CHAPTER ELEVEN

'BARAT KETEMU TIMUR': CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND THE MAKING OF EARLY KRONCONG HISTORY

Lutgard Mutsaers

Introduction

Regarding the notion of cross-cultural encounters impacting on the course of music, *kroncong* is a case in point.¹ It symbolizes the intimate relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands unlike any other music. Although its roots were neither Dutch nor Indonesian, it was on Indonesian soil under the Dutch crown that *kroncong* compromised a middle ground between European and Asian aesthetics and social practices. To the present day *kroncong* holds its own cultural space in both Indonesia and the Netherlands as evergreen signature sound of East-West relations.

The unique bond was forged around the turn of the twentieth century, well before commercial electrical recording, radio and sound film would turn *kroncong* into the national popular music of Indonesia on its road to Independence, and into a special favourite and a home-grown genre in the Netherlands on its road to geographical miniaturisation. The moment *kroncong* caught the attention of the colonial press, the music was an as yet unnamed, unwritten foreign folk tradition alive in a rural niche of some notoriety in the vicinity of Batavia (Manusama 1919).

Already familiar with, in particular, lower class Indo-Europeans in the capital city, the music consisted of a handful of melodies with more or less fixed lyrics in an archaic language, accompanied by guitar-like instruments. Before long, and once labelled as *kroncong*, the budding urban

¹ This chapter is an original extract of a book by the same author, *Roep der Verten. Krontjong van Roots naar Revival* 'The call from beyond'. *Kroncong from roots to revival*, 2013). *Barat ketemu Timur* ('West embraces East') was the title of a variety show staged in Jakarta in 1953 that tried to re-establish pre-war popular urban stage entertainments, more in particular *stambul* and *kroncong*. This attempt by seasoned veterans of the entertainment circuit failed due to its retro agenda within the fresh postcolonial context. It had nothing to do with the *Vereniging Oost en West* (East and West Society), a semi-idealist, semi-commercial organisation in the Netherlands promoting the native arts and crafts of the East and West Indies. Its charity events usually included *kroncong*.

Indo scene adopted and appropriated the music, enlarged its repertoire and popularised it through Indo variety performances attended by people from all walks of colonial life who could afford a ticket (Cohen 2006). When *kroncong* moved into unpreferred directions as far as the new urban Indo middle classes were concerned, its former core audience abandoned it in favour of the latest American popular musics. As an identity marker, *kroncong* was not of much use anymore. Indo's in general lost touch with the *kroncong* of old, but championed fusions of *kroncong* lyrics and melodies with foreign sounds and performance styles, in particular the commercialized genre called *Hawaiian* (the Polynesian-Portuguese signature sound of Hawaii as an annexed part of the United States of America) with its steel guitars and ukuleles (Mutsaers 1992).

Today's relevance of that long bygone era of early *kroncong*, is the actual creative aftermath of the 1970s revival of *kroncong asli* (traditional, original *kroncong*) in Indonesia. A book by the departing ambassador of Portugal in Indonesia António Pinto da França, had prompted the Suharto government to recognize old time *kroncong* as an integral part of the nation's cultural heritage (Pinto da França 1970). The revival movement in the Netherlands took action in response, unaided by the Dutch authorities, with a different outcome, and first and foremost for a different reason. The immaterial ownership of *kroncong asli* was at stake.

Within circles of the independent Indo magazine *Tong Tong* (now *Moesson*) and in close collaboration with the Indo family business that organized the annual Pasar Malam (now Tong Tong Fair & Festival) in The Hague, steps were taken to recapture *kroncong* as an 'Indo-music' (term coined by Indo-activist Tjalie Robinson in 1969; Mutsaers 2012) and secure its place as a part of the diverse grassroots of the Dutch world of music. Ideologically motivated to the point of overstressing the difference between 'Indo-music' and Indonesian music at the expense of the acknowledgement of common roots and obvious similarities – which made the movement vulnerable to hijack by sectarian interests – the strategic revival effort in the Netherlands reached an unforeseen goal: the open recognition of post revival *kroncong asli* as a classic folk genre fit and ready as a concert music for the 'world music' stage. The Netherlands embraced the world music cause and format early on. During the 1980s, popular music media and specialty promoters 'discovered' and disclosed information about world musics performed by postcolonial, so-called new-Dutch inhabitants of the nation (Mutsaers 1993).

The two successful revivals of the one music called *kroncong* reached back into a poorly documented distant past. However, as the key to success of any music revival is its method of selectively kissing a long-time

dormant style back to creative alertness within a completely different context and for a new generation of people not totally unaware of the music's history and old time meaning (Livingston 1999), the *kroncong* revivals on both sides of the world concentrated on the issue of authenticity. *Asli* was effectively translated as 'the real thing' in terms of credibility, avoiding all too obvious areas of controversy, such as stereotypical colonial issues of race, race mixing and overt discrimination. Both revivals were conducted in order to define what the real thing in *kroncong* actually meant for postcolonial Indonesia on the one hand, and post-repatriation Holland on the other hand. This was obviously not a matter of constructing a politically correct common outcome. It was a matter of creatively reinventing the past (real time old style *kroncong*) for the sake of the present (*kroncong asli* in post revival mode), both with their own dynamics regarding identities and articulations. Future generations to whom *kroncong* may concern, would be able to make choices of their own, provided they were well informed and not somehow pressed into adhering to causes beyond their grasp and interest.

Musical allegiance for old times' sake and individual taste only, is not enough to make a revival work. Apart from the business side of revivals and ad hoc commercial flare-ups, this type of cultural movement will not succeed when it is not also motivated otherwise. The sense of self as belonging to a particular self-identifying (group of) people or nation state for that matter, in creative combination with an awareness of a relevant musical heritage not yet passed into oblivion, have inspired and informed the *kroncong asli* revivals at both ends of the equation.

