



## Zooming In: Children as Guides and Informants in Merauke, West Papua 1905-1910

By  
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### Abstract

At the heart of this article is the presence of Indigenous children in photographs of explorative travels taken by Dutch Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Netherlands New Guinea (present-day West Papua, Indonesia) in the early twentieth century. Departing from the hypothesis that the children may have been guiding the missionaries, this research studies if and how young West Papuans acted as 'local intermediaries' in the early years of colonial settlement. 'Zooming in' on engagements between missionaries and children in both visual and textual sources, two paradoxical aspects of Indigenous children in missionary archives are grappled with: their centrality as objects of civilising practices on the one hand, and their marginalisation as historical subjects in colonial textual practices on the other. The visual and textual are brought in conversation: the active presence of children as individual historical actors participating in processes of colonisation in the photographs helps to see children and their actions in 'still' discourse, to contextualise captured instances in time and space. This shows how and when missionaries depended on the knowledge, skills, and networks of local children to introduce them to their new working ground. This article thus adds to the existing body of literature on colonial intermediaries, in which young people constitute an overlooked group, and to complement understandings of non-elite colonial childhoods of Indigenous children outside of familial or institutional contexts.

**Keywords:** colonial intermediaries; historical childhoods; photography; Catholic mission; West Papua

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Fig. 1. Erfgoedcentrum Nederlands Kloosterleven (hereinafter: ENK), AR-P027-20210-3. Photographic catalogue of the mission on South New Guinea until 1940, page containing photograph 228987 and 228988.

## Introduction

Sometimes, what is right in front of you can remain unnoticed. The reasons are manifold. Information is purposely obscured. Unobtrusive details get lost in an overwhelming mass of information. Confirmation bias causes observations to lean toward confirming the observer's conscious and unconscious expectations. Even technological factors can be biased toward privileging certain data while shrouding other.

With some effort, however, what is obscured can be brought into focus. Take the image above (Fig. 1). At first glance, the black-and-white photographs depict a densely grown tropical forest. The pictures are part of the archive of the Dutch province of the French missionary congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (*Missionarii Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu* or MSC).<sup>1</sup> They can be found in a categorised catalogue of photographs depicting the early years of the Catholic mission on the south coast of West Papua, then known as 'Netherlands New Guinea'. West Papua was one of the final territories of the Dutch East Indies to be brought under Dutch administration, and colonial presence was negligible when the MSC missionaries settled in administrative post Merauke in 1905. Being among the first colonial agents in the area, the missionaries were involved in ethnographical, linguistical, and geographical explorations. The photographs in

Figure 1 testify to the efforts of the missionaries to document their surroundings. As indicated by the code in the upper left corner, the page is classified under section 3, 'land and people,' group E, 'landscape.' The backside of the page bears the caption *klapperbosschen* or 'coconut tree forests' (AR-P027-20210).

These landscape photographs did not exactly spark my interest in my initial engagements with the MSC's photographic archive, some five years ago. Curious about daily interactions in colonial society, I spent hours hovering over photographs capturing moments of contact between missionaries and the local Marind-anim communities, but more or less flicked through the images depicting West-Papuan coasts, wetlands, and forests. However, since the primary aim of my project then was to get a full picture of the quality and content of photographic collections in Dutch missionary archives, even the to my mind insignificant 'landscape' photographs were included in the database I was constructing of the photographs taken by the MSC on in the Merauke area of West Papua between 1905 and 1940 (Reichgelt 2016). This database contains factual data (what, where, when, who, of whom), a social biography (uses, captions, publications; see Fig. 2), and a high-definition scan (600dpi) of each of the 1,300 photographs (Fig. 3).

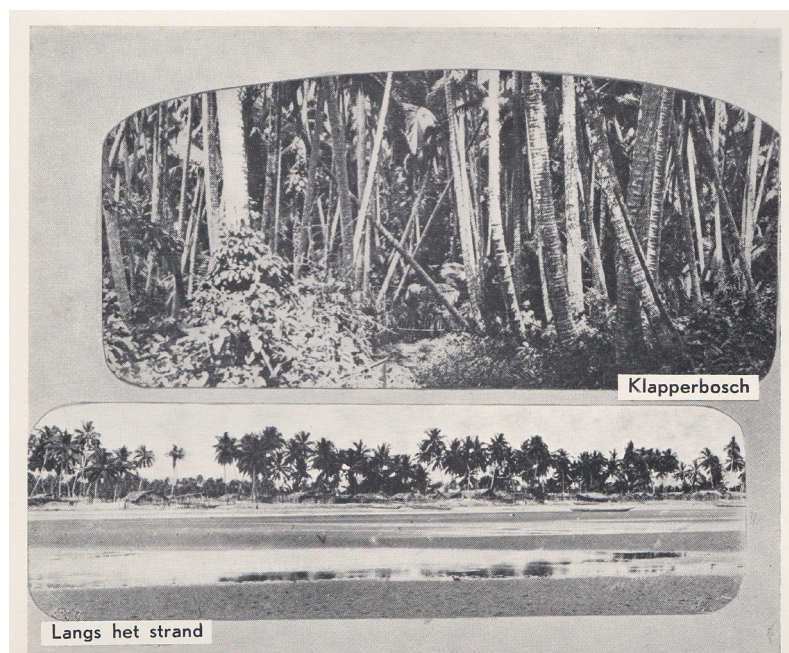


Fig. 2. Photo no. 228987 printed in H. Geurtjens msc, *Onder de Kaja-Kaja's van Zuid Nieuw Guinea*, Roermond: J.J. Romen & Zonen (1933), plate 16.





Fig. 3. Scan of photograph 228987, ENK AR-P027-20210-3.

It was not until I took the time to take a close look at each of those high-definition scans that I noticed that photograph 228987 does not just depict a forest. On the bright computer screen, it was possible to make out a figure in on the centre lower half of the picture. As I zoomed in, a boy became visible, posing inconspicuously between the trees, his body overlit by the strong light of the sun (Fig. 4). Enlarged details showed him standing to the side of a path through the forest, which seems to be leading up to a bamboo fence – presumably marking the borders of a garden maintained by the Marind-anim for food production (Van Baal 1966). His cropped hair and the band around his upper arm indicate that he is a *patur*, the Marind age grade for boys until the onset of puberty. I wondered why such a young child was captured so inconspicuously on a photograph taken during an early explorative trip, and why he was standing there all alone. Was he perhaps guiding the missionaries through the forest?





Fig. 4. Fragment of photograph no. 228987.

