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Regulating Dutch–Chinese marriages and relationships in the Netherlands (1920–1945)

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to contribute to *The History of the Family* by researching the historical relationship between family and state, and the role that ‘race’ and ‘mixture’ played. To this aim, it analyzes the regulation of Chinese–Dutch marriages in the interbellum and Second World War period in the Netherlands. It argues that the ways in which these interracialized marriages were regulated were informed by colonial discourses on the Chinese as racialized others. This resulted in a systematic pattern of exclusion of Chinese migrants in the Netherlands, in which they were registered, fingerprinted, counted and deported. Part of these discourses was on Chinese “interracialized” marriages with Dutch white women. This resulted in forms of “regulation of mixture” in which state officials aimed to prevent such marriages, through migration law, document requirements and premarital counseling. During the war period, these marriages were considered a “racial shame” and relationships were broken up by arresting the Chinese husbands before marriage. More research is needed to learn more about the extent of these practices and to know whether they were applied to racialized groups other than Chinese.

KEYWORDS

Mixed marriages; Second World War; Chinese migrants; regulation of mixture; race

1. Introduction

In a 1926 article entitled *Sheep without shepherds*, Rotterdam children’s judge Hendrik de Bie, writing about families and children who were threatened with ‘moral decline’, lamented parents who allowed their 17-year-old daughter to marry a Chinese sailor rather than an unemployed Hollander.¹ He put these parents on the same par with those who send their children out stealing, as they were both without morals, estranged from Christian religion and culture.

De Bie’s writing illustrates the concerns among Dutch state authorities about interracialized intimacies and marriages in the interbellum period, that are the topic of this paper. This paper explores the question whether and how such concerns resulted in state regulations aiming to prevent such unions.

In the American literature, so-called ‘anti-miscegenation’ laws aimed at preventing mixed marriages and relationships (or sex) have been studied extensively. The American prohibitions of interracial sex and marriage have resulted in a rich literature mapping how the state intervened in the composition of families and the role that ‘race’ and

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'mixture' played in these state regulations (Hodes, 1999; Kennedy, 2003; Moran, 2003; Onwuachi-Willig, 2013; Pascoe, 2009).

In the family history literature on Europe, however, attention to regulations preventing 'interracialized intimacies' (Haritaworn, 2012) and marriages has remained much more limited (see, however, Heuer, 2009; Hondius, 1999; Moses, 2019; Ray, 2009; Schrover, 2011; Woesthoff, 2013). The common understanding is that Europe never had interracial marriage prohibitions, with the notable exceptions of the Nazi laws prohibiting sex and marriage between Jews and non-Jews (Stuldreher, 2007; Bukey, 2011; Szobar, 2002) and interracial marriage prohibitions in Europe's colonies (Everts, 1998; Neus, 2007; Stoler, 2001). Outside of the context of 'Nazi laws' or colonialism, little family history research has been done into the issue of so-called 'mixed' marriages and relationships, and how the state intervened into families that were problematized as 'interracialized' families that had to be prevented and surveilled. This paper aims to contribute to our understanding of the historical relationship between the family and the state by exploring how the state regulated interracialized marriages and relationships. It does so by looking at the case-study of the regulation of Chinese-Dutch marriages in the Netherlands in the period 1920-1945.

The exclusion of Chinese migrants has also been extensively studied, both in the American and the European literature on migration. The notorious American Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Canadian Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, and the White Australia Policy of 1902 have all received ample academic attention (e.g. Calavita, 2000; Chan, 1991; Gyory, 1998; Lee, 2010; Mar, 2010; McKeown, 2003; Tavan, 2005; Volpp, 2005; Willard, 1967). The rich literature on these acts has demonstrated how migration was restricted through race-based criteria. Through the Asian migrant, the three states projected a series of anxieties regarding internal and external threats to the coherence of the national body, summarized in the label 'yellow peril' that was used in all of these contexts. For Europe, their exclusion has been studied too, as well in the colonies of European empires (Amenda 2012; Benton & Pieke, 2016; Coppel, 2002; Dharmowijono, 2009; Guiqi, 2011; Guttinger, 2004; Parker, 2016; Zolberg, 1997).

In this paper, I raise the question to what extent fears of 'interracial mixture' were part of the process of racialization and exclusion of Chinese migrants, resulting in regulations that served to prevent them. Looking at the forms of regulation trying to prevent 'interracialized intimacies' provides a useful approach to the construction of the Chinese as a racialized category, but also into the relationship between families and the state. Looking at the Dutch context both in the interbellum period as the period of the Nazi occupation show continuities over time, but also the divergent and often contradictory and indeterminate discourses and practices, which stemmed not merely from the vague and ambiguous nature of the law in the books, but from the contradictions and paradoxes of prevailing assumptions about race, class, and identity more generally (Calavita, 2000). As will also be argued, these regulations were informed by Dutch colonial legacies of practices and discourses on the Chinese and interracialized intimacies in the Dutch East Indies. In doing so, this contribution combines literature on the regulation of mixture, on Chinese exclusion and on colonial racialized practices in order to inform the study of family history.

2. Theoretical framework: regulation of mixture, Chinese exclusion and colonial legacies

American critical race scholar Debra Thompson has argued that ‘anti-miscegenation laws’ should be understood in a broad sense, including other forms of regulations and policies aimed at preventing or restricting mixed relationships (Thompson, 2009). She demonstrates how the modern state had changed and was less inclined to prohibit and more willing to regulate, facilitate and produce. Hence, in spite of a shift from prohibitions to other forms of regulation, official opinions continued to disapprove of and discourage mixed marriages and relationships, which were seen as a threat to individual partners as well as a social threat. Her concept of ‘regulation of mixture’ is especially suited for the Dutch context that knew few formal interracial marriage prohibitions but regulated such mixture in other ways, preventing or restricting mixed marriages and relationships.²

In my earlier work, I have identified several forms of regulation of mixture that could be found in the Dutch context (De Hart, 2014): spatial-legal segregation (keeping groups apart in order to prevent relationships from developing), regulation of consequences (e.g. private international law, citizenship law De Hart, 2015), premarital counselling (informing especially women about legal and other consequences of mixed marriages De Hart, 2017) and migration law (expulsion to prevent mixed marriages or relationships, or to break up families). As we will see, several of these forms were applied to Dutch-Chinese marriages.