Especially relevant for the movement in Indonesia in relation to the Netherlands is the possibility for Indonesian *kroncong asli* bands to perform in the Netherlands and find a particularly keen and critical market for their music. Especially relevant for the movement in the Netherlands was, and thanks to oral history and cultural manifestations still is, the vivid memory of repatriation and its aftermath. Musics that embody (in its performers) and express (in its moods and contents) memories and stories of loss, alienation and reluctant diaspora, have the innate potential to universally express the power of rising above the occasion, any occasion.

In this chapter I will look more closely at the contribution of newcomers from Holland to the early history of *kroncong*, the common source of the two separately conducted postcolonial revivals. Also the common cause of pointless wanderings into the mists of time, in order to prove assumptions that no longer can be proven. Between 1880 and 1920 the term *kroncong* was fresh and exciting for more than one generation of aficionados. The label *kroncong asli* did not exist, because there was no

practical use for it. All music was acoustic and handmade. Recorded music on cylinders and disks was available to the happy few only. Early recordings of *kroncong* were specimens of studied novelty, not anthropological field recordings (Yampolsky 2010). Mass mediation was not at stake.

As it turns out, Dutch newcomers became actively involved in the formative years of *kroncong* as a popular music. Their documented personal encounters with lifelong local connoisseurs and practitioners add source-based evidence to what previously has been ignored or denied for reasons that may no longer be considered as valid. Their perhaps naive contributions also bear witness to the reality of more or less fruitful personal advances across cultural divides that, for once, do not in the first place refer to encounters of a sexual or commercial nature.

Prehistory

Portugal, the top naval power in Europe during the 16th century, made its Asian capital in Goa in Southern-India and its staple of trade in Melaka on the Malay Peninsula. Goa and Melaka were the poly-cultural centres where the imported music that would develop into *kroncong* was learned by ear and memorized while plucking and strumming the guitars that came with Portuguese ships to their settlements abroad. When in the 17th century the Dutch East India Company took possession of most Portuguese strongholds in Southeast-Asia, local mestizo communities already had adopted and adapted Portuguese folk instruments, songs and tunes.

The slave trade conducted by the European powers that be, brought an element of particular intensity into the mix of musical influences and practices: the infusion of the social function of community song and dance, a universal phenomenon, with heartfelt expressions of alienation, loss and despair. People with backgrounds in faraway and different places, shared their fates and feelings at their places of transit and arrival. The Dutch East Indies were just one of the many regions where the coming to terms with forced separation and impending loneliness drew people from widely divergent backgrounds together. The unsophisticated self-made music that entered this picture had the potential to rekindle the hurting longing for home and to offer temporary consolation at the same time. From times immemorial, Portuguese folk music, both rural and urban, performed on string instruments, possessed that soothing melancholy softness and melodiousness. By historical chance this was the first European music to capture the minds and imaginations of non-Europeans on a large scale.

After the abolition of slavery in the Dutch East Indies in 1860, out of the undocumented amalgamation of musical influences, *kroncong* (as yet unnamed) covered a wide range of Portuguese-derived musical practices within mestizo communities and Christianized freedmen communities alike. Both heterogeneous cultures had their own histories and dynamics, but they were most likely to socialize because of their Christian identity within a predominantly Muslim environment and because of their social ranking in the lower regions of the colonial system. The Dutch ruling class did not interfere with native urban folk styles, nor replaced or infused existing styles with their own. They imported western musical instruments only for the purpose of their army and police force, their protestant churches and homes, often leaving the playing of instruments for recreational purposes to their servants. The Dutch did not bother to build or (co)-finance a colonial entertainment culture across the racial and cultural divides. This is why the last generation of people freed from slavery in the Dutch East Indies did not have the immediate option to seek out a popular entertainment stage. Unschooled people with ambitions of the sort had to create their own opportunities from scratch.

When modern Western entertainment hit the East Indies, it came from the United States. Blackface minstrel shows and travelling circuses passed through Java on their way from the British Straits Settlements (Malayan Peninsula) to Australia and New Zealand. The latest technological innovations such as recorded music, electric lighting and motion pictures were the magnets of American and American-style shows. These outfits offered an exciting brand of song-and-dance and sentimental 'plantation' songs accompanied by guitars, banjos, fiddles and percussion. The newly composed 'slave songs' idealised the good old times by way of parody disguised as nostalgic sentimentalism. Industrial modernity and romantic dreaming were the two sides of the nineteenth century medal of Western entertainment. Poorly documented, but immediately influential was the temporary sojourn of artists from abroad who taught and inspired local youths to try their hand at show business.

Tugu Strings

In 1880, *kroncong* was first noticed in Batavia in the form of a staged parody of natives showing off their European clothes, strumming their guitars and singing *Morisco*, a beautiful (implying it was not naughty) song of Portuguese origins. The performance took place in a private home in the

European quarter Weltevreden. The parody was targeted at Tugu, a small Christian community of non-Indonesians in the vicinity of Batavia. The relatively isolated rural community over two centuries had managed to keep their musical traditions more or less intact.

Tugu's first settlers, in the mid-1600s, had a background in Portuguese Melaka as a deported group of slave labourers from the Portuguese coasts of India. Their language was an archaic mix of pidgin Portuguese and Malay, the *lingua franca* of Southeast Asia under Dutch rule. Tugunese were seen at the city markets selling their produce. The specialty for which Tugu was well-known in the city was *dengdeng*, a pork conserve. Tugunese men could drink as hard as the Dutch. Their Christian lifestyle and diet did not endear them to the Dutch however, who openly criticized their uppity behaviour when visiting their relatives in the city. Hence the farcical take on their values and customs. An attractive folk expression, such as a good song that may be learned by ear, is vulnerable to unsolicited appropriations. *Morisco* in 1880 already was or else soon became a staple of the Batavian repertoire, a few years before the word *kroncong* popped up in the press. The song is oldest one known by title of the standard repertoire called *kroncong*.