The photograph brought two crucial realisations. First of all, that not everything that had been captured by the camera was necessarily visible on the often small and dark prints. There was more to these photographs than meets the naked eye. From that point onwards, zooming in on every inch and every detail of each photograph became standard practice. This did not only reveal countless of small or more meaningful details, but also turned vague blobs into clearly distinguishable human figures. Often, these people seemed remarkably young: children, in fact.<sup>2</sup>

The second realisation was not the presence of children in and of itself, but rather that this presence could be questioned. As I have written elsewhere, young people were the overwhelmingly dominant subject of the missionary photographs I digitised and analysed (Reichgelt 2020), just like they were the focus of attention in missionary writings and civilising interventions (Mak et al 2020). Yet, these photographs with obscured or barely visible children differed from the ubiquitous missionary propaganda photos in which children – often flocking around the missionaries or posing in a distinctly colonial environment – were the focus of attention (Reichgelt 2018, Jensz 2018). Here, children turned up ‘unexpectedly’ and in the margins, prompting a simple but formative question: What were they doing there? I started seeing the children in the missionary archive not as mere objects of interest but as active participants in photographic, and in extent, colonial encounters. This paper studies West-Papuan children’s engagements with missionaries in the first years after colonial settlement in the Merauke area of West Papua, 1905-1910. Using visual and textual sources to position these encounters in time and space, I consider if and how young Papuans introduced the missionaries to culturally-specific information and skills by acting as guides, interpreters, and informants.

## Children as Colonial Intermediaries

The principle that children are not just ‘becomings’, but social actors capable of making sense of, participating in, and affecting their societies has its roots in the early 1990s, when a ‘new sociology of childhood’ emerged in childhood studies (James & Prout 1990). This notion soon permeated other fields of research, including history, where the search for children’s agency and ‘voices’ became important aims. Mary Jo Maynes famously likened the difficulties of recognising the agency of children to the problem of recognising the agency of women: obscured by the ‘everydayness’ of their activities as well as ‘prevailing views that historical change is a result of the public actions of powerful individuals’ (2008). Although Maynes’ critique on inadequate notions of historical agency and the prevalent focus on the individual rather than collective social relations resonated widely, the central issue in the discipline remained the lack of representational sources on historical children (Gleason 2016, Maza 2020).

The past decade has seen many scholars address these theoretical and methodological challenges in writing histories of children and childhood. Especially historians with an interest in children in colonial history have been at the forefront of developing new approaches to teasing young peoples’ ‘voices’, perspectives, and traces from the archive. These approaches have focussed on religious practices, educations and emotion, children’s mobility, and youth culture, paving the way for a much-needed consideration of (marginalised) young people as social and political actors in history (McLisky et al 2015, Olsen 2015, Vallgård 2015, Pomfret 2015, Moruzi et al 2019). Thus far, these debates primarily take place within the context of institutionalised interventions in children’s lives: the history of education, constructions of childhood, and politics of sexuality, race, and citizenship (Stoler 2002, Saada 2012, Mak et al 2020). Moreover, the insights gained on children’s agency in colonial history have not always reached other subdisciplines yet. In the significant body of literature examining Indigenous agency in processes of colonisation, young people remain largely absent.

Since the 1990s, imperial and colonial exploration has increasingly been considered in terms of a ‘collective enterprise involving a diverse labour force [...] upon which expeditions were dependent for their progress and success’ (Konishi et al 2015: 1). While the concept of local intermediaries was first employed by anthropologists and historians who aimed to ‘uncover’ ‘hidden histories’ of (scientific) exploration expeditions and critically reconsider networks of global knowledge circulation, it has since found wider use in colonial history studies ranging from cross-cultural contact to knowledge creation (Driver & Jones 2009, Schaffer et al 2009, Roque & Wagner 2012, Kennedy 2013, Konishi et al 2015). In a similar vein, the obsolete notion of a one-way interrelation model of missionary-to-missionised has long since been abandoned within the field of

missionary history. Many compelling studies have pointed to the multiplicity of colonial actors which had a stake in the mission project: missionaries, converts, settlers, local communities, educators, and government authorities (Pels 1993, Brock 2005, Ballantyne 2015, Derksen 2021). Missions were dependent on the cooperation and support of local people in order to be successful. It has been widely acknowledged that both Protestant and Catholic missionaries employed intermediaries who, as children, had been raised in the mission's sphere of influence (Lawrance et al 2006, Jensz 2016, Derksen 2021). Yet actual children have seldom been considered in the role of guide, interpreter, or cultural broker.

In this article, I aim to bring together the debates on children's agency and colonial intermediaries and elaborate our understanding of children's positions in colonial society, as well as point to an overlooked category of colonial intermediaries. I hypothesise here that in times of early colonial settlement, young Indigenous people often constituted the indispensable guides, interlocutors, escorts. These periods,<sup>3</sup> in which there was little to no colonial infrastructure and colonial agents were especially dependent on Indigenous help, knowledge, and skills may have been brief, but were decisive moments of societal change and exchange in which young people performed crucial intermediary roles.

Additionally, I want to reflect upon the mechanisms which obscure children's active participation in processes of colonisation. There is of course the lack of sources on children's lives, which is even more paramount when considering children belonging to colonised communities, who are twice removed from being represented in historical archives: by their age, and by their societal position (Nieuwenhuys 2013). Many authors have pointed out silences and silencing in colonial archives (Trouillot 1995). I postulate, however, that children acting as intermediaries have remained particularly 'silent' or invisible, as the notion conflicts both with the rationale behind the civilising mission that colonised peoples were in need of European 'help' or even 'saving' as well as linearly opposes the late-modern conviction that children are inherently in need of 'instruction', 'guidance', or 'training'. This means that the positionalities of brokering children are not only outside the logics of the colonial archive and mainstream histories, but also challenge present-day understandings of childhood as situated mostly in familial and educational contexts (Nieuwenhuys 2013).

Finally, this paper examines the merit of using photography to study people marginalised by colonial textual practices – a source which does not play a key role in methodological debates in the history of childhood (Moruzi et al 2019). Photographs may alert one to the presence of people unnamed or unmentioned in textual sources, may provide additional information regarding age or background, and, crucially, document actors in time and space. It is therefore a valuable and relevant starting point to question historical encounters and engagements.



### *Case Study, Sources, and Method*

This paper analyses the acts of guiding, assisting, and brokering that children performed for MSC missionaries during the first years of colonial settlement in Merauke, 1905-1910. Military post Merauke had been erected in 1902 and the Dutch presence on the southern coast was still limited and fragile. The main interests of the colonial administration were copra trade and the geographical exploration of the island. The colonial government hardly concerned itself with communities living in the area. The missionaries and other colonial agents knew little about the geographic features of the region and even less about the languages and customs of the people living there, the largest community being the Marind-anim (Steenbrink 2014: 239). The MSC congregation was plagued by financial mismanagement, causing the Merauke mission to be understaffed and undersupplied (AR-P027-135, AR-P027-139). Arguably, this was the period when the missionaries were most dependent on others, yet had the least connections locally.

The Dutch MSC would remain active in the Merauke area until the 1990s, resulting in an extensive archive documenting the history of the mission and the culture, traditions, and language of the Marind-anim. The archive of the Merauke mission was brought to the Netherlands in the early 1990s and integrated in the archive of the Dutch MSC province, which is presently maintained at the Heritage Centre of Dutch Religious Life (AR-P027-7822, 7914). In addition to a wealth of textual sources, the archive contains a collection of thousands of photographs taken by the missionaries. As described above, my research started with the construction of a database containing 1,300 photographs taken on the south coast between 1906 and 1935. These visual sources not only make it possible to locate children in various colonial encounters and contact zones, but also provide a useful and meaningful source to zoom in on people marginalised in the textual archive, rupture the colonial discourse, and offer perspectives that allow for new ways in which to engage the missionary archive (Reichgelt 2020).

