Colonial extraction and living standards

*Household budgets, women’s work and consumption in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, ca. 1860-1940*

Corinne Boter (corinne.boter@wur.nl)

Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (elise.vannederveenmeerkerk@wur.nl)
Industriousness in an Imperial Economy

- Reciprocal relations between the metropole (the Netherlands) and the colony (the Netherlands-Indies).
- Main point of interest: influence of colonial relations on living standards.
- Research on the household level.
Comparison of living standards in NL and the NL-I

- Focus on 19th century (Van Zanden, 2003)

- Largely based on GDP and real wages.
Our contribution

- Regional data: budget studies from NL and NL-I

- Period 1890-1940

- Income and expenditure

- Incorporate women’s and children’s incomes.
## Budgets Java

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-section</th>
<th>Actual Year</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of budgets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1886; 1888; 1900</td>
<td>Java, various regions</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>Java, various regions</td>
<td>1,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dutch budgets according to skill level head of household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill level head of household</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1919</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-skilled</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-skilled</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher-skilled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Income composition NL 1900

Urban households
- Husband: 79%
- Wife: 8%
- Children: 5%

Rural households
- Husband: 50%
- Wife: 17%
- Children: 4%

Industrial households
- Husband: 39%
- Wife: 13%
- Children: 26%
- Home production: 13%
- Other: 9%
Income composition (peasants) NL-I 1900, 1940

- **1900**
  - Home production: 52%
  - Agriculture: 19%
  - Wage unknown: 7%
  - Wage children: 3%
  - Wage wife: 9%
  - Wage husband: 7%

- **1940**
  - Home production: 43%
  - Agriculture: 35%
  - Wage unknown: 7%
  - Wage children: 2%
  - Wage wife: 9%
  - Wage husband: 7%
Deflated annual expenditure Dutch households in guilders per consumption unit (1935 = 100)
Monthly expenditure per family (peasants, NL-I) in guilders
Monthly expenditure per family in guilders (1940, NL-I)

- Garden coolies on plantation
- Factory coolies on plantation
- Craftspeople/foremen on plantation
- Garden coolies outside plantation
- Factory coolies outside plantation
- Craftspeople/formen outside plantation
- Peasants

Monthly expenditure
Share of expenditure spent on food, NL and NL-I

Netherlands

- 1900: 46% Food, 54% Non food
- 1935: 33% Food, 67% Non food

Netherlands-Indies

- 1900: 31% Food, 69% Non food
- 1935: 23% Food, 77% Non food
Conclusion

1. Living standards 1900-1935:
- In NL: improved until 1930, then slightly deteriorated
- In NL-I: remained stable

2. Importance women’s and children’s contributions 1900-1935:
- In NL: decreased
- In NL-I: remained important
Thank you!

Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk: elise.vannederveenmeerkerk@wur.nl

Corinne Boter: corinne.boter@wur.nl