A Bad Press

After 1880 a growing number of news reports indicate that *kroncong*, under that name, had become a hobby and house party pastime of lower class Indo-Europeans in Batavia. The noise level of a *krontjong partij* (*kroncong* session), involving mostly guitars but also flutes, violins and tambourines, was one reason for sleepless neighbours to go and fetch the city police or neighbourhood watch. Another reason was alcohol induced brawling ending in serious domestic or street violence.

Legend has it that male Indo slum dwellers during that same era used to roam the city streets in moonlit nights, singing songs of unrequited love and longing. The Malay word *melajang* expressed the emotional range of what in the Portuguese language (a major feed into the Malay *lingua franca*) was covered by *saudade*. More mundanely, *kroncongistas* were after the girls for casual sex. The colonial press named, blamed and shamed these *buayas* (literally crocodiles, i.e. streetwise petty criminals basking in the 'respect' of their peers and potential victims). Truth was, girls and women seemingly unforcibly fell for *kroncong* playing *buayas* and follow the music in obvious disregard of their parents' wishes. More

often than not these girls and women ended up in prostitution or the domestic equivalent thereof: being *njais* (concubines) to men who could afford them. This supposedly unintentional career move might have been safer anyway than returning to a revengeful father's house and an unmarried future situation.

The targeting of *kroncong* was just one way of expressing fear for the emancipation of lower class urban Indo's. They greatly outnumbered the Dutch (and should, being their offspring) and had strong aspirations to improve their situation. The emergence and crossover of *kroncong* into wider society coincided with a defining time in the social history of Indo's. Having stated this on the authority of academically trained Dutch historians of late, this chapter is the place for me to notice that Dutch historians are used to leave music aside, any music, whether it is an irreplaceable motor for social change, or the affirmative embellishment of elite cultures.

Indo Stambul Songs

At the centre of early *kroncong* popularisation and professionalization was the *Komedi Stamboel* (Stambul comedy) enterprise under artistic direction of August Mahieu from Surabaya, an educated self-confessed Indo and proud of it (Cohen 2006). Mahieu perhaps designed and in any case supervised the musical format of the *stambul* number: an untitled piece for the accompaniment or mood support of the scenes played out on stage. According to legend he also wrote (but never published) original songs and tunes still current within today's *kroncong* repertoire. As far as *kroncong* went at the time, Mahieu provided room and time on his *stambul* stage for *kroncongistas* to perform their songs of fate and self-pity – those were the ones early *stambul* audiences craved for – during intermissions.

Press reports from the early years of *Komedi Stamboel* identified some of the musical numbers as '*baboe* songs' (nursery rhymes). The factual truth of it may be traced back to the 1865 sheet music publication of *La Berceuse Javanaise* by the Paris-based pianist Charles Wehle. He had picked up the melody the year before, when he was touring the Dutch East Indies. Batavia immediately recognized it as *Nina Bobo*, the Malay-Portuguese equivalent of *Sleep Baby Sleep* that was rocking the world in many languages.

Other Mahieu *stambul* fixtures such as *Terang Boelan* (Moonlight) and *Schoon ver van u* (Although you're far; original French title *Je pense à toi* translates as: I think of you) circulated before. *Terang Boelan* was a Malay

pantun type of song lyric: four lines to each verse, in a alternating rhyme scheme and inter-verse repetitions. Its melody was later identified as an original written by the French songwriter Pierre-Jean de Béranger who was old enough to have witnessed the French Revolution. The tune was a hit among sailors and inhabitants of the French colonies, from where it travelled into Dutch territory. *Schoon ver van u* is also of late eighteenth century French origins.² It came to the Netherlands during the Napoleonic wars. The song was repeatedly republished in the Netherlands until well into the twentieth century. As a typical song of sad goodbye and painful loss, it was well suited to *stambul* purposes. *Schoon ver van u* later took on new meaning for repatriates, and has since remained as a staple of the post revival repertoire.

The four main types of early *stambul* and *kroncong* songs are also the main types of the postrevival *kroncong asli* core repertoire: sweet nursery rhymes (prototype *Nina Bobo*), sour songs of satire (prototype *Terang Boelan*), bitter songs of loss and lovesickness (imported Tugunese prototype *Morisco*; translated Dutch prototype *Schoon ver van u*) and salty songs rife with sexual innuendo of a racist nature (Tugunese prototype *Cafrinjo*). *Cafrinjo* was exposed in Pinto da França's book mentioned earlier. Title and content of *Cafrinjo* were too hot to handle for the revivalist movement in the Netherlands: *cafrinjo* means 'son of a nonbeliever', as viewed from the perspective of a Muslim. Mahieu himself may have introduced the fifth type of the newly composed song with Malay and Dutch lyrics in the same song. Its prototype is *Ajoen Ajoen* a.k.a. *De klapperboom marsch* (Coconut March), one of the best known *kroncongs* of all time.

Taking Tugu Seriously

The first Dutch person to take Tugu's musical culture seriously was Jan Beukhof, protestant religion teacher and preacher (*zendeling-leraar*). Newly wed in 1861, he took his wife with him to Java. The couple lived in Depok, a native Christian community in the vicinity of Batavia, with its own unique history and dynamics (Kwisthout 2007). Beukhof was to work with the Christians of Depok and Tugu. The Beukhofs grew fond of their parishioners, but to the Dutch authorities Jan could be a nuisance. He only cared for the wellbeing of his family and his flock.