Scholars, with anthropologists at the fore, have been proving the significance of photography as a historical source inviting alternate readings and perspectives for decades (Edwards 1992, Pinney & Peterson 2003, Quanchi 2006, Camp 2017). Ariella Azoulay's (2012, 2019) ground-breaking philosophical and theoretical work even developed a non-imperial understanding of photography, which abandons the notion of a sovereign photographer in favour of viewing photography as a complex encounter involving various participants, including (potential) spectators of the photograph. Although various power imbalances may exist between these participants, the fact that they all play a role in the event of photography means that a photograph does not necessarily reflect the point of view of the most powerful. This differentiates it 'from all other forms of

documentation that we know, and renders it a powerful and suggestive source for understanding the political existence of human beings, as well as investigating their history' (Azoulay 2012: 25).

Like many scholars of photography in (post)colonial contexts, I take my inspiration from Azoulay's assertion that a photograph is always the product of an encounter and thus always shows people in shared space (Campt 2017, Moser 2019). In this article, I adapt Azoulay's method of 'watching' photography, in other words reinscribing temporal and spatial dimensions to still images. Departing from the potential of intermediating children offered by the photographs, I contextualise the captured encounters and actions in time and space by tracing the presence of these children in the mission's archive. Sources used range from published texts in journals, newspapers, and books to confidential letters, reports, diaries, and chronicles, as well as some colonial government records and reports of exploration expeditions between 1905-1910 (Rouffaer et al 1908, Miedema 1993). Although most of these sources discursively present children as *objects* of the civilising mission – if individual children are mentioned at all – the photographs can shift perspective: by first watching children as active historical *subjects*, the 'still' narratives can be put in time and space to study practices on the ground. Moreover, the encounters and engagements between missionaries and children as recorded in the photographs show what to look for in the textual sources, and vice versa. This way, children in intermediary positions can be 'teased' out of the archive – their actions, sometimes their names, backgrounds, and some of their engagements with the mission.

In the following, I discuss three different kinds of brokering activities in which young people engaged in the first five years of the mission's presence in Merauke: guiding and escorting the missionaries when travelling, assisting on the mission station, and instructing in Marind language and customs.

## Children as Guides and Escorts

This article began with a photograph documenting the presence of a young boy on one of the explorative travels between 1905 and 1910, prompting the question: could he have been a guide? (Fig. 4) Photographs of early expeditions and trips made by the missionaries are rare: since the photographic equipment was cumbersome and heavy, it was not taken along on every trip. Furthermore, infrequent supplies coming in to the Merauke mission meant that the missionaries habitually suffered from a shortage of photographic plates and paper to print the photographs on (AR-P027-135). Still, a few dozen photographs presumably made during travels before 1910 could be identified in the archive. About a third of those feature children; none feature adults (AR-P027-20210, 20153, 20244). Despite the

limited photographic documentation, the noteworthy presence of young people in 'landscape' photography taken between 1906 and 1910 is a clear indication that children at least occasionally accompanied missionaries on their travels and trips.

To contextualise and understand the apparent phenomenon of children accompanying missionaries on their travels, it is imperative to consider the general employment of guides by the mission. The mission's chronicle describes how on their first visits to the Marind after their arrival in August 1905, the missionaries were accompanied by 'boys' (*jongens*) working in Merauke as (indentured) labourers (AR-P027-5790). The chronicle notes that labourers had to accompany the missionaries in order to translate. Another entry on 22 August 1905 records how the missionaries decide not to visit a dance in Novari because Saul, a 'boy' from Manado, was too tired to accompany them. This suggests that the missionaries relied on these 'companions' not just to interpret, but also for a measure of protection. It must be noted here that the word 'boy' in this context does not necessarily signify young or underage people: Indonesian and Asian men with lower social status, such as indentured labourers and men sentenced to penal labour in Merauke prison (*kettingjongens*, chain boys) were consistently called 'boys'. Notably, Marind adult men were never referred to as 'boys' in missionary writings – possibly because of their tall and muscular physique, possibly because they did not occupy subordinate positions within colonial society.

Despite the initial reliance on indentured labourers, the mission's superior Father Nollen severely disliked travelling together with representatives of either the colonial government or the Merauke company. The missionaries wanted to get acquainted with the Marind-anim on their own terms, and aspired to be seen as benefactors or even mentors to Marind communities. They absolutely did not want to be associated with people who were (violently) enforcing restrictions or who were only after material gain (AR-P027-142, AR-P027-5790). Therefore, from late 1905 onwards, the missionaries started to look for other ways to get around and to inform themselves about the Marind and their ways. Although there are no outright references to children as guides or brokers in the textual sources, Marind children are quite often mentioned in passing in descriptions of explorative encounters. A closer look at these encounters shows children engaging in various guiding practices.

Letters written by the missionaries are an important source on the early mission. The archive contains two types of letters: confidential communication with superiors at the central mission station on the nearby Kei Islands and in the Netherlands, and letters written with a broader audience in mind. These 'public' letters were addressed to seminary students, family, friends and beneficiaries, and often intended for publication in the *Annalen van O.L. Vrouw van het H. Hart* (hereinafter: *Annalen*), the MSC's leading missionary journal with approximately



15,000 subscribers around 1905. Although the propagandistic letters were censored and romanticised, both the public and the confidential letters and reports are characterised by the same pervasive narrative: the independent and competent missionary-protagonist toiling to bring salvation to unwilling adults and passive children (AR-P027-135, 139, 142, 5790). For example, the missionaries often mention in passing how children ‘follow them around’ on their travels and visits.<sup>4</sup> Subtle anecdotes, however, indicate that it may have been the other way around:

We know most of the children by name, but as for the women, that is a different matter. First of all, they are often away, and what is more, they have multiple names. Still, they want to be called by their name. “So what is my name then?”, asks Mambiske’s mother. At a loss, I pull Mambiske close to me, and he whispers his mother’s name: “*Ramoeke*”.<sup>5</sup>

This short exchange indicates how children were escorting the missionaries in the villages, introducing them to and informing them about their kin and communities. It also points to the fact that children were the necessary go-betweens, since they were often the only ones available when the adults were engaged in their daily doings during the day, often away from the villages. Moreover, when visiting a new village or community, the missionaries often mention how they are already acquainted with a few children who have been visiting the mission station in Merauke.<sup>6</sup> Several contemporary anthropologists describe with wonder how children, boys especially, were free to do, come, and go as they pleased (Wollaston 1912, Van Baal 1966). It seems that young Marind were both by availability and on their own initiatives among the first contacts of the missionaries.

