstated assumption was the same: that to *see* the Other was to *know* the Other; and knowing the Other also meant knowing where to *locate* the Other within the structured world of colonial society. This was an instance of what Todorov (1984) labels ‘the knowledge that kills’,⁴⁸ where epistemology and arrest are interlinked, and where knowing the Other really meant imposing upon that native Other a body of

48. Todorov T (1984) *The Conquest of America*. New York: Harper Collins.

assumptions and prejudices that had come along in the train of colonial expansionism; and in the process entirely negating the thing-in-itself.

The contemporary reader/viewer who looks at these images may find them quaint, in the manner that they lay bare the colonial sensibilities that were the norm at their time of production. Book and art collectors alike retain an obvious desire for them, for some of them are undoubtedly beautiful objects – particularly the images by de Bry, Nieuhof, Daniells and Hardouin, which remain sought after by antiquarians the world over. But in admiring their beauty we should never forget the multiple layers of meaning that are encoded in such works that offer us a glimpse of South East Asia's past. *For these are images of a South East Asia that was seen through the Eurocentric gaze, and where the visual-epistemic arrest of the native Other was the intended result.* In the same way that contemporary readers of Raffles' *History of Java* would not read the work as an impartial account of the land and its people, we should likewise sensitise ourselves to the perspectivism that is inherent in the visual depictions of South East Asia that were produced during the colonial era. The tropes remain in circulation in so many tourist ads and marketing campaigns in the region even today. It is not so easy to simply 'step out' of the shadow of Empire, for its shadow is long indeed. And though the visuals that accompanied the colonial enterprise were sometimes fanciful, sometimes exotic and sometimes handsome, these were renderings of the Other that arrested the Other in the process, like moths pinned on a picture frame – *dead, and therefore knowable.*

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.