² Liederbank Meertens Instituut (www.liederbank.nl) shows the song's history.

In 1884 the German professor of linguistics Hugo Schuchardt wrote to the *Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences). He was keen to know if there were remnants of the Portuguese language in the spoken language in and around Batavia. Beukhof at the time was the one who knew Tugu best, so the *Genootschap* asked him to gather information. Beukhof's informants were members of the Quiko family – to this very day a famous name in *kroncong* on both sides of the world. The cross-cultural encounter between Beukhof and the Tugunese resulted in two publications, one in German by Schuchardt and one in Dutch by Beukhof.

Schuchardt was first of all notified that in Batavia the Malay language was paramount. The same with Depok. Tugu was the community to research. Schuchardt in his armchair combined Beukhof's field findings with the literature on Tugu, one of the most studied cases of foreign Christian settlement in the Javanese countryside. A long academic article resulted and was published in Vienna (Schuchardt 1890). Unfortunately the name Beukhof appeared as Benkhoff. His international credit seemed lost for posterity. The Malay word *krontjong* (old spelling) appeared without translation. Following Beukhof's authority in this matter, Schuchardt took the *krontjong* to be a local copy of a Portuguese instrument. He determined quite a few words of Portuguese origins in the song lyrics Beukhof had sent. Some were rife with double entendre.

After his return to the Netherlands, Beukhof presented a detailed history of Tugu, including its musical tradition, in a book of his own (Beukhof 1890). First of all it was meant to draw attention to the poor state of Tugu compared to its sister-community Depok. He therefore named his book *Eene verwaarloosde zuster* (A neglected sister). Beukhof identified the *krontjong* as (in Tugu) the name of the smallest of three sizes of locally handcrafted Portuguese guitars. More recent information indicates that these guitars were more like mandolins in terms of their shapes with no separate blade between body and upper blade (Manusama 1919). Tying in, as scholars do, with Schuchardt's earlier publications on the languages of the Gypsies living in the southern regions of Portugal and Spain, Beukhof wrote:

'Like the Gypsies, Tugunese Christians love their guitar, which they call Krontjong. They have three sizes of it: the big Krontjong or *guitera*; the middle type or *matjina*, and the *little* or actual *Krontjong*. Young and old play or learn to play these instruments. They manufacture them, sell them to outsiders and repair them when damaged. If one talks with them about the making of these instruments, one notices, from their words and

gestures, that they know the possibilities of the instruments inside out and are fond players. Gamelan playing, i.e. the regular indigenous variant, they do not fancy at all. At wedding parties they use the guitar or horns, and on those occasions large numbers of their kinsmen from Batavia are present in Tugu' (Beukhof 1890).³

Six years later Joh. F. Snelleman incorporated the musical information on Tugu in the fourth installment of the *Encyclopedie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (Encyclopaedia of the Dutch East Indies) (Snelleman 1896). By that time *kroncong* had gained momentum as a budding popular genre, spilling over from city streets and *stambul* stages into wider society. *Kroncong* did not get its own lemma though. It goes to show that Dutch authors were late in recognizing the difference between traditional folk music and modern entertainment music feeding on partly the same sources. Or simply that Dutch authors chose not to spend their time and money on things of little significance and no relevance to them as good Calvinists.

Issues of Language

A more influential publicist to advance the general knowledge about *kroncong* among Dutch readers was F.P.H. Prick van Wely. He was a Dutch linguist and scholar of the Malay language as spoken and written (romanised and with Dutch spelling peculiarities) within the Dutch context in the East Indies. He defined '*krontjong*' within everyday speech of Indo-Europeans as 'a kind of guitar' (Prick van Wely 1906, 1910). The exotic word was incorporated into the Dutch vocabulary before the music had sounded live on stage in Holland.

Prick van Wely was a figurehead of the East Indies chapter of the *Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond* (Transnational Dutch Language Association). The Association promoted the advancement of the Dutch in the world. The daily use of Dutch in the East Indies by all born-inhabitants who already possessed or had acquired the Dutch nationality by the 1893 Law of Dutch Citizenship, would open possibilities for singers of popular song. In due time, they might replace their Malay lyrics with Dutch words, as yet another token of modernisation. Mastery of the Dutch language became a watershed between the wannabe privileged through education

³ Translation L. Mutsaers.

and better paid jobs, and the fatefully unprivileged, uneducated majority with no apparent social ambitions.

A small number of high profile Indo-Europeans debated the issue of language at the meetings of the *Indische Bond* (Dutch East Indies Association) founded in 1898 by peers to advance their collective economic, political and social interests. They recognized the importance of lifting the largest Indo segment of the population from underclass poverty to middle class prosperity through education. The issue of *kroncong* lyrics was understood well in these circles. As had been observed several times before and after the ANV started its Dutch-language-and-culture campaign supported by the IB, Malay *pantuns* by their very nature as veiled communications of florid folk poetry were quite unfit for translation into any other language without substantial loss of rhythm, form, content and meaning. *Kroncong* performers could teach themselves to sing Dutch songs in current *kroncong* styles, but the fascination for the real thing – the Tugunese folk strand and the popular Indo *stambul* music strand – had not even begun to wane among Malay speaking, *pantun* loving punters.

F. van Meurs Alerted by Kroncong

In 1893 F. van Meurs arrived in the colony, a well educated Dutch bachelor approaching thirty. He had been eager to escape from an unglamorous life of odd office jobs, frustrated by unfulfilled ambitions and idle hopes. A quarter century later, in his autobiography *Mijn Lier Aan De Wilgen* (I Rest My Case), he mentioned his encounter with local *kroncong* at a party in the house of his boss (Van Meurs 1918). By the time he was writing, *kroncong* was way past its prime, but when he first heard the music, it was hot. It happened soon after he had started his first job as an overseer of a tobacco sweatshop in rural Java. One of his colleagues, a guy called Willems, sang local songs with Malay lyrics while accompanying himself on a guitar.