In addition to the many anecdotes describing children escorting and introducing the missionaries in their villages, children are also encountered in accounts of explorative trips in the country, acting as guides. The following example describes an effort to find drinking water (notably scarce in the marshy region) during a first visit to the Okaba region, some 100 kilometres to the west of Merauke:

“Hey! Boys, where’s the water hole?” – “That way, Tuan!” – “All right, but who is going to show us the way?” – “Me! Me! Me!” and a whole bunch of them little rascals chased after us. In the blink of an eye those apprehensive boys seemed to have changed, and cheerful and friendly they led the way and said their names, and asked ours, and took our hand.

The letter then describes the difficult trip across the marshland, during which the children showed the missionaries how to navigate the bridge-like constructions used by the Marind-anim.

The way back [across the bridges] was successful, but only because I had taken the precaution of giving the pots filled with water to the most boisterous boys and the lids to the quieter ones, telling them: “You may help Tuan too”<sup>7</sup>

Again, the children are described as *chasing after* the missionaries, while they were actually *leading* them towards an unknown water source, even sharing their skill in navigating the terrain. Furthermore, the letter frames the anecdote as if the missionaries were doing the children a favour, as if this trip was to indulge them: the children had been “apprehensive” among adult Marind, but became “friendly” and “cheerful” once removed from that environment. In reality, however, the young Marind were aiding the missionaries by not only helping them navigate unfamiliar and difficult terrain, but also pointing them to a basic need: water. The children’s alleged use of the Malay word *Tuan* (‘sir’) may also point to their intermediary position between Marind and colonial societies, Malay being the lingua franca in the Dutch East Indies.

Another way in which young Marind helped the missionaries to navigate their land, was by rowing – an essential form of transportation in Melanesia for which colonising powers often depended on Indigenous skill (Ballantyne 2018). This published letter by Father Cappers describes how four young men in their late teens from Jobar village, whose names are uncommonly mentioned, agree to be rowers on a first visit to Wendu village across the Merauke river, in June 1908. Cappers, however, only complains about how useless they are:

Our glorious rowers, who before entering the proa claimed to be afraid of neither devil nor hell, laid their paddles down one after the other and scabbled for the middle of the boat, hugging the benches tightly with the face of someone who is determined not to let go [...] I have to say, shame to these people: cowardly, cowardly, cowardly. [...] The fear had entered their souls and they started calling us all sorts of names: “What stupid people! You don’t understand anything about sailing, we Mariend-anim (= people from here) know all about it ... Who would sail in the middle of the river?!” [...] We told our cowards to lie down on the bottom of the proa, we would keep rowing ourselves. [...] Our four heroes Wangies, Jogoei, Karvi and Joro were impressed, staring at us with open mouths [...].<sup>8</sup>

In this clearly propagandistic story, the efforts and characters of the missionaries are favourably compared to those of the Marind, who are consistently accused of both vanity and cowardice. By ridiculing the Marind-anim and belittling their help, the mission's dependence on young Marind is minimised as well, making the missionaries seem competent and self-sufficient. If we take the criticism in the letter seriously, however, it is at least questionable whether the missionaries were indeed the sea-worthy boaters they claimed to be: perhaps they underestimated the danger of rowing in the middle of the fast-flowing river. What is more, a critical reading of the remainder of the letter suggests how the four young men did far more than just row: they facilitated the first encounter with the residents of Wendu, they showed the missionaries how to cross the wetlands, they alerted the missionaries about local customs and taboos, warning them when their behaviour might be upsetting.<sup>9</sup>

Departing from the perspective provided by the photographs, i.e. the hypothesis that children acted as guides, the textual sources in the missionary archive feature quite a few examples of young Marind engaging in practices of guiding, escorting, rowing, informing, and instructing the missionaries. Starting from the photographs and approaching children as possible intermediaries, helps to read through the passive framing and instead zoom in on acts and encounters. The photographs, however, have value in addition to changing perspective: they can provide information which remains obscure in the textual sources, namely into the background of the children depicted, as well as allow for individual children to be identified.

Figure 5 shows a young person featured in multiple photographs made on explorative travels between 1905-1910.<sup>10</sup> Although his features seem Papuan, he is not wearing the traditional Marind dress as worn by the children in Figures 3 and 6, but dressed in clothing. Here, I use the term 'clothing' to specifically refer to forms of dress made from textile, as opposed to forms of dress consisting of other material like pomade, shells, bark, and fibre, typically worn by the Marind-anim in this period. The distinction is important since dress and appearance were important signifiers of 'belonging' in colonial contexts especially (Brock 2007). In the first decade of the twentieth century, the number of Marind who wore clothing was limited and missionaries were unsuccessful in propagating its use. Therefore, it can be surmised that the teenager posing on the sawed-off tree trunk suspended over the pond is likely not Marind, and can be identified as Paulus le Cocq d'Armandville.<sup>11</sup> Paulus had been born in Mimika, some 600 kilometres to the north west of Merauke, and had been bought and taken away as toddler by Jesuit Father Cornelis le Cocq d'Armandville (1846-1896) in 1896.<sup>12</sup> He grew up with the mission on the Kei Islands and spent a year and a half with the Merauke mission





Fig. 5, ca. 1907. ENK, AR-P027-20210-3, no. 228989.

from August 1906 until February 1908, as a domestic servant. The missionaries indicate that he was around twelve years old upon arrival in Merauke.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the various photographs of Paulus posing in the woodlands surrounding Merauke, he is not once mentioned as coming along on any explorative trips.<sup>14</sup> In the published letters in the *Annalen*, his name is barely mentioned at all – even though three photographs of him clearly posing on various travels were printed in the journal between 1907 and 1909, among which the photograph in Figure 5.<sup>15</sup> This is in line with other published photographs of the explorative travels featuring children: their presence is consequently left unspoken, as if they belonged to the scenery (Figure 6; caption reads ‘snapshot of a plantation on the way to Boeti’). This is remarkable, since as we have seen in the previous textual fragments, missionaries were typically very eager to stress their involvement with local children (Jensz & Acke 2013).

That brings me to the third and final pointer provided by the photographs: they show that in addition to non-local intermediaries, local Marind were involved in guiding too. In the literature on the colonisation of West Papua, the dominant focus lies on intermediaries from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, such as Ambon and the Kei Islands, or on the go-between role that traders of Chinese descent often fulfilled (Steenbrink 2014, Derksen 2016). Other European parties in the Merauke region, such as the colonial government, exploration expeditions, and trading companies, employed various labourers from all across

the archipelago too. Although they are seldom mentioned by name and their actual contributions are discounted, since they were technically employees their involvement, numbers, wages, housing, and sometimes protests are described in detail in various reports.<sup>16</sup> The involvement of Papuan people, on the other hand, in the exploration journeys, in ethnographic research, in the establishment of Merauke, or in trade is at most only hinted at. Since they were often not paid in money, but received material goods in return for their services, their employment was not in the books and readily discounted.