Obviously, what was considered ‘mixture’, ‘mixed’ marriage or relationship, is not based on inherent characteristics of marriage partners. As ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ are socially and legally constructed, what is considered a ‘mixed’ marriage or sexual relationship differs depending on time and place. Hence, a ‘mixed’ marriage is a marriage between partners of two groups that are considered to be distinct racial or ethnic groups by society at a certain time and place; this is why Haritaworn suggests the term ‘interracialized intimacies’ (Haritaworn, 2012). Although much of the literature on regulation of mixture has focused on the black-white relationships, it was never only about the black/white binary, and Asians were definitely seen as a ‘racial group’, a ‘yellow race’, especially before the Second World War (Hsu, 2015; Keevak, 2011). As such, they were considered a threat, also in sexual terms (Spickard, 1991). This also held true for the Netherlands, where Chinese–Dutch marriages met with concern and exclusion.

The extensive literature on Chinese exclusion laws has demonstrated that they were not only based on racialization, but also on gender, sexuality and class (Lee, 2010). Fear of ‘interracial mixture’ was an important part of Chinese Exclusion, especially in the United States where marriages between ‘whites’ and ‘Chinese’ were prohibited (Pascoe, 2009; Volpp, 2005). In the period before the Second world War, Asian and Chinese men were seen as sexually aggressive and dangerous to white women (Gardner, 1999). Canada and Australia never legally banned interracialized marriages but had other forms of regulation to prevent mixture: Chinese employers were prohibited from hiring white females, and Canadian white women involved with Asian men were prosecuted and incarcerated (Backhouse, 1996; Ryan, 1999). This concern over ‘racial mixture’ between Chinese men and white women was not uncommon in Europe too (Guiqi,

2011; Guttinger, 2004; Stovall, 1998). The 'evil' of sexual intercourse between Chinese men and British white women and their offspring was a main topic in early twentieth century Britain, contributing to the development of migration laws such as the 1925 Special Restriction (colored Alien Seamen) Order (Parker, 2016). In Britain as well as France, deportation served to limit the number of interracial relationships. Other forms of regulation included censoring the news on French-Chinese romances and issuing official warnings against French women marrying Chinese (Guiqi, 2011, p. 149) or brochures warning against Chinese migrants' interest in white German women (Guttinger, 2004, p. 147).

One cannot adequately understand the regulation of mixed Dutch-Chinese families in the Netherlands, without taking its colonial history into consideration, as well as the interaction between the colonies and the metropole (Peabody & Stovall, 2003). Post-colonial studies have demonstrated that the racial divides of the colonial past are part of the genealogy of European modes of exclusion (Stoler & Cooper, 1997; Balibar, 2004; Stoler, 2001). Hence, the Dutch metropole and colony were not separate, but part of the shared and differentiated space of empire, in which discourses, knowledge, ideas and scholarship circulated. One central 'tension of empire' shared between the colony and metropole was that the otherness was not stable or obvious but had to be defined and reproduced (Cooper & Stoler, 1997, p. 7). Thus, in exploring these colonial links, this article answers to the call of scholars such as Cooper and Stoler (1997), taking into account the racialization of the Chinese and their families in the colonies in order to understand the treatment of the Chinese and their families by the Dutch authorities in the metropole.

3. Methodology

The research for this article started when in the Dutch National Archives, I came across a file entitled 'Documents concerning surveillance and measures against marriages of Chinese and Dutch women'.³ This file covered the period of Nazi occupation (1940–1945) and documented the specific measures taken by the Dutch nazified authorities to prevent Chinese–Dutch marriages. However, as the quote by children judge Hendrik de Bie that started this article suggests the problematization of Dutch-Chinese marriages started already before the war, and this was confirmed by the literature on Chinese migrants in the Netherlands (Benton & Vermeulen, 1987; Meeuwse, 2010; Van Eijl, 2012; Van der Harst & Lucassen, 1998; Wubben, 1987). Therefore, this article covers the interbellum as well as the war period. During this entire period, the police of the city of Rotterdam, where the largest Chinese community lived (the first and largest 'Chinatown' in Europe), played a central role in developing policies towards Chinese migrants nationwide. Hence, I studied both the national and the Rotterdam archives on police practice.

In order to contextualize these practices, I mapped the public discourses on Chinese migrants and Chinese–Dutch marriages and relationships by collecting national and local newspapers articles with an emphasis on the 1920–1940 period, including some articles outside this period. Newspapers could be accessed through the digital system *Delpher* of the Dutch Royal Library. Search terms included 'Chinees' and 'Chinezen' in different spellings, also in combination with 'huwelijk', 'vrouwen' and 'meisjes' (Chinese,

marriage, women, girls). The Dutch news reports regularly reported on Chinese elsewhere in Europe and the United States; these reports were also included. Newspapers could be accessed through the digital system *Delpher* of the Dutch Royal Library. This resulted in a total of 35 newspaper articles describing Chinese–Dutch marriages, Chinese migrant communities and policies directed at them.⁴ Finally, I used marriage records in Rotterdam, and other municipalities, as far as digitally available for the period 1920–1945.

4. Colonial legacies of the ‘Chinese issue’

Chinese migrants started coming to Europe in considerable numbers in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. They worked in the French war industry during WWI and as sailors employed by British, German, French, Danish and Dutch shipping companies. The first Chinese seaman came to the Netherlands in 1911, when shipping companies used them to break the sailor’s strike in Rotterdam and Amsterdam (Benton & Pieke, 2016).

It is often assumed that their early twentieth century migration was the first time the Dutch population and authorities got acquainted with the Chinese. For instance, Dutch migration historians Van der Harst and Lucassen (1998, pp. 94–95) assumed that the early twentieth century Dutch population would have learned about the Chinese by booklets and Hollywood films, ignoring that the Chinese had formed significant communities in the Dutch East Indies (nowadays Indonesia) and, later, in Surinam. Especially the literature on the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies has demonstrated that Chinese communities were the focus of intense problematization (Dharmowijono, 2009; Tjiok-Liem, 2017).