On the spot Van Meurs learned that this was known as *krontjongen*, a Dutch novelty verb derived from the word *kroncong*, covering the entire range of singing, playing and on the spot improvising. His description of the social skills and sense of humour displayed by Willems implies that this colleague was himself Indo. The guests at the party knew Willems' repertoire all too well and asked Van Meurs to tell a new joke or two. Obliging, he let the comedian in himself out. He groomed his talent at private parties, his almost sole opportunity to shine. In his next job as a

travelling salesman in cigars, liquor and life insurance policies, he infused his standard talks with a joke and a song tailored to the occasion.

In 1898 Van Meurs decided to make entertaining his livelihood. He toured the colonial men's clubs and garrison barracks, socializing with military big shots, government bosses and common people alike. Starting out by covering familiar Dutch tunes, Van Meurs soon tried his hand at singing his own lyrics to tunes familiar among his audiences. He was arguably the first Dutch entertainer in the colony to do so. A regular performer and honorary guest at the meetings of the *Indische Bond*, Van Meurs picked up on hot topics first hand. He got away with being charmingly critical in his lyrics, where others might have been cautioned or even arrested.

While Mahieu was toiling on the road doing his *Komedie Stamboel* routine, playing in tents and warehouses, Van Meurs in 1901 played the European theatre of Batavia, the city's main high-class venue. The self-made artist had 'arrived'. He had set the colonial standard for the budding stage genre called *cabaret* that was all about personality, timing and the ability to project a song. His pianist L. Simon musically took him to another level. Simon was sensitive to local sounds, possibly because he was born in the colony. While the city's youth across the ethnic board filled the streets with songs picked up at Mahieu's, Simon managed to incorporate perhaps more than a hint of the craze music into his accompaniment of Van Meurs.

A number of detailed performance descriptions indicate that Van Meurs combated his own homesickness through his songs. He sang about Dutch food, Dutch weather, Dutch women and Dutch transport, and along the way commented on '*Indische toestanden*' (colonial situations). Comparing Dutch life and lifestyles to colonial life and lifestyles in a direct and personal way would become the artistic trade of comedians and singer-songwriters who poured in from 1905 onwards. Unable to cope with the competition, Van Meurs in 1913 left the stage. The cultural space he had carved out was growing fast, as was the Dutch population in the colony. Simon continued to tour the colony but did not surface in his own right. Van Meurs turned to journalism and advertising and made his home in Malang. He died there in 1927.

Willem Siep's Uit Insulinde

Willem Siep would take *kroncong* and *stambul* songs – remaining intact as two distinguishable strands – to another level and into another realm:

publishing. Amsterdam-conservatory trained Siep arrived in Batavia in 1897. He worked as musical director in the theatre, choir conductor, tenor singer, pianist, accompanist of visiting artists, silent film, and what not. Press reviews reveal that Siep followed Mahieu's musical *stamboel* method of cutting and pasting familiar melodies and mood pieces into an often hilarious hotchpotch soundtrack to more or less coherent plotlines from Eastern and Western sources. Mahieu was often criticised by Dutch commentators for his quasi disrespectful handling of Western music. Siep became famous for it. His social intelligence had told him to meet local preferences and check out local fads and tastes.

Shortly after Mahieu died (1903), Siep capitalized on *kroncong* and *stambul* songs popularised by Mahieu. He collected twelve favourite melodies from the current repertoire and arranged them for solo piano, each one a single page long, ten items numbered only, as was *stambul* practice – hence the musical jargon *number* for single item. Two have titles, *Djohor* and *Maresco* (= *Morisco*, the Tugu traditional). *Djohor* has not made the grade of the *kroncong* classics. It may have been a Mahieu original. *Terang Boelan* is there, as is *Schoon ver van u*. Siep secured his arrangement rights under the Dutch law article of 1881 and filed this collection as his Opus 18.

For publication Siep turned to the Chinese Batavian firm Tio Tek Hong, a department store in the European heart of the city. Hong in 1902 had become involved in the founding of the local European music association Musica. Its mission was to provide tuition in Western art music theory and Western instruments such as piano, violin and cello. No guitars. Under professional Dutch supervision, Musica would be open to pupils from low income families, implying (also) the recruitment of talented Indo-European boys who might move on to classical orchestras and salon (so-called light music) ensembles. Musica did not materialize, but Siep could have met Tio while the project was still on.

Siep used his given nickname Scipio (pronounced Seep-ee-oh) on the collection of piano arrangements published by Tio in 1904. The items from *Uit Insulinde, Een twaalfstal stamboel- en krontjongmelodieën gearrangeerd voor piano* [From the Indies' islands, Twelve *stambul*- and *kroncong* melodies arranged for piano] have no melody lines or lyrics. Two years later, sound recording of local repertoire would start to add to, but not for a long time abolish, sheet music publication. Over the years, Tio reissued Scipio's arrangements and added new ones under the same title. Sheet music – *roti kismis* (raisin bread) in Indo slang – was disliked among Indo *kroncongistas*. Even when they could read music, they preferred to play

Image 11.1 Portrait of Willem Siep, 1892 (source: Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie).

their *kroncong* by ear, perceiving notation as yet another Western imposition on the Eastern soul. Underneath their interest in all things Western, Indo's cultivated their Eastern soul.