A telling example concerns Bido, a Marind adolescent who lived with the missionaries around 1910. In their letters, missionaries describe how Bido had acted as a guide during the 1904/1905 exploration tour.<sup>17</sup> The official report of this expedition, however, repeatedly states that it was ‘impossible’ to hire Papuan people as carriers or guides as they were too ‘uncivilised’. Nevertheless, Bido is mentioned in the report: his name is included in the list of measurements of Marind people subdivided in men, women and children. Bido is on the men’s list, being number 46 out of 46 in total.<sup>18</sup> However, with a height of 1.55 meter he is the shortest among the men by a distance, the average height being 1.76. Moreover, his measurements are incomplete: the column indicating the estimate age is left empty, as are most of the measurements which required specific instruments. Of the sixteen children (one girl, fifteen boys) whose measurements were recorded, the average height of a twelve-year-old boy was 1.52 meter.<sup>19</sup> This supports the idea that Bido was a boy in his early teens involved with the exploration tour in *some way*, whose data was haphazardly recorded and used to substantiate the humble data set. The report shows how colonial textual practices quite literally reduces the Marind to objects of interest, passive data to be ‘collected’, instead acknowledging them as contributors to colonial enterprises. Moreover, it is an example of how the age of those rare young Marind brokers we know by name like Bido is obscured by listing him among the ‘men’.

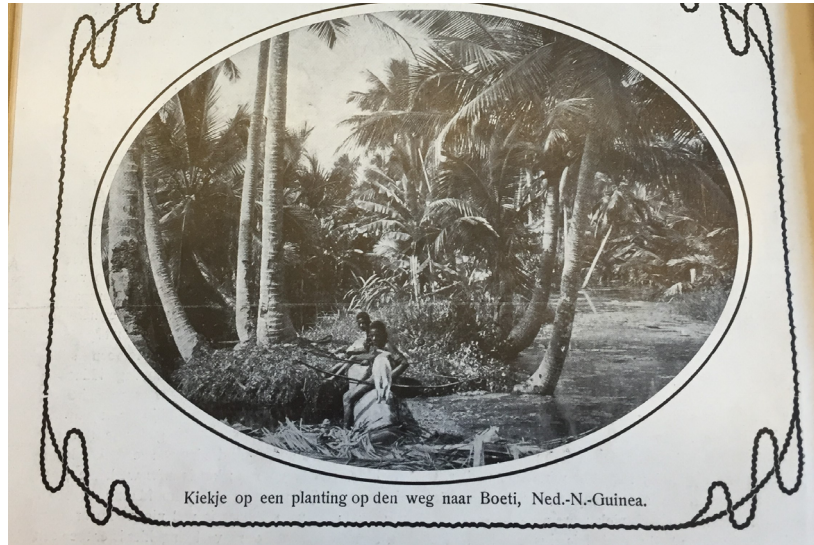


Fig. 6. ca. 1907. *Almanak van O.L. Vrouw van het H. Hart* 27 (1909): 63.

### Children as Labour Force

Figure 7 shows a photograph of the view on the pasture behind the first mission station. Judging by the livestock, it was probably taken halfway 1906. Most animals seem to have gathered in one spot. The picture was shot from some distance away, but zooming in on that spot, a person becomes visible (Fig. 8). It looks like an adolescent boy, holding some kind of container. It seems like he is feeding the animals.

In addition to indicating the existence of certain practices, such as guiding, photographs may also reveal in which practices children did *not* engage. This photograph is a rare example of what looks like a Marind child doing one of the many daily chores at the mission station. In the first years of settlement in Merauke, insufficient personnel proved a persistent problem for the MSC missionaries. Upon arrival in August 1905, the entire mission consisted of two fathers and two lay brothers. The division of labour was as follows: the fathers were charged with visiting the people, learning the language, and reporting back home. The brothers were in charge of both manual labour and domestic duties, including but not limited to: cultivating plants and livestock, hunting, construction work and maintenance, cleaning, cooking, mending clothes, and practicing taxidermy in order to stock the mission museum in the Netherlands.<sup>20</sup> Two people hardly sufficed to manage all this. After several attempts to have some of the Dutch missionaries working in German colonial territory in Papua New





Fig. 7, mid-1906. ENK, AR-P027-20210-1, no. 228351.



Fig. 8. Fragment of photograph 228351.

Guinea transferred to Merauke, a third brother arrived on 22 December 1905. In September 1906, however, one of the brothers was called back to the main station on the Kei Islands and shortly after another died after attracting typhoid fever. His replacement arrived in February 1907, but died two weeks later from dysentery. Despite repeated requests, extra help, either in the form of a brother or Catholic labourers from Kei, did not arrive until the end of January 1908 (AR-P027-142). Brother Hamers and Paulus had to manage together.

A lack of personnel was not the only difficulty. Manual labour was a sensitive, racially segregated issue in a colonial settlement like Merauke: white Europeans were not supposed to engage in physical work. Since the *ora et labora* work ethic of the missionaries dignified manual labour as inherently virtuous, and a significant part of the responsibilities and duties of the lay brothers consisted of physical labour (farming, tinkering, construction work), this principle was problematic for the Merauke mission.<sup>21</sup> The mission had insufficient resources to hire men from Merauke or Kei, whose monthly wage was 15 guilders. Therefore, the missionaries often tried to enlist young Marind against a small payment or, ideally, as live-in pupils.

According to the official narrative as presented in the *Annalen*, young Marind were eager to help. Photographs with the explicit subject of ‘Marind children’ engaged in domestic or manual labour feature regularly in the *Annalen* around 1910. Figure 9 is an example.<sup>22</sup> Its caption reads: ‘Some Kaja-Kaja-boys [Kaja-Kaja being an obsolete slang name for Marind], working in the garden with Brother Joosten. The fact that these wild children of nature want to work already, proves the progress we are making among the depraved people of New Guinea.’



Fig. 9, late 1908. *Annalen van O.L. Vrouw van het H. Hart* 28 (1 October 1910): 293.



Photographs like these provided the reader with ‘evidence’ that the mission had acquired pupils, who were being taught what was perceived as good labour and useful crafts, such as construction and gardening: civilising efforts with the benefit of creating an unpaid workforce. Furthermore, the ‘pupils’ are wearing clothing. Both the labour and the clothing served to signify that a beginning had been made with the ‘civilisation’ of West Papua, as well as convince the reader that the younger generations could adapt. At the same time, the accompanying description reminds the reader of ‘[t]he big difference between the Dutchman and the native, being that the first are known to be especially diligent and hardworking, whereas the latter does not even deserve the honourable label of “labourer” [...]. But one should not exaggerate; they do some work, as one can see in the pictures’ (*Annalen* 30, 1912: 346).

However, again photographs can be used to rupture the discourse: judging from the appearances of the young men and boys in Figure 9, there is only one Marind among them. The first, second and fourth men from the left are construction workers from the Kei Islands employed by the mission. The boy on the far right might be Marind, but also closely resembles a boy from Kei who spent a brief period in Merauke.<sup>23</sup> The boy in the centre, however, is unmistakably Marind: he is dressed in the manner of the *aroi-patur*, the age grade of boys of approximately thirteen years old. Zooming in on the picture, it seems like he is holding up a piece of fabric to shield the lower half of his body. All in all, this caption and message purported by this photograph is clearly false – as were the photographs claiming to portray Marind children and even adults at ‘school’ in this period (Reichgelt 2018).