The Chinese were there even before the Dutch arrived in 1602 with the *Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* (VOC) and established a post in Batavia (nowadays Jakarta), an area with a largely mixed population (Bosma & Raben, 2008). From this early stage, relations between the Dutch and Chinese had been strained. In 1740, after an uprising by Chinese laborers, Dutch colonists murdered 5,000 to 10,000 Chinese and expelled all Chinese inhabitants from Batavia. The terms ‘Chinese issue’ and ‘Chinese problem’ were already used at the end of the nineteenth century. Although never defined, this referred to the economic and political power of the Chinese, but also their supposedly deviant family patterns (including cohabitation, polygamy and adoption, which were prohibited in the Netherlands) and their relationships and marriages with European or ‘native’ women (Dharmowijono, 2009). Although part of the Chinese community was economically well-off, the colonial authorities considered them parasites, abusing the weaker native population. The colonial authorities assigned themselves the task of protecting the natives from the Chinese, although Dutch colonial rule also depended on them as intermediaries for the day-to-day enforcement of its policies (Shirahshi, 2011). When at the beginning of the twentieth century, the ‘ethical policy’ was developed, based on the notion of ‘uplifting’ and civilizing the natives, the Chinese were considered a threat to this mission. To protect the natives from the Chinese, the colonial authorities took over money loans as well as the opium trade.

These negative perceptions of the Chinese were translated into a colonial legal system that was based on racial categorization of the population. In this legal racial

system introduced in 1854, the Chinese were categorized as 'foreign orientals' and thus legally 'equal to the natives', as were the 'Arabs, heathens and Muslims'. To serve Dutch colonial interests, they were subjected to European civil and commercial law (with the exception of family law) but also to criminal law applied to 'natives', which included harsher punishments and less procedural safeguards than European criminal law. The Chinese had to live in separate living areas under the supervision of Chinese leaders and only in exceptional cases could they live in areas designated to Europeans or the native population. In 1872, it was expressly forbidden to dress differently than what was considered appropriate according to Chinese '*landaard*' (national character). Furthermore, an 1863 Act restricted the mobility of the Chinese and natives through an obligatory pass system. These rules about separate living quarters and the pass system remained in place until 1919 (Tjiok-Liem, 2009).

As Bosma and Raben (2008) have pointed out, racial lines were blurred and keeping the Chinese legally apart was a way to display racial distinctions openly and therefore try to make them appear more distinct (Shirahshi, 2011). The instability of these racial categories is further illustrated by the introduction, in 1899, of the Japanese treatment as 'equal to Europeans' rather than the Chinese. The Japanese were another significant non-native Asian group, that was economically well-off and their equal treatment had purely economic reasons. The question of how to regulate the legal position of the Chinese in the Indies was continuously debated and addressed by numerous experts on the Chinese, reports and government advice. In the end, nothing happened, and Chinese, and the natives, remained subjected to the separate native courts and criminal law until after decolonization (Coppel, 2002; Tjiok-Liem, 2009).

Similarly, interracialized intimacies were a constant matter of concern to the colonial authorities. Stoler (2001) and others (Gouda, 2008; Locher-Scholten, 2000, De Hart, 2001a) have described how it was commonplace for European men to have native or Chinese concubines, but interracial union of European women and native or Chinese men were thought of as repugnant. As sex, marriage and family are central to colonial rule 'who married whom and who bedded whom was not left to coincidence' but instead translated into regulations of mixture (Stoler, 2001, also McClintock, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Before 1848, when interreligious marriage prohibitions applied in the Dutch East Indies, marriages between Europeans (as Christians) and Chinese (as non-Christians) were forbidden. Although this prohibition was framed in terms of religion, it was commonly understood to be about race. In this colonial, racial and gender hierarchy, anxiety about mixture focused on European *women* marrying Chinese and therefore upsetting these hierarchies. This is exemplified by a lawyer lamenting the abolishment of the marriage prohibitions in 1848 as 'the most ridiculous' of all concessions to non-Christians:

What would remain of the moral supremacy of the European if one permits the lowliest Javanese or Chinese to propose in marriage to the governor-general's daughter? Is this according to the law? (Bake, 1846, translation from Dutch by author).

This concern was expressed again when in 1889 the Chinese jurist Oei Jan Lee, who had studied in the Netherlands, married a Dutch woman, and in the newspaper *Bataviaansch Nieuwsblad* a commentator rejected the woman's father allowing such a marriage:

Because] a small *burger* in the Netherlands by marrying off his daughter shows to have thrown away all respect for his religion, for the white race and the nation and the family, to which he belongs.⁵

The extensive concern over the individual marriage of Oei jan Lee with a Dutch white woman demonstrates that even when interracialized marriages were no longer prohibited, this did not signify a growing social acceptance of such marriages. Hence, when in 1898 the Mixed Marriages Act was introduced that subjected European women to the law of their (native, Chinese) husbands, still had the purpose of preventing such socially and morally 'repugnant' unions (De Hart, 2001a).

In short, colonial law functioned to create the Chinese as a separate 'race', setting them apart legally and socially from both the European and the native population. Against this background, separate legal treatment in the metropole does not seem that much of a stretch.