After 1904 Siep did not return to *kroncong* and *stambul* song arrangements. Although he remained in the colony and continued his varied musical activities, he worked hard at being a serious composer in his own right. In 1926 he died a member of the *Genootschap van Nederlandse Componisten* (Association of Dutch Composers) in Nice in the South of France.

Ruyneman's Krontjongliedjes

Perhaps encouraged by Siep's *Uit Insulinde* remaining in print over the years, Danny Ruyneman from Amsterdam tried his hand at arranging *kroncong* songs. He had visited Batavia as a sailor's apprentice and may have encountered *kroncong* first hand. On return, Ruyneman decided to become a professional musician and started off as a pianist/accompanist. In 1912 he had his own collection of twelve *Krontjongliedjes* (*Kroncong* Songs) published with Naessens, a Dutch firm with a colonial branch selling acoustic and mechanical musical instruments and sheet music

(Mak van Dijk 2007). The 1912 ratification of the international Copyright Law (*Auteurswet*) in the Netherlands and its colonies opened new possibilities for Dutch citizens to file existing folk melodies in the public domain as their own.

In 1913, the Naessens firm adapted Ruyneman's *kroncong* arrangements for the phonola, forerunner of the electric player piano. *Kroncong* as a repertoire now entered the homes of people who could not play the piano but were able to handle the phonola. In terms of repertoire, Ruyneman had produced *kroncong*, but it was not the real thing in terms of sound and feel. That same year Ruyneman entered Amsterdam Conservatory and went on to become an avant-garde composer and advancer of the field. His *Krontjongliedjes* were later routinely snubbed by the Dutch art music establishment.

Soon Indo-Europeans took over the field of arranging old *kroncong* tunes and composing new ones. Paul Seelig did not self-identify as Indo and adhered to the elite Dutch lifestyle in the colony. He was of German descent and had enjoyed his musical education in Europe (Mak van Dijk 2007). In Bandung he ran his father's western musical instrument retail business. Genuinely interested in all types of music in Java, he never snubbed *kroncong*. A few years later Fred Belloni came on the scene as a protégé of Willem Siep who secured his break as an arranger for orchestra. Belloni was born and bred in Bandung, moved to Batavia where he preferred a steady civil servant job over the unsteadiness of being a professional musician (Mak van Dijk 2007).

Having arranged *Schoon ver van u* in 1905 for his guitar club, Belloni moved on and arranged *kroncong* and *stambul* tunes for his own salon ensemble, while paying his dues as a dinner musician at the European restaurant Stam and Weijns in Batavia. With Belloni a new chapter of *kroncong* Indo-style began. He was a prolific arranger, songwriter and in-house composer of the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* (Indo-European Association) founded in 1919. His commercial recordings from the late 1920s (in Asia) and 1930s (in Europe) nowadays stand as the classics of the recorded Indo-*kroncong* repertoire. The polished sound of Indo-*kroncong* Belloni style, infused with Western ballroom dance and marching rhythms was far removed from the music heard on the city streets and in the homes of Indo's around the turn of the century. When retro sounds in *kroncong* became a priority among repatriates in the Netherlands, Belloni's music was paramount. His version of *Moeritskoe* (= *Morisco*) grew into mythological proportions. Belloni did not live to see the revival movement. He died in 1969.

Pisuisse and Blokzijl Take Kroncong Home

Jean-Louis Pisuisse and Max Blokzijl were professional journalists with the Amsterdam-based *Algemeen Handelsblad* when they came to the colony in 1908. Only recently they had developed their alternative roles as self-made stage performers, singing topical songs with instrumental accompaniment. Their curious minds were wide open for new influences. They would tour together until the end of 1913. Their first long stay in the colony was between 1908 and 1911. With their own eyes they saw the handmade guitars used by local *kroncong* groups. Blokzijl compared the small and plump instruments cut out of whitewood to Dutch wooden shoes.⁴

When in 1911 they returned to the Netherlands as accomplished stage performers, their impresario Max van Gelder capitalized on the novelty by using the intriguing term *krontjong* in his promotion of the duo's Dutch tour. At a gig in The Hague, Pisuisse and Blokzijl invited a group of *kroncong* players from Semarang on stage to show their audience what the real thing sounded like. This event marked the introduction of *kroncong* on the legit stage in the Netherlands. In the years to come, live *kroncong* would be a staple of the *Indische Avond* (Indies' Night) circuit, in a staged setting with a bamboo fence, a palm tree in a pot and a bright spotlight behind a blue screen representing the full moon of the tropics.

In 1912 Blokzijl gave the readers of the *Algemeen Handelsblad* the first extensive fact finding observation of the two main strands of current *kroncong* performance in the East Indies: rural *kampong kroncong* and urban Indo *kroncong*.⁵ His source for the *kampong* strand of the music was a young friend named Sanoesi. Sanoesi was the singer in a Priangan (Bandung region) *kampong kroncong* band. Perhaps this was the same band that in 1908 had performed in Bandung at the initiative of a gentleman called Schenck. He had formed and managed a workers' band at Pasir Malang, an agricultural business near Bandung. Schenck wanted to prove and show his fellow nationals the civilizing effect of well made music on any audience. Blokzijl may have witnessed a similar event together with Dutch friends. Describing *kroncong* as still containing Portuguese remnants, he exclaimed 'Wat schaad het!' ('Never mind!'), as if to protect the music from being called an inauthentic hybrid. The times had changed.

⁴ M. Blokzijl, 'Kroutjong', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 9 November 1912.

⁵ M. Blokzijl, 'Kroutjong', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 9 November 1912.

