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Jongos en Baboe aan boord: The Role of Indigenous Domestic Workers on Cruise Ships That Sailed to Java during the Colonial Period

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***Abstract*—This study investigates the roles of indigenous attendants, known as jongos and baboe, aboard Dutch luxury passenger ships to the Dutch East Indies between 1918 and 1935. Archival records and visual documentation reveal that these attendants were indispensable for maintaining passenger comfort, supervising cabins, serving meals, and caring for children. Their labor reflected both technical skill and cultural negotiation within the hierarchical structures of colonial maritime operations. Differential treatment by European passengers highlighted the intersections of race, nationality, and colonial ideology in shaping shipboard experiences. The study employs historical research methodology, utilizing source identification, critical evaluation, interpretation, and historiographical presentation to reconstruct the nuanced social and operational dynamics of indigenous maritime labor during the early twentieth century.**

***Keywords*—indigenous labor; jongos; baboe; colonial maritime history; Dutch East Indies; luxury passenger ships; cruise ship.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the Royal Mail Ship (R.M.S.) Titanic famously embarked on its maiden voyage on April 10, 1912 [1], Java had already been established as an international cruise destination since 1908. Evidence of early cruise tourism included the publication of the travel guide *Java The Wonderland*, commissioned by Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland (Nederland Royal Mail Line), which organized first-class steamship voyages from Europe to Java. These itineraries typically departed from Amsterdam and included stops at Southampton, Lisbon, Genoa, Port Said, Suez, Colombo, Sabang, Singapore, and concluded in Java, highlighting its appeal as a premier destination for European tourists [2].

Java attracted tourists not only through its natural beauty, including iconic sites such as Prambanan, Borobudur, and the Botanical Gardens at Buitenzorg, but also through cultural experiences concentrated in the Vorstenlanden, namely Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Visitors could witness royal ceremonies, traditional dances, and batik production, while Batavia, as the colonial administrative center, offered a blend of European architecture, tropical ambiance, vibrant nightlife, and fine dining in luxury hotels [3] [4].

The increasing demand for organized travel prompted the establishment of pioneer travel agencies, such as Henny Couperus's bureau in Yogyakarta in 1906, which provided multilingual guides and cruise itineraries connecting major cities and cultural sites across Java [5]. Tourism administration was later formalized with the founding of the Officieele Vereeniging voor Toeristen Verkeer (VTV) in Batavia on April 13, 1908, initiated by Governor-General J.B. van Heutsz, who envisioned structured promotion and infrastructure development, including roads, railways, ports, accommodations, and communication networks [6].

Between 1908 and 1940, Java remained a prominent destination for international cruise tourism. Archival evidence from travel guides and promotional campaigns, such as coffee propaganda by Van der Spek in 1939, demonstrates a dynamic tourism landscape influenced by global and regional events, including World War I, epidemics, immigration regulations, and regional conflicts [7].

Within this context, the present study addresses the following research problem: how did indigenous workers, particularly Javanese laborers, contribute to and experience service aboard passenger ships during the Dutch East Indies cruise tourism period? This research focuses on understanding the roles, working conditions, and social positioning of indigenous personnel within colonial maritime labor hierarchies, emphasizing their contribution to the operational functionality and cultural mediation of cruise tourism in Java.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several colonial-era publications provide essential insights into the development of tourism in the Dutch East Indies. G. H. Von Faber's *Het Toerisme in Indie* offers a detailed account of organized tourism, tracing the formation

and operational mechanisms of institutions overseeing tourism in the colony. Von Faber emphasizes the role of affiliated organizations in structuring tourism activities, highlighting that effective development relies on cooperative interactions among institutions. He further critiques government-led efforts to propagate tourism, noting their limited efficacy in fostering a cohesive industry.

Achmad Sunjayadi's *Pariwisata di Hindia Belanda (1891–1942)*, published in 2019, presents a comprehensive overview of tourism in the colony, addressing the contributions of hotels, government employees, and journalists to the sector. The work spans 376 pages, offering a broad perspective on the evolution of colonial tourism.

H. Kodhyat's *Sejarah Pariwisata dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia* examines tourism across three historical phases: classical (Hindu-Buddhist), colonial (Dutch East Indies), and contemporary (post-independence). The discussion of colonial tourism, primarily in the chapter on modern tourism, outlines global and local developments and references the Vereeniging voor Toeristenverkeer (VTV), established in 1910 under Governor-General A. W. F. Idenburg (1909–1916). Kodhyat's work relies largely on secondary sources, yet it remains a foundational reference for understanding the organizational and institutional contexts of tourism during the colonial period.

III. METHOD

Research methodology refers to a systematic approach, procedure, or technique employed to achieve a specific objective effectively and efficiently. It is applicable across all branches of knowledge, including the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. This study employs the historical method, complemented by a literature review as the primary data collection technique. The historical method is particularly appropriate for this research, as the study focuses on reconstructing past events using documentary and archival sources.