5. Chinese exclusion in the Netherlands

The Chinese migrants who are central in this contribution did not come from the colonies but from parts of China itself. At that time, the Dutch were already familiar with the North American exclusion acts that were reported in the newspapers and discussed by legal scholars.⁶ The images of the Chinese were quite similar across countries (Amenda, 2012). In the Netherlands metropole, the idea of a '*Chinezenprobleem*' (Chinese problem) emerged in the 1920s, and the term came to be used in a Dutch newspaper.⁷ These concerns grew even stronger when, after the economic crisis of 1929, the number of Chinese migrants increased as some shipping companies simply dumped their Chinese sailors in Rotterdam. Other groups of Chinese migrants were merchants, street vendors and students; the latter from the Dutch East Indies (Pieke & Benton, 2016). Chinese migrants were strongly associated with illegal migration (Van Eijl, 2012) as well as criminality, in particular the opium trade. However, it was mainly the authorities that were concerned, and there is no indication that they were in any way pressured by Dutch public opinion, the media or politicians to take action. On the contrary, the media representation expressed some sympathy towards the Chinese, although in rather stereotypical terms, as did the wider public. The authorities regularly lamented the attitude of the public that bought peanut cookies from Chinese street vendors, commonly called '*pinda-Chinezen*' (peanut-Chinese) by newspapers, state officials, politicians and the wider audience. On the other hand, there is also no indication of more than incidental protests against the treatment of the Chinese. Such protests were initiated by the pastor J. Dols, who worked among the Chinese in Rotterdam, and sometimes by individual MPs.⁸

The exclusion of the Chinese relied on the cooperation of numerous public and private actors: local police across the country, the Justice department, the Chinese consul in the Netherlands as well as Dutch consuls abroad, and shipping companies transporting the deported Chinese back. The Dutch authorities communicated with the British, German and Dutch East Indies about their policies, or the deportation of particular Chinese. Even the Chinese associations in the Netherlands promised to send their members to the police in order to register.⁹

The system of legal exclusion intended to limit the numbers of Chinese migrants and consisted of several measures. First, visas were routinely refused by Dutch consuls or even if they were granted, access at the border was refused. Second, Chinese were deported on a mass scale. The first time this happened was in 1922 in Amsterdam after a gang murder, when the Amsterdam police organized a raid rounding up all Chinese migrants living in the Chinese quarter and according to contemporary newspapers, expelled around 300 to 400 Chinese without sufficient means; some of them had Dutch wives.¹⁰ Other cities also deported Chinese in smaller groups or simply put their undesired Chinese on the train to another Dutch city (Cottaar, 1998, p. 56, Van der Harst and Lucassen, 1998, p. 98).¹¹ Years later in Rotterdam, police commissioner Louis Einthoven contacted shipping companies in order to arrange for deportation of Chinese migrants from Rotterdam, and over the years systematically deported Chinese migrants who he did not consider economically useful. Einthoven was determined to solve the 'Chinese issue' and saw the deportation of so-called 'undesirable elements' as the most effective remedy. He managed to deport 1,000 of the estimated 3,000 Chinese migrants (Wubben 197).¹² Third, every year, from 1930 to 1942, the number of Chinese migrants in the country was counted. This annual count was initiated by the Rotterdam police commissioner Einthoven, but relied on the cooperation of the police across the Netherlands reporting the number of Chinese living in their towns.¹³ These counts were also reported in the newspapers: '105 Chinese in the Hague. The annual count of peanut-Chinese and Chinese working in restaurants revealed that at this moment 105 of these countrymen are residing in our city'.¹⁴

Fourth, again on the initiative of Einthoven, all Chinese in the Netherlands were obliged to register with the police, using identity cards with photographs and fingerprints. One could see this as a form of 'modern' policing (McKeown, 2003), which it was, but it was certainly also motivated by the racialization of the Chinese. As police commissioner Louis Einthoven explained in his memoirs, to the Dutch 'all Chinese looked alike' and they could easily exchange identities and passports but not fingerprints (Einthoven, 1974). This system of legal exclusion targeting Chinese migrants continued for decades after the Second World War, until it was abolished as discriminatory in the 1980s (Groenendijk, 1987). In these specific regulations, the terminology of '*landaard*' (national character) that had originated in the colonies was used, although the Chinese who migrated from the Dutch East Indies after decolonization were not subjected to them (Tjiok-Liem, 2017).

As indicated earlier, the Rotterdam police was central in developing this policy, especially its two police commissioners, A.H. Sirks and Louis Einthoven. A brief discussion of their background illustrates how discourse on the Chinese were disseminated. Sirks was a former marine and active in anti-drug policy. He published internationally on the issue of opium-related crimes (Sirks, 1930), and in 1927, he was appointed as an expert for the Opium Commission of the League of Nations. He succeeded in establishing a Central Bureau for the Fight Against Drugs in Rotterdam. The transnational as well as colonial discourse that linked opium to the Chinese certainly explained much of his attitude towards the Chinese migrants (De Kort, 1995, pp. 85–87).

Louis Einthoven was Sirks' successor and remained commissioner until 1942. Einthoven was born in the Dutch East Indies, but grew up and studied law and colonial law in the Netherlands. After returning to the Dutch East Indies in 1920, he

served in several legal positions at various courts. He also worked on the issue of the punishments of native laborers in the colonies who left their employer, the so-called penal sanctions, with the International Labour Organization. We have already come across the prevalent discourse on Chinese in the colonies that we can assume must have influenced Einthoven. In his memoirs, he wrote that his colonial experiences came in handy for his dealings with the Chinese issue in Rotterdam (Einthoven, 1974). Einthoven became a controversial figure after the war because of his political activities during Nazi occupation but also became the first head of the secret service after the war.

Given these facts, we can conclude that there was a system of Chinese exclusion in the Netherlands. Although it was not similar to the exclusion laws in the Dutch colonies, it was clearly informed by the racialized discourses in the colony and the idea that it was justified to exclude a migrant group based on racialized group criteria. As a result, it was more difficult for the Chinese than for other migrant groups to enter the Netherlands, they were in greater danger of deportation and their mobility was monitored through registration and annual counts. The question is to what extent this system of exclusion also targeted Chinese–Dutch marriages.

6. Chinese–Dutch marriages as ‘racial mixture’ in the interbellum period

In the metropole, Chinese–European marriages drew attention since the late nineteenth century. The media reported with some regularity on Chinese migrants and their involvement with white women in the United States, Canada and other European countries. These media reports demonstrate contradictory discourses; on the one hand, a fascination with the fates of individual couples, on the other hand, informed by colonial discourses in which such couples, and especially the white women involved were doomed, ending up in, strange, unfamiliar and unbearable living conditions.