Blokzijl tapped into a subject of growing concern. The International Congress on Race, held in London in 1911, had discussed current views on racial mixing and cultural hybridity as the causes of dilution and therefore deterioration. This potentially poisonous analysis was put forward and supported by European and American academics, casting its shadow into the fascist future. In this shifting ideological context, the reputation of *kroncong* would soon be damaged by its very hybridity, its innate impurity, as indeed some influential Dutch critics from the 1920s onwards would insist (Brandts Buys 1921). The Indo-European middle classes united in the *Indo-Europeesch Verbond* would denounce *kroncong* for different reasons: because it had become too indonesianized for their liking.

Blokzijl came across as a genuine admirer of *kroncong*. As a trained journalist he sticks to the facts. As an outsider he is curious to know more. He warmly described its melancholy sound, produced by male musicians only. He informed his readers about call-and-response *pantun* singing between men and women as a way to express romantic feelings. He appreciated the music itself and its community function, naively supposing a rural *kampong* was free from outside pressures. *Kroncong* meetings of Sanoesi's group were open to visitors and foreigners, provided they did not intrude, applaud or otherwise disturb the musicians' concentration.

That same respectful distance Blokzijl expected to be kept from street *kroncong*, the romantic pastime of adolescent Indo guys. Their *kroncong* rituals had caused bad press before and would off and on continue to do so. Although it was likely for outsiders to become emotionally engaged with the soft and melancholy music, Blokzijl stated, the intimate situation between serenader and serenaded should not be disturbed. City *kroncong* folklore had its own dynamics and was not to be interfered with. A couple of years later, this phenomenon would be the subject of *Totok en Indo* (Dutch newcomer and Indo) by the Dutch playwright Jan Fabricius. During the 1890s he had lived and worked in Batavia, where he had witnessed the emergence of *kroncong* as Indo-music first hand.

Taking his acquaintance with *kampong kroncong* to his song writing, Blokzijl wrote *De Zeebaboe* (The Sea Nanny), supposedly one of the '*krontjongs*' (*kroncong* songs) Puisse and Blokzijl introduced to Dutch audiences upon their return in 1911. In it he described the feelings of homesickness of Adinda from Bandung, a nanny with a Dutch family. Travelling to the Netherlands by boat, a journey that took about six weeks, Adinda becomes more desperate, the Dutch family more cheerful day by day. After arrival, Adinda is harassed by strangers because of her looks and habits. In this song Blokzijl described the situation, as in his newspaper

article, by evoking a real person with a name and a face. Without moralizing he dragged his listeners into the story and left them to draw their own conclusions. In the chorus, Adinda daydreams of home, imagining the sound of 'gamelan, *pantun* and *kroncong* music'. These words were to be sung on a repetitive and punctuated three note motive, using a, d and g, meant to 'imitate gamelan', as the sheet music indicates. Blokzijl also sampled quotes from *Nina Bobo* and *Ajoen Ajoen*.

Poëzie en proza in de thee (Poetry and prose in tea) was the duo's signature song. Pisuisse and Blokzijl recorded it in Berlin in 1913 before their final East Indies tour together. The song is an example of their critical commitment regarding colonial dealings with the native workforce. As Multatulis of song they promoted *kroncong* with their audiences. Both ended up dying spectacular violent deaths, which for the wrong reasons raised their profile as a groundbreaking double act.

A Folklorist's Agenda

The serious acceptance of *kroncong* as a type of folk song had its ultimate European champion in the Flemish folklorist and singer Emiel Hullebroeck. He was conservatory trained and a well-known stage performer also in the Netherlands. In order to raise funds for the Red Cross war effort in Europe, he paid the East Indies a visit that lasted six months over 1915–1916. His sojourn would have a lasting effect on the understanding and appreciation of *kroncong* in the Netherlands. Upon return, Hullebroeck lectured extensively on the folk song traditions of the East Indies. In the lively and engaging performances for which he received much credit, he labelled *kroncong* as a slow dragging song of self-pity, a complaint about the workings of fate that was supposed to be typical for Malay culture.⁶ In Portugal this type of song was called a *fado*. He was only interested in a *kroncong* as an authentic folk song, not made for profit but for being sung and cherished by as many people as possible.

In 1918 Hullebroeck published a selection of twelve items out of the many he had collected, in four instalments of three. Hybridity was no reason for him to pitch *kroncong* negatively against other types of songs. His enthusiasm came across as genuine, unhampered by snobbism. As such, he was an early exponent of a (semi-)academic movement in the West to try and save true folk songs from corruption by the entertainment industry

⁶ This is consistent with the findings of Tan (1993).

and its media. In 1928 the movement staged its first international congress on folk arts and crafts under the French title *Arts Populaires* in Prague. The conference was a sadly missed opportunity for *kroncong*. The delegation from the Netherlands consisted of a Dutch court-gamelan expert and an Indonesian expert on court dancing to gamelan music. They had not only confused folk with non-Western, but had also bypassed the one and only Batavian *kroncong* expert Alvares Theodorus Manusama, author of *Krontjong als muziekinstrument, als melodie en als gezang* (*Kroncong* as a musical instrument, as a melody and as a way of singing) (Manusama 1919).

Hullebroeck's fact finding visit marked the end of an era. The Dutch no longer called the shots as they used to. The Batavia city council in 1915 had opened the first modern amusement park: Deca Park on King's Square (now Medan Merdeka). Lunaparks popped up in all major cities, offering decent Western-style amusement such as roller skating, and entertainment such as cinema and demonstration dancing. *Kroncong* contests in particular attracted large multicultural audiences. In a stimulating competitive atmosphere, where juries awarded honorary medals and cash money, where masters of ceremony operated hand in hand with talent scouts, the *bintang krontjong* (*kroncong* star) emerged as the home-grown pop star avant-la-lettre. *Asli* became a necessary adjective to distinguish old style from new style. These contests were also the breeding ground for the female star phenomenon, catapulting *kroncong* into Indonesianisation and mass mediated eroticization (Keppy 2007).