Interestingly, the only young West Papuan who is known to have performed manual labour for the mission, is consistently obscured in these same pages. As opposed to the ‘Marind boys’ who were proudly presented in Figure 9, Paulus’ presence is again ignored in the captions and surrounding text – even when other people are mentioned by name (Fig. 10: ‘Brother Hamers in the vegetable garden’, Fig. 11: ‘Father Cappers and Brother Hamers in action’). Paulus’ hard work and many responsibilities are mentioned frequently in internal communication (AR-P027-142). He is often compared favourably to the Marind-anim, whose indifference to manual labour and money, goods, or profits is denoted as ‘laziness’ (AR-P027-5006, 5007, Miedema 1993: 48-51). Yet, despite the mission’s dependence on him and his help, Paulus’ contribution too is belittled and ridiculed at times. In one of his letters to former pupils in Tilburg, Father Cappers quite literally lists Paulus among the things bothering him during his writing: ‘the boiling heat, a terrible exhaustion, a swarm of mosquitos, Paulus (a person who is always on pins and needles) at my table, a pile of newspapers staring at me and a very bad mood.’<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 10, ca. 1907. *Annalen van O.L. Vrouw van het H. Hart* 30 (1 October 1912): 342.

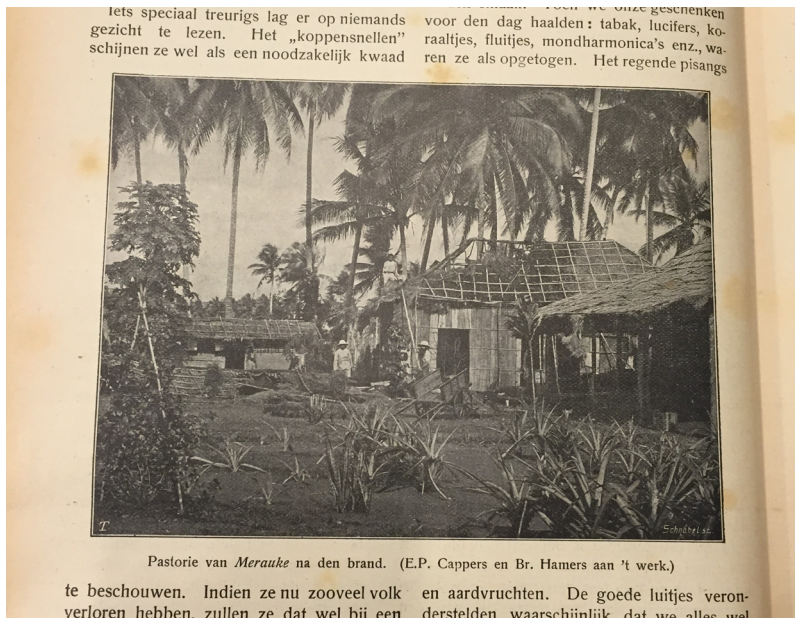


Fig. 11, 1907. *Annalen van O.L. Vrouw van het H. Hart* 27 (1909): 24. Paulus is standing on the roof of the damaged presbytery.

To conclude: where it is often hard to spot children in photographs taken on exploratory travels, quite a few photographs taken between 1905-1910 depict young people ‘openly’ engaging in manual labour. As labour was seen as a civilising instrument, improving both one’s material and moral condition, these photographs served propagandist purposes as proof of successful ‘education’ of the Marind. However, most pictures do not feature Marind children but non-local intermediaries who had been raised or trained by the missionaries on the Kei Islands. The internal textual sources mentioning young or older Marind engaging in (paid) labour for the mission are scarce – it seems that those who were willing to engage in the culturally-sensitive manual labour, opted to work for less demanding private traders. What, then, was the boy feeding the animals in Figure 8 doing on the mission station? Well, it seems that even though the missionaries were unsuccessful in durably or substantially attracting young assistants, they did manage to convince various groups of young boys to stay and live with them for shorter or longer periods between 1906 and 1910. Although they helped around on the station, I postulate that their most important contribution was not in the form of manual or domestic labour. Rather, as I will elaborate upon in the final section, these boys supplied the missionaries with the opportunity to learn the Marind language and get acquainted with their norms, values, and culture.

### Children as Cultural Brokers and Instructors



Fig. 12, 1906. ENK, AR-P027-20210-2, no. 228628.

Figure 12 depicts four of the first boys who lived at the mission station for a while. Their names were probably Sopajam, Grave, Badei, and Oembri. The textual sources drafted around the time of their stay do not mention them. However, their names and story are recounted in a 1910 letter detailing how Father Nollen runs into Sopajam in Okaba, about four years after their stay.<sup>25</sup> The fact that neither letters, nor reports, nor diary entries from 1906 mention them was probably because their stay was short and ‘unsuccessful’ from the mission’s point of view. It seems the missionaries attempted to keep the boys from leaving the mission station at night, forbidding them to attend the many Marind social events which took place after dark. In response, Sopajam and the others opted to work for Chinese traders in Merauke instead, who did not put such restrictions on their freedom (AR-P027-5006).

Mentions in the sources are scattered and scarce, but it seems that several groups of young men and boys lived with the missionaries between 1906-1910. Despite claims in the official reports that these children were being educated and being prepared for baptism, a critical reading of the engagements between the missionaries and the children indicates that in this period, it was the other way around: the children were instructing the missionaries.<sup>26</sup> Take for example the mission’s engagements with Aroe and Kenda, two teenage boys who are among the first Marind to live at the mission station for more than a few weeks. During their stay in early 1908, Father Superior Nollen was composing an article for *Anthropos*, a journal of anthropology and linguistics (Nollen 1909). It seems he conversed with the boys both in order to advance his language studies, as well as to acquire information for his ethnographical study on Marind age grades. Additionally, Aroe and Kenda helped out at the mission station and accompanied the missionaries on their travels.<sup>27</sup> They are acknowledged to have accompanied the missionaries on at least two trips: a first visit to the hinterland along the Merauke river and a trip to Kumbe, across the river. According to the missionaries’ reports, the boys fulfilled all kinds of small tasks like carrying goods, fetching water, making fire.<sup>28</sup> However, when Father Nollen left for the MSC’s headquarters in Langgur on the Kei Islands in May 1909, he took Kenda with him. Kenda stayed there for six months and travelled back in November, together with newly-arriving Father Van de Kolk. Although Nollen does not mention the reasons for taking Kenda to Kei, it seems very likely that Kenda was there to instruct arriving MSC missionaries on Marind language and customs.<sup>29</sup>

Acts of cultural brokering by children also took place during encounters in the villages and surrounding area. When travelling to unfamiliar places, children – mostly boys – are often described as the first to approach the missionaries, to break the ice.<sup>30</sup> Some texts had propagandistic purposes, and the ‘natural’ curiosity of the children to unfamiliar things may have been exaggerated to underline how



the children are 'open to' change, or the exchanges may have been embellished to make the missionaries look popular with the children. Still, the descriptions do indicate (what kind of) information between children and missionaries was exchanged. Moreover, events describing how children instigated contact and sometimes smoothed out cultural conflict appear in confidential sources too. In one letter, Cappers describes how Warmoeke, a girl of about thirteen years old, succeeds in mounting his horse Blanda without help.<sup>31</sup> Witnessing this, several other girls want to try too. Afterwards, the girls promise to clean up Blanda's dung off the roads from then onwards, which had apparently aggravated the village's elderly. Interestingly, this particular fragment of the letter had been crossed out by the censors as inappropriate for publication. Probably, both the interaction with teenage girls engaging in behaviour deemed 'improper' such as mounting a horse as well as the mention of excrements were cause for censorship.