Two late nineteenth-century Chinese–Dutch marriages drew extensive media attention. One was already mentioned: the marriage between Oei Jan Lee, a Chinese from Indonesia who obtained a PhD in law at Leiden University and returned with his Dutch white wife to the Dutch East Indies. Basically, every step Lee took, including the marriage, was reported in national and colonial media.¹⁵ The other, between British–Chinese Frederick Tan Tuang, a salesman, and Mia Cuypers, daughter of a well-known Dutch architect was portrayed in a novella by Lodewijk van Deysse, a prominent Dutch author, entitled *Blank en Geel* (White and Yellow). Newspapers referred to the novella as a warning against the marriage of Dutch women to Chinese (Altena, 2013); in general, news reports served to warn Dutch women against interracialized marriages with Chinese.¹⁶

However, these reports were not only negative and often contradictory. They mentioned that Chinese men were ‘attractive’ to or ‘successful’ with European women, as they were seen as hardworking, good fathers, and relatively wealthy. On the other hand, the frequent use of derogatory terms in the same news reports, such as (John) Chinaman, ‘yellow peril’, and ‘geeltjes’ (little yellows), referred to the existence of a ‘yellow race’.¹⁷ A short 1909 news report reflects all of these elements under the heading ‘A Love Tragedy’:

An actress, Rosa Hofmann who came from Berlin, where she had a Chinese lover, to Frankfurt a.M. got involved there with a Japanese. As the Chinese learned about this, he went to Frankfurt, met his unfaithful lover in her home, and killed her, after a short row, with three bullets. After this, the Chinese killed himself with his gun. It seems that the little Yellows (think of New York) have an amorous temperament. A 'yellow peril' for European (and American!) ladies.¹⁸

The topic of interracial marriage was considered important enough that it became part of the first academic study on migrants in the Netherlands, specifically on the Chinese (Van Heek, 1936). It was initiated by an NGO of Chinese students from the Dutch East Indies that was concerned about the poverty among Chinese migrants as a result of the economic crisis. It was conducted by sociologist Frederik van Heek, who was then at the start of his career and who had accomplished a PhD in China.

The study's attention for interracial marriages was not justified by their numbers. Although there were virtually no Chinese women in the Netherlands before WWII, marriages and relationships with Dutch women were rare. Van Heek counted 10 marriages and 10 permanent relationships in Amsterdam, and 13 marriages and 19 long-term relationships in Rotterdam. The Rotterdam marriage records reveal 22 marriages between Chinese men and Dutch women, concluded in Rotterdam between 1917 and 1939 and no marriages involving Chinese women.¹⁹ These low numbers demonstrate once more that there is no obvious link between anxiety of mixed marriages and their actual numbers. Even a single marriage could attract excessive attention (Altena, 2013; Stoler, 2001).

The researcher conducted interviews with police and a survey among local police in 10 cities across the country. However, he never interviewed any Chinese migrants, although he visited the 'Chinese colonies' in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, together with police officers. We can thus assume that he was strongly influenced by the police discourse on Chinese migrants as described in the previous paragraph.

Key elements of the study betrayed a remarkable resemblance to suggestions made by police commissioner Einthoven in his deportation policy. Van Heek distinguished between Chinese who were a social burden and those who were not. In his view, about a quarter of the Chinese could function as a reserve labor force while the rest should be deported. This is exactly what happened after 1936 on Einthoven's initiative.

The study is characterized by racialized, gendered and class discourses, especially in the parts devoted to sexual relationships and marriages with Dutch women. Van Heek described them as relationships between different 'races' resulting in 'half-caste' children that 'physically have the characteristics more of the Mongolian than the white race' (Van Heek, 1936, p. 65). The relationships, including marriages, were explained mainly as born out of need, due to the lack of 'women of their own race' as well as Chinese men's 'natural urge' and religious duty to establish families (Van Heek, 1936, p. 61). The lower class 'girls' involved in these relationships were thought to be motivated by economic need. Thus, the relationships and marriages were depicted as deviant, devoid of love and devotion.

Their sexualization is exemplified by the questionnaire distributed among the police that included one question about sexual relations with Dutch women. The police in Leiden answered that none of the Chinese had sexual relations with Dutch women, as they held them in 'high regard'. Again, this statement is informed by a colonial discourse

in which it is assumed that racialized men who know their place, lower in the racial hierarchy, would never enter a relationship with a white woman, who would be downgraded by such a relationship. Still, the study is not only negative about interracial relationships, as it concluded that most were long-term relationships and seemed happy.

Van Heek's study, especially the part on mixed marriages, received considerable media attention in the metropole as well as the colony. For instance, the colonial newspaper *Batavians Nieuwsblad* reported under the headline *The Chinese of Katendrecht (the harbor quarter of Rotterdam). Desired lovers for harbor daughters. Never rough, never drunk, loves wife and children*.²⁰ This headline seems to suggest a positive discourse; however, the article paints a rather gloomy picture of the marriages: the husbands are likely to be already married in China, husband and wife can hardly communicate, the wives have economic motives for marrying the Chinese and the children who are doomed to have problems, as they did not belong to either of the 'races'.

Van Heek's study served as a justification for the exclusion policy towards Chinese before and even during World War II (see the section below). Van Heek would later become the first professor of Sociology in the Netherlands, appreciated especially for his studies on social mobility (Ellemers, 1987; Flap, 1983; Gevers, 1987; Van Doorn, 1988).