According to Nugroho Notosusanto, historical research encompasses four principal activities: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics involves identifying and collecting relevant sources, while source criticism assesses their authenticity, reliability, and context. Interpretation entails analyzing the information to reconstruct historical narratives, and historiography involves presenting the findings in a coherent and scholarly manner. The application of these stages ensures a rigorous and systematic reconstruction of historical events, enabling an accurate and nuanced understanding of the subject matter [8] [9].

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The employment of *jongos* on luxury passenger ships is documented as early as 1918. These indigenous attendants were essential for cabin maintenance, meal service, and passenger supervision, particularly children. *Jongos* functioned both as general stewards and as intermediaries within the ship's hierarchical service system, facilitating operational order and service delivery across culturally and socially heterogeneous passengers. Archival evidence confirmed the presence and significance of *jongos* aboard Dutch-Indies passenger cruise ships, as reported in the *De Sumatra Post* newspaper on October 11, 1918. [10].

Archival newspaper records documented that the Dutch luxury cruise ship Noordam, operated by the Holland-America Line, arrived at a port in the Dutch East Indies in 1918 after completing multiple Atlantic crossings. The ship carried European settlers, government officials, and vacationing families. In the context of the ship's operations, the indispensable role was played by the *jongos*, indigenous attendants who maintained cabins, served meals, and assisted passengers of all ages, thereby ensuring the smooth functioning of the cruise ship and the comfort of its travelers throughout the voyage.

Accounts from the period reveal marked differences in how passengers interacted with *jongos*. American travelers typically employed polite requests, often using terms such as *please*, reflecting expectations of courteous service interaction. In contrast, Dutch passengers frequently issued commands in a direct or harsh tone, mirroring hierarchical and authoritarian norms embedded in colonial administration. This behavior aligns with the broader societal structure codified in the legal and administrative framework of the Dutch East Indies, which divided society into three castes: Europeans, Eastern foreigners, and indigenous populations. *Jongos*, as indigenous attendants, were positioned at the lowest tier of this social hierarchy, which justified and perpetuated unequal treatment in both formal and informal contexts aboard the cruise ship [11].

Despite these pressures, *jongos* remained indispensable for maintaining the functioning of the ship. They were tasked with supervising children, controlling crowds, and ensuring the cleanliness and readiness of cabins and public areas. Their labor mitigated passenger complaints regarding meals, cabin allocations, and general shipboard logistics. On ships such as the Noordam and the Nederland, *jongos* had to adapt to the tropical environment and the contrasting behavioral expectations of European and Dutch-Indies passengers. Their conduct demonstrated both technical skill and cultural navigation, balancing subordination with professional authority within the onboard hierarchy.

The treatment of *jongos* aboard Dutch-Indies passenger ships illustrates a dual dynamic: while they were indispensable for operational stability and passenger satisfaction, they were subjected to verbal abuse and coercive demands reflective of entrenched colonial social stratification. Dutch passengers' continued use of hierarchical authority exemplified the transplantation of colonial governance practices onto maritime labor systems, whereas

foreign passengers, such as Americans, tended to employ more deferential, polite forms of communication. This differential treatment underscores the intersection of race, nationality, and colonial ideology in shaping maritime labor experiences. *Jongos* navigated these constraints, providing essential service while exemplifying the broader structural inequalities inherent in early twentieth-century colonial shipping networks.

This early documentation of *jongos* aboard the Noordam in 1918 provides a foundational understanding of the roles and hierarchical positioning of indigenous maritime labor within colonial passenger shipping. The patterns of recruitment, service expectations, and differential treatment observed on the Noordam established a precedent that continued into the subsequent decade. Building upon this framework, the presence of indigenous workers aboard luxury passenger liners had already been well established since the 1920s. These workers were recruited primarily to serve the daily needs of European tourists throughout their long maritime journeys to the Dutch East Indies. In 1923, indigenous attendants were documented as being employed on the Steamship (SS) Rembrandt, one of the prominent cruise ships operating on the Java route. Their responsibilities were not limited to catering and cleaning services but extended to attending to passengers of all ages, including children.

One illustrative example can be found in the documentation of a children's party held on board the SS Rembrandt during a voyage to the Dutch East Indies. Indigenous attendants were assigned to ensure the smooth running of the event, which included serving food and drinks, distributing party accessories, and assisting the children with various activities (see Fig. 1). This demonstrates the essential role of indigenous workers in maintaining the atmosphere of leisure and comfort that European passengers expected during their travels.

Such records highlight not only the social dynamics aboard passenger ships but also the unequal colonial labor relations that extended into the maritime sphere. While European tourists enjoyed entertainment and recreation, indigenous workers performed the behind-the-scenes tasks that made these experiences possible. Their presence aboard ships like the SS Rembrandt exemplifies how