Conclusion

Dutch newcomers into the East Indies around the turn of the twentieth century in their own ways acted as agents of change for the world of *kroncong*. They participated not from the sidelines, giving testimony of a inconsiderable music culture in the making via established media in elite circles. As early adopters, the likes of Van Meurs, Siep, Pisuisse and Blokzijl promoted their newly acquired knowledge for the sake of the music they appreciated against the grain of their times. Beukhof in his correspondence with Schuchard even ventured into taboo territory: the informed suggestion that the *kroncong* loving Tugunese of Java had something in common with the guitar loving Gypsies of Europe. Both were ethnic minorities in a strange land and had a traumatic history to come to terms with. Present day commitments to the active preservation of *kroncong asli* have come a long way.

Early *kroncong* history provided the core repertoire for the postcolonial *kroncong asli* revivals both in Indonesia and in the Netherlands. The link between then and now is concrete. Tugunese *asli* bands living in Jakarta have *Schoon ver van u* in their repertoire, in Dutch, as do Indo *asli* bands living in the Netherlands. Remarkably, the Tugunese community in the Netherlands maintains an unbroken line of their own brand of traditional *kroncong*. The common ground called *kroncong asli* is solid. Dutch newcomers at the time have made it clear, that rural conservative Tugunese *kroncong* was diametrically opposed to urban progressive Indo *kroncong* and *stambul* songs, copied from the Tugunese and equally from Western-European repertoires that had landed in the Dutch East Indies.

In later years these distinctions remained, however hidden under the layers of legend building and controversy. The explanation of *asli* among Tugunese representing their common stance does not correspond with the explanation of *asli* among Indo's representing a common stance of their own. Both self-identifying peoples maintain a strong sense of virtual co-ownership of the music. Post revival *kroncong asli* is closely monitored by aficionados communicating across ancient divides. The bilateral restoration of cultural contacts, the Dutch tourist boom and the ever expanding Pasar Malam circuit in the Netherlands, contributed to the restoration of *kroncong* as a musical bridge between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Indonesia is the home of *kroncong*, the very music that is at home in the Netherlands unlike any other music from Indonesia.

References

- Beukhof, J. *Eene verwaarloosde zuster. Aanteekeningen omtrent het verleden van de kleine Christen-gemeente te Toegoe*. Leiden: D. Donner, 1890.
- Brandts Buys, J.S. 'De ontwikkelingsmogelijkheden van de muziek op Java', in: *Congres Java-Instituut te houden te Bandoeng 17-19 juni 12: prae-adviezen; Djawa.*^e jg, Prae-adviezen 2, pp. 1-90. Batavia: Java Instituut, 1921.
- Cohen, M.I. *Komedie Stamboel: Popular theater in colonial Indonesia, 1891-1903*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006.
- Keppy, P. 'Le keroncong, les femmes et le combat de l'Indonésie par la modernité, 1900-1940', *Le Banian* 3: 90-112. Theme issue: Les années trente. Des Indes néerlandaises vers la République d'Indonésie, 2007.
- Kwisthout, J. *Sporen uit het verleden van Depok. Een nalatenschap van Cornelis Chastelein (1657-1714) aan zijn vrijgemaakte christenslaven*. Woerden: Freemusketeers Productions, 2007.
- Livingston, T. 'Music revivals: Towards a general theory', *Ethnomusicology* 43-1: 66-85, 1999.
- Mak van Dijk, H. *De oostenwind waait naar het westen: Indische componisten, Indische composities, 1898-1945*. With a contribution by F. Schreuder. Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2007.

- Manusama, A. *Krontjong als muziekinstrument, als melodie en als gezang*. Batavia: Kolff, 1919.
- Meurs, F. van. *Mijn lier aan de wilgen. Grepen uit het leven van den oud-Indischen bard*. Magelang: Maresch, 1918.
- Mutsaers, L. *Haring & Hawaii. Hawaiianmuziek in Nederland 1925–1991*. Amsterdam: Mets, 1992.
- . *25 jaar Paradiso. Geschiedenis van een podium, podium van een geschiedenis*. Amsterdam: Mets, 1993.
- . 'Tjatie's muzikale missie. De revival van krontjong als Indo-genre', *Indische Letteren* 27–1 (March): 56–72, 2012.
- . *Roep der Verten. Krontjong van Roots naar Revival*. Haarlem: In de Knipscheer, 2013.
- Pinto da França, A. *Portuguese influence in Indonesia*. Djakarta: Gunung Agung. [Reprinted 1985. Lissabon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.], 1970.
- Prick van Wely, F. *Koloniaal Nederlandsch-Engelsch, Fransch, Duitsch aanvullend hulpwoordenboek: Supplement op alle in Nederland verschenen lexica*. Batavia: Kolff, 1906.
- . *Viertalig aanvullend hulpwoordenboek voor Groot-Nederland*. Weltevreden (Batavia): Visser, 1910.
- Schuchardt, H. 'Kreolische Studien IX, Über das Malaioportugiesische von Batavia und Tugu', *Sitzungsberichte der Phil. Hist. Classe der Kaiserlichen Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien CXXII*, pp. 1–256, 1890.
- Snelleman, J. (ed.). 'Toegoe', in: *Encyclopedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, Aflevering 4, 1 januari 1896, p. 397. 's Gravenhage: Nijhoff; Leiden: Brill, 1896.
- Tan, S.B. *Bangsawan: A social and stylistic history of popular Malay opera*. Singapore/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Yampolsky, P. 'Kroncong revisited: New evidence from old sources', *Archipel* 79: 7–56, 2010.