Given the discourse on interracial Chinese–Dutch marriages in the interbellum period, the question is to what extent these marriages were faced with regulations of mixture. From the archival research that I conducted, my impression is that there was no consistent pattern of using migration law and deportation as a means to regulate mixture. The archival documents discussed here, covering the period of the 1920s and 1930s, have given no indication of a direct link between the measures taken against the Chinese and the aim of regulating mixture; most of the time interracial marriages or relationships are not even mentioned (e.g. in the annual counts). What the documents do reveal is authorities' perception of marriages to Dutch women as a hindrance to effective enforcement of migration law: in their view, such marriages hindered the expulsion of Chinese because of criminal or political activities (as communists or anti-colonial activists).²¹ This could be due to article 19 of the 1849 Aliens Act that protected an admitted foreigner from expulsion if he was married to a former Dutch citizen and had a child with her that was born in the Netherlands.²² It is, however, doubtful whether this provision offered actual protection in practice as, in this period, most migrants were never formally admitted. The provision was withdrawn in 1935 as a reaction to the economic crisis.²³ According to the government, its purpose had been to protect Dutch children, but since the Dutch Nationality Act of 1892, children no longer acquired Dutch nationality through birth on Dutch territory (*ius soli*) and the provision had lost its purpose. Hence, at least after 1935 there was no formal hindrance to expel the whole family. If a Dutch woman married a Chinese or other foreign husband, she automatically lost her Dutch nationality. She and the children became Chinese nationals and thus aliens subjected to the Aliens Act (De Hart, 2006). However, it seems that authorities assumed that in such instance, the Chinese husband and his family would be allowed to remain in the country.

It is likely, however, that migration law was used on a more incidental basis. Wubben (1987, pp. 86–87) mentions the 1931 example of Rotterdam police commissioner Sirks refusing to temporarily readmit a Chinese–Dutch couple that wanted to travel from

France to China, as the husband was terminally ill. The couple had married in 1930 in Rotterdam. Even after the Dutch consul in France had intervened on their behalf, Sirks refused to readmit the couple or even only the wife. In motivating his decision, he claimed that the woman was likely to give birth to a child on Dutch territory, which would make it difficult to expel the husband or, if only the woman would return to Rotterdam, that she 'would form a link between her husband and opium smugglers in the Netherlands'.

Another form of regulation of mixture was pre-marital counseling by Dutch civil registrars who warned Dutch women not to marry a Chinese husband. This practice is mentioned in several Dutch studies on Chinese migrants which included interviews with Dutch women with Chinese husbands. They were warned: 'Woman, what do you get yourself into, you are crazy!'.²⁴ This practice not only targeted Dutch women marrying Chinese but was part of a more general institutional practice in the interbellum period of warning against mixed marriages with 'undesirable' oriental husbands, e.g. Muslim Indonesian men (De Hart, 2017).

Furthermore, Van Heek and other, later, authors writing on the history of Chinese migrants in the Netherlands, mention their difficulties in getting married due to document requirements to prove their bachelor status. According to a 1928 newspaper article, the Dutch consul in China inquired about the bachelor status of the husband-to-be with the Chinese authorities. As this would sometimes take months, it served as an important disincentive, reducing the number of Chinese–Dutch marriages.²⁵ According to Van Heek (1936, p. 64), the Chinese husbands could initially prove their bachelor status through a letter from their parents, but after this method proved sensitive to fraud, official documents from the Chinese authorities were required but hard to get. Without these documents, civil registrars had the competence to refuse to solemnize the marriage. In response, some couples cohabited without marriage, which made these relationships all the more suspect and 'immoral' (cf. Pascoe, 2009). As a strategy to circumvent these document requirements, couples would also use what Pascoe has called 'geographies of evasion' by marrying in Britain (Meeuwse, 2010, p. 145). Another strategy was acquiring permission from the court.²⁶

Due to the limitations of the archival material at hand, I have not been able to confirm these difficulties with document requirements. In Rotterdam, only the marriage records are available and not the documents that were required to be permitted to marry. Studying marriage certificates from the 1930s proved that couples were allowed to marry after the Chinese husband solemnly swore that he could not provide a birth certificate and that his parents had died or their whereabouts were unknown.²⁷ We also have to take into account that such document requirements applied to all foreigners willing to marry in the Netherlands but could have hit Chinese specifically hard, as China did not have a civil registry, but also because official (colonial) discourses linked the Chinese to bigamy. Hence, marriage to a Chinese was seen as a threat to the 'monogamous marriage model' (Carter, 2008), which served the state's concern to safeguard the lifelong, monogamous, Christian marriage that was assumed to be based on consent and love and on the submission of wives. Document requirements could serve as a way to protect this monogamous marriage model, that was part of statehood. In any case, it is likely that practices differed locally, as the civil registrars had leeway in handling the

document requirements and they were likely to have divergent assumptions about race, class, and identity more generally (Calavita, 2000).

7. Chinese–Dutch marriages as ‘racial shame’ during Nazi occupation

The concerns that had existed before the war about the relationships between Chinese men and Dutch white women got new vigor in the context of Nazi ideology that considered these relationships a ‘racial shame’. However, in Germany, the Nazi laws prohibiting interracial marriage also included marriages to negroes, Pygmies, Hottentots, Australians, Mongols, Indians and Polynesians, whereas in the Netherlands they applied strictly only to marriages with Jews. Nevertheless, the Nazis also had an interest in interracialized marriages with ‘coloreds’, as exemplified by media coverage in *Ss-magazine De Storm*.²⁸ Consequently, Chinese–Dutch couples were sent away by civil registrars and had to try several municipalities before they could get married (Meeuwese, 2010, p. 157).

Authorities also attempted to prevent relationships by arresting Chinese men just before a planned marriage. This was part of a wider practice to arrest marriage partners before a planned interracial marriage, which affected, obviously, above all Jews. Mayors across the country were pressured to use the civil registry to prevent mixed marriages after August 1941, when the marriage prohibition was introduced; they had to warn couples eager to marry off the chances of arrest. To set an example, in May 1942, dozens of Jewish men and women were arrested in Amsterdam and deported to concentration camps before they could conclude their mixed marriage. Only one of them survived (Stuldreher, 2007, p. 254; Romijn, 2012).