When visiting the villages in the vicinity of Merauke, it seems children supplied the missionaries with the most useful information. Letters indicate that children informed the missionaries of practices the colonial government tried to ban, such as the abduction of young children during head hunting raids,<sup>32</sup> as well as warned the missionaries about possible acts of hostility by other villages and when other villages were about to go on raids.<sup>33</sup> And, most importantly, children were the ones teaching the missionaries the Marind language:

There is a little fellow from the fourth village, called "Mària", a quick boy who understands what I am after quite well, and is happy when he teaches me a new word. When I have finished an outline for a new catechism lesson, I sometimes take him home with me so I can practice. One time, while he was in complete wonder about what I had said, he suddenly asked: "May I tell the other boys about this too?" – "Yes, dear boy, please pass it along; the more the better!" May Our Lord bless that seed!<sup>34</sup>

Here, the events are framed as if the missionaries are the ones teaching the children the wonders of the Christian faith, thus obscuring the fact that they are relying on the children for language instructions. Another example of this distortion can be found in a letter written by Father Cappers to his former students in Tilburg, dated May 1907. In it, he describes how he 'teaches' the children of the two villages of his 'parish' (Boeti and Novari) how a prearranged meeting works, by asking them to bring coconuts to the mission station in three days. When they indeed arrive with the goods three days later, he exclaims: 'Oh! But now I have to entertain this lot!' – insinuating that the children had come to ask something of him instead of the other way round. Cappers describes how he lets the boys try out his cigars, play



with his tinderbox, draw with pencils and paper. These efforts are presented as ‘gifts’ to the children. Afterwards, however, Cappers sent the children’s drawings to the Mission’s Museum as examples of ‘primitive art’. Moreover, three of the boys stay the night and share stories of Marind mythology. So, even though this visit was both instigated by Cappers and resulted in a wealth of information for the mission, Cappers presents the events as if he is being a patient and self-sacrificing teacher, and as if all his efforts are just to ‘win their hearts.’<sup>35</sup>

Finally, it seems that Paulus sometimes acted as cultural broker too. Being young and Papuan himself, he had a connection and a rapport with the Marind that the missionaries could not establish. For example, when Father Cappers – who prided himself on his sense of humour – describes his failed attempts to banter with the Marind, he mentions how ‘[a Marind] preferably laughs about a thousand things of which Paulus says that they could not even be whispered among us.’<sup>36</sup> These few words indicate that Paulus had learned to speak Marind quite well, and, more importantly, that he was included in cultural intimacies which remained difficult to access for the missionaries. It seems, however, that Paulus was perhaps getting *too* close to the Marind-anim to the missionaries’ liking. A short diary entry on 29 January 1908 mentions how the visiting Father Superior has taken Paulus back with him to the Kei Islands. The explanation given: ‘The boy was pursuing a bad path’ (AR-P027-5790).



Fig. 13, early 1909. ENK, AR-P027-20297, no. 229260.



Fig. 14. Fragment of no. 229260.

Returning to the photographs, a final argument can be made to support the impression that in the first years of colonial settlement, the involvements between missionaries and children primarily served to instruct the missionaries, rather than ‘civilise’ the children. Both Figure 12 and 13 present photographs of boys deliberately posing at the mission station (although the boys in Figure 13 are almost impossible to see without digitally enhancing the picture, Figure 14). Just like the photos of the labouring ‘young Marind’, these photographs probably had to prove the mission’s influence on local children, to show that the missionaries were raising their first pupils. What they do, however, is indicate that the missionaries’ claim that ‘clothed’ boys lived at the station was an exaggeration. In both photographs, the ‘clothes’ worn by the boys are ill fitting, awkwardly bound or draped around their lower bodies – more likely a temporary cover for the sake of the photograph than practical everyday dress as worn by Paulus.

## Conclusion

The modest presence of a small figure posing alongside a forest path on a photograph taken on an early-twentieth century missionary exploration trip formed the starting point of this article. The boy’s unexpected presence prompted the question what he could have been doing there, changing the child from object of interest to active participant in a colonial encounter. Departing from the hypothesis that he may have been guiding the missionaries, this article examined the ways in which children acted as local intermediaries in the early years of colonial settlement in West Papua. Inspired by Azoulay, I used the active presence of children as individual historical actors participating in processes of

colonisation in the photographs to circumvent 'still' discourse and focus on actions and encounters. Simultaneously, tracing the presence of young intermediaries in the textual sources enabled contextualising the captured engagements in time and space, showing how and when missionaries depended on the knowledge, skills, and networks of West-Papuan children. This not only adds to the existing body of literature on colonial intermediaries, in which young people constitute an overlooked group, but also complements understandings of non-elite colonial childhoods of Indigenous children outside of familial or institutional contexts. Moreover, the analysis allows for the agency of young Marind to emerge, by considering which practices they did, but also did *not* engage in: despite multiple attempts by the missionaries, they could not persuade Marind boys to become their live-in assistants, nor to engage in manual labour. Finally, this paper indicates the merit of using photography to study people marginalised by colonial textual practices. Although the information provided in the photographs is just as obscured and partial as the data in textual sources, photography always documents people engaging in time and space. It is therefore a valuable and relevant starting point to consider and question encounters and engagements.

In this article, three different intermediary roles in which children engaged in the first five years of the mission's presence in Merauke were analysed: guiding and escorting the missionaries when travelling, assisting the missionaries in daily chores, and instructing the missionaries in Marind language and customs. In each case, the photographs formed the lens through which the textual archive was examined. In the first section, the photographic documentation helped to tease the traces of young Marind engaging in practices of guiding, escorting, rowing, and informing out of the missionary discourse. Additionally, the photographs provided information which remains obscure in the textual sources, namely into the social background of the children depicted. In the second section and third section, photographs were used to rupture the discourse in a different way, namely by showing how missionary claims of employing Marind children as live-in attendants were false – making room for a different perspective on their presence at the mission station. Zooming in on photographs helps differentiate between photographs taken for propagandic purposes, which may have been staged (Fig. 9) and details which were 'caught' on camera: in this article, the children emerging on landscape photographs (Fig. 4) and far-away views of the mission station (Fig. 7). These may have been 'failed' photographs: the children could have been posing with the intent of being captured on camera, but the technically limited possibilities and small prints and reproductions meant that they were rendered (almost) invisible in the resulting photograph. Moreover, as the racial bias built into photography favoured light objects over dark, photography was unsuited for adequately capturing the skin of the Marind children (Fig. 13, Lewis 2016).