The archival material reveals that Chinese men were also arrested, and although they were not deported to concentration camps in Eastern Europe, they were interned in workcamps in the Netherlands. The archives give insight in correspondence in the years 1941–1944 between local police, the Ministry of Justice and the Public Prosecutor on how to prevent Chinese–Dutch marriages.²⁹ As before the war, the police in Rotterdam played a central role. Local police sent annual reports on the number of Chinese migrants to the Rotterdam police.³⁰

Rozbach, the Rotterdam police commissioner at the time, had become a member of the Dutch Nazi party NSB in 1941. In September 1941, he wrote a letter to the Central Bureau, pointing out the problem of Chinese–Dutch marriages in explicit Nazi terminology.³¹ He wrote that 389 Chinese, who could not leave as a result of the war, lived in the Katendrecht harbor area in Rotterdam, where their stay caused the danger of close relations with the Dutch population, especially because of the lack of Chinese women. He claimed that he had, for a long time tried to prevent families of ‘mixed blood’. Because the Chinese had no income of their own, they were likely to use marriage to act as a ‘parasite’ on the Dutch population. Nevertheless, returning the family to China would be unjustifiably harsh towards the own ‘*volksgenoten*’ (the Dutch women). In his letter, he mentioned three examples to substantiate his request to take action: two Chinese men involved with minors, and one involved with a married woman. Although prosecution of the Chinese was not possible, the authorities should not tolerate these actions of members of an ‘alien race’. The attorney general answered that interning the Chinese after they had impregnated a woman was too late. He

suggested to closely monitor the relationships between Chinese men and Dutch women and to arrest the men once the marriage was announced. In response, a list of 15 married and 5 cohabiting couples living across the Netherlands was compiled.

The first three couples on this list were cohabiting couples without children. The Chinese men of these couples were arrested and later released after they promised to break off their relationship and never to consort with white women again. It was also decided not to intern the Chinese men who were married and had children, because this would mean their families would fall back on welfare. Chinese men cohabiting with Dutch women with children, however, were arrested.³² In November 1941 this became a nationwide policy: Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice Schrieke instructed police commissioners to arrest Chinese men who planned to marry Dutch women as a temporary measure, while a legal prohibition was being prepared. Schrieke had had a successful legal career in the East Indies and was appointed as a professor of colonial law in 1935 in Leiden. He was convicted after the war for his accommodating attitude towards the Nazis.

In 1943, the police commissioners in The Hague and Rotterdam expressed their concern over the lack of a national policy, which made it easy for couples to marry in other Dutch cities, such as Amsterdam, where no measures were taken. Indeed, during the war period, Chinese–Dutch couples succeeded in getting married, as marriage records in various cities demonstrate.³³ In January 1944, the police commissioner in Rotterdam Boelstra, Roszbach's successor, informed the police in the southern town of Nijmegen about measures taken. Although initially the Chinese were not interned because camps were necessary to intern the Jews, later internment in so-called *werkver-uimingskampen* took place, which kept the men from coming into contact with Dutch women, and in some serious cases, the men were interned in prison. Since the racial laws only applied to Jews and considering the good relations between Germany and China, Boelstra suggested using immigration law as a way to prevent *bloedmenging* (blood mixing). Here, he also referred to Van Heek's study. Interestingly, the relatively 'soft' measure of premarital counseling was also suggested: as was done before the war, informing the Dutch women about the poor economic prospects of their Chinese husbands, the poor living conditions in China, as well as the chances that he was already married. Also, as before the war, those counseling practices proved to be not entirely effective: a gap existed between the public perception of the Chinese migrants and the official perceptions of authorities: the police complained that the fathers of the Dutch women often saw the Chinese men as suitable marriage partners for their daughters and refused to file a complaint.³⁴ The authorities continued monitoring Chinese–Dutch marriages at least until August 1944. Although marriages with Chinese were never prohibited legally, wartime authorities tried whatever they could to prevent them.

8. Concluding remarks

This article has demonstrated the systematic pattern of exclusion of Chinese migrants in the Netherlands in the interbellum period on racial grounds. As members of the 'yellow race', they were counted, registered, fingerprinted, and deported on a mass scale. These enforcement practices were informed by colonial, racialized discourses that linked Chinese to the opium trade, political activism, poverty, and deviant family patterns.

It was further demonstrated ‘regulation of mixture’ occurred of marriages and relationships between Chinese migrants and Dutch white women as part of these exclusion practices. For the interbellum period, the picture is mixed and contradictory. European public and media discourses were informed by colonial discourses that strongly problematized these marriages, but were also more contradictory, leaving some room to perceptions of happy marriages with good Chinese housefathers. Consequently, enforcement practices varied. Migration law seemed to have been used only incidentally as a means to prevent these marriages, although they were perceived as a hindrance to deportation. Premarital counseling and document requirements were used to prevent these marriages. An active policy using migration law and arrest was developed during German occupation when these marriages and relationship came to be seen as a ‘racial shame’. The war period shows a continuation and extension of the differential treatment of Chinese in the Netherlands, rather than a policy break. The concerns, as well as measures, remained the same, although put in specific Nazi terminology of ‘racial shame’. The treatment of Chinese–Dutch marriages shows that in the Netherlands Jewish–Arian marriages were not the only ones facing the consequences of Nazi ideology, although only Jewish–Arian marriages were prohibited. For both the interbellum and the war period, more research is needed to understand the extent to which such measures were used, as well as the extent to which it was used against other groups of undesired, racialized others, and their interracial relationships.

After the war, migration from China increased and became more diverse, including females and family reunification. These migrants were rather successful in establishing restaurants that became quite popular with the Dutch population. The problematization of Chinese migration continued for decades after the war, including exclusionary practices, but gradually ceased to include the problematization of mixed marriages.

Nowadays, Chinese are considered a ‘silent’, successful and well-integrated minority. The number of mixed marriages among Chinese has increased to 25%, mainly Chinese women migrating from China to marry Dutch white men (SCP 2010). Interestingly, these couples face restrictive family reunification rules to be together, with a pre-entry test as a condition, that does not apply to Japanese migrants. A colonial legacy?