In addition to addressing the underresearched positions of Indigenous children as intermediaries in pioneering periods of colonial settlement and adding to the debate on children's agency, I wanted to reflect on why young intermediaries had received such scant attention so far. The article grapples with two paradoxical aspects of Indigenous children in missionary archives: their centrality as objects of civilising practices on the one hand, but their marginalisation as historical subjects in colonial textual practices in the other. Although this is in line with the current consensus among historians of exploration that 'colonial textual practices typically obscured the fragility of the European explorer and their deep dependence on indigenous intermediaries' (Konishi et al 2015: 5), I feel that children acting as intermediaries have remained particularly marginalised. Perhaps this is because the notion not only conflicts with the rationale behind the civilising mission that colonised children needed to be 'enlightened' and even 'saved', but is also at odds with current trends within historical research on colonial childhoods. For the last two decades, prominent research has been dedicated to the important and crucial aim of outlining how children became the targets of colonial interventions – and the post-colonial continuities of this (Saada 2012, Mak et al 2020). Although this research underlines the agency of children, it concentrates on childhood as shaped within institutionalised contexts and colonial governmentality. This means that the positionalities of brokering children are outside the 'child-as-recipient' focus in both the colonial archive and mainstream histories.

Once aware of the existence of children acting as guides, interlocutors, and informants, this discourse and the silencing it enforces can be ruptured to reveal colonial records of Indigenous children as skilful and knowledgeable intermediaries. Once I had seen the young Marind as historical actors in the mission's exploration of Merauke, I started seeing evidence of children as acting as guides and informants in a variety of sources and contexts: from the small boys sitting at the feet of the White Fathers in the photographs of their famous caravans from north to central Africa at the end of the nineteenth century (AR-P024-5004), to the young people from all over the world examined by German anthropologist and physician Rudolf Virchow and his *Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* who were being introduced as 'former guides' of colonial agents (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*: 'Sitzung vom 20. Juli 1889', 'Sitzung vom 21. Februar 1891'). The existence of young guides, interpreters, and brokers was not limited to West Papua alone, and merits more consideration by researchers interested in histories of colonisation and Indigenous childhoods.

## Author

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> International religious orders and congregations are often divided in administrative regions called 'provinces', generally according to political borders.

<sup>2</sup> I follow the Convention on the Rights of the Child and regard those under the age of eighteen as children. Childhood sociologists and anthropologists have pointed out how the category 'child' was variously deployed within colonial modernity resulting in the production of multiple childhoods, emerging from unequal, situated encounters (Nieuwenhuys 2013: 6). Although both in Marind and Dutch Catholic communities, boys up to the age of eighteen were considered to be adolescents, the sociocultural meanings of 'childhood' differed and sometimes interfered especially with regards to children's mobility and labour.

<sup>3</sup> In his dissertation on the gathering of ethnographical information by different parties (Catholic missionaries, Protestant missionaries, government officials, academic scholars) on West Papua, anthropologist Sjoerd R. Jaarsma dates the period of, in his words, 'exploration and expansion' until approximately 1920. See: Jaarsma, *Waarneming en interpretatie: Vergaring en gebruik van etnografische informatie in Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea (1950-1962)* (Utrecht: ISOR, 1990), 30.

<sup>4</sup> Letter by Brother Dionysus van Roessel, *Annalen* (1906), 99-102; letter by Father Eduard Cappers, *Annalen* (1907), 42-45.

<sup>5</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5005, Cappers to the board of directors of the MSC's mother house in Tilburg, 20 October 1906.

<sup>6</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5005, Cappers, September 1908.

<sup>7</sup> Father Henricus Nollen, 'Reis naar Okaba-Sangasee', *Annalen* (1910), 292-293.

<sup>8</sup> *Annalen* (1908), 301-303.

<sup>9</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5005. Cappers, June 1908.

<sup>10</sup> Other examples are 228967 (AR-P027-20210) and 229228 (AR-P027-20244).

<sup>11</sup> Although this photograph does not bear a caption, a captioned photograph of Paulus exists: AR-P027-20210-2, no. 228646.

<sup>12</sup> For a romanticised description of how the missionary bought Paulus and another child and the events leading up to his death, see W. van Nieuwenhoff sj (1900), *Levensbeschrijving van R. P. Le Cocq d'Armandville S.J.*, Amsterdam: Borg, 167-172.



<sup>13</sup> ENK, AR-P027-142, Nollen 15 August 1906.

<sup>14</sup> The only mention of him accompanying the missionaries is immediately after his arrival, August 1906. In a confidential letter to his superior, Nollen writes how Paulus attracts a lot of attention in the Marind villages, and that people are eager to get acquainted with him. ENK, AR-P027-142, Nollen, 5 August 1906.

<sup>15</sup> *Annalen* (1907), 277; *Annalen* (1908), 76; *Annalen* (1909), 24. Paulus is also featured on a photograph in *Annalen* (1907), 230, but less clearly visible.

<sup>16</sup> Miedema (1993); Rouffaer, Seyne Kok & Adriani (1908).

<sup>17</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5007, G. Jeanson 21 August 1910.

<sup>18</sup> Rouffaer, Seyne Kok & Adriani (1908): 397-398: '1<sup>e</sup> meetlijst'.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, '2<sup>e</sup> meetlijst'.

<sup>20</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5007, Brother Norbertus Hamers 22 December 1906.

<sup>21</sup> This was one of the reasons the missionaries refused to live in Merauke (the other being their wish to live close to the Marind-anim). ENK, AR-P027-5790.

<sup>22</sup> Other examples: *Annalen* (1908), 362.

<sup>23</sup> See *Annalen* 1910, 196.

<sup>24</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5005, Cappers to seminary students in Tilburg, 18 May 1907.

<sup>25</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5006, Nollen 2 May 1910.

<sup>26</sup> ENK, AR-P027-142, Nollen, 15 November 1908. Ironically, the missionary sources affirm this: after 1910, newly arriving missionaries complain that no start had been made with some form of schooling or education, see for example ENK, AR-P027-142, Father Joseph van de Kolk.

<sup>27</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5005, Cappers 22 February 1909.

<sup>28</sup> ENK, AR-P027-5005, Cappers, September 1908 and 22 February 1909.

<sup>29</sup> ENK, AR-P027-142, Van de Kolk 15 December 1909. A few years later, around 1913, Kenda is among the first people who move into the mission's so-called model kampong, an attempt to enforce social re-organisation in the form of nuclear families. He suddenly passes away on 6 April 1914, shortly after his marriage. He was buried next to Brother Oomen, the first missionary to be 'martyred' on New Guinea – a sure sign of Kenda's crucial role for the mission. See also AR-P027-5790.

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