Notes

1. Mr. H. de Bie, *Weekblad voor Christendom en Cultuur*, Schapen zonder herder, 15 Januari 1926, p. 1.
2. The Netherlands had prohibited interracial marriages and relationships in the colonies, and during the French occupation of the Netherlands (1810–1815), interracial marriage prohibitions applied on Dutch territory (Hondius, 2014, p. 227).
3. Archives Rijksvreemdelingendienst (RVD) en taakvoorgangers van het Ministerie van Justitie, 1918–1945 (–1981), Stukken betreffende het houden van toezicht op en het nemen van maatregelen tegen huwelijken van Chinezen met Nederlandse vrouwen, 1941–1944, archiefinventaris: 2.09.45, 921.
4. Often news reports were reproduced literally by more than one newspaper. I counted these articles only once. The total of news reports that was collected is therefore larger.
5. *Bataviaans Nieuwsblad*, 9 March 1889.
6. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 18 March 1882, *Amerikaansche Kroniek*. *Javabode*, 29 September 1882, *Chineezen in Amerika*. The Canadian Exclusion Act of 1923 was also reported, *Voorwaarts*, 30 June 1923, *Uit de Internationale Vakbeweging*.

7. The term was used first in 1922, *Roterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, Chinatown Katendrecht. 24 February 1922.
8. Letter by J. Dols, Rotterdam archives, Gemeentepolitie Rotterdam 1845–1949, 'D1'Chinezen-repatriëring, nr. 63 3165. *Nieuwe Roterdamsche Courant*, 29 November 1928. Onder de menschen. De dagtaak van een zendeling onder de Chineezten te Katendrecht. *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, De Pinda-Chineezten in Nederland. Lezingen over hen! There were no extensive debates on the so-called 'pinda-chinese' in parliament but their presence came up now and then, Senate *Handelingen I*, 1936–1937, 4 March 1937, 234. Vaststelling van hoofdstuk IV (Departement van Justitie) der Rijksbegrooting voor 1937 Senate Bijlage A, Rijksbegrooting voor het dienstjaar 1938. 2. IV, voorlopig verslag, p. 1. Senate Bijlage A, Rijksbegrooting voor het dienstjaar 1938. 2. IV, Eindverslag, p. 13.
9. As demonstrated by numerous communications in the Rotterdam archives, Gemeentepolitie Rotterdam 1845–1949, 'D1'Chinezen-repatriëring, nr. 63 3165.
10. *Nieuwsblad van Friesland*, 8 augustus 1922, De Chineeztenlogementen in Amsterdam ontruimd.
11. *De Telegraaf*, 15 December 1922, Chineeztenleed in de residentie.
12. Numerous letters with shipping companies and others to accomplish this can be found in the Rotterdam archives, Gemeentepolitie Rotterdam 1845–1949, 'D1'Chinezen-repatriëring, nr. 63 3165.
13. The compiled lists of the numbers of Chinese migrants across the country can be found in the Rotterdam archives. Gemeentepolitie Rotterdam 1845–1949, 'D1'Chinezen-repatriëring, nr. 63 3165.
14. *Het Vaderland*, 20 January 1940. *De Tribune*, 7 February 1935, Vijf honderd vijf en zestig Chinezen te Rotterdam. *Leeuwarder Courant* 7 February 1935, (with photo).
15. *Roterdamsche Courant*, 24 April 1889, Nieuws uit de koloniën.
16. *Bataviaans Nieuwsblad*, 1 April 1898, Blank en Geel. *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant*, 5 March 1898, Allerlei. Lodewijk van Deyssel (1894), *Blank en Geel*, Amsterdam: L.J. Veen.
17. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Chinaman in Londen, 4 May 1920.
18. *Delftse Courant*, 7 August 1909, Een liefdestragedie.
19. Rotterdam marriage records, available at <http://www.stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/>, last visited 5 August 2018; For the whole period, I found only one marriage of a Chinese woman and Dutch husband. Marriage records Leiden, 12 June 1940, nr. 233.
20. *Bataviaans Nieuwsblad*, 24 November 1936. *Bredasche Courant*, 9 November 1936. China in Nederland. Misstanden bij zeeliedenwerving. *Het Vaderland*, 11 November 1936, De Chineesche Immigranten in Nederland.
21. E.g. in a police report on the members of the Chinese Association in the Netherlands Wah Kin Wei Kun, 29 October 1930. Gemeentepolitie Rotterdam 1845–1949, 'D1'Chinezen-repatriëring, nr. 63 3165.
22. Wet van 13 Augustus 1849, Staatsblad nr. 39.
23. Wet Verlaging openbare uitgaven 25 juni 1935. Memorie van Antwoord, 363.3, par.5, p. 250.
24. Interview with Dutch woman married to Chinese husband in the 1930s, Meeuwese (2010, p. 48). *Nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 27 February 1933. Pinda-Chineezten in Nederland.
25. *Nieuw Roterdamsche Courant*, 1 August 1928, Trouwende vreemdelingen. The report mentioned that civil registrars from other municipalities referred couples to Rotterdam.
26. Van der Harst and Lucassen (1998) write how a Dutch woman who married a Chinese husband in 1953 needed four witnesses and a court order to get married.
27. Marriage certificate Leeuwarden 7 October 1936, nr. 342; Marriage certificate Rotterdam 20 March 1938, nr. 902.
28. De Strom, Zulke vaders voor Nederlandse kinderen, 18 August 1944.
29. Rijksvreemdelingendienst (RVD) en taakvoorgangers van het Ministerie van Justitie, 1918–1945 (–1981), Stukken betreffende het houden van toezicht op en het nemen van maatregelen tegen huwelijken van Chinezen met Nederlandse vrouwen, 1941–1944, archiefinventaris 2.09.45, 921. Gemeentepolitie Rotterdam, 1845–1949, Stukken betreffende de

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30. NA 2.09.45, 921, Letter 22 March 1944, Chief Central Bureau Kellenborn.
 31. NA 2.09.45, 921, Letter 23 September 1941 Chief Commissioner police Roszbach to Central Bureau.
 32. RA 254, Statement translated from Chinese by Chinese man promising to break off his relationship but continue paying for the child, 7 November 1942.
 33. Marriage certificate Groningen 27 June 1942, nr. 613. The marriage was announced in Zwolle, which indicates that they may not have been allowed to marry in Zwolle. Marriage certificate Breda 6 August 1943, nr. 370. Also Cottaar (1998, p. 62).
 34. NA 2.09.45, 921, Letter Rotterdam police president Boelstra 11 January 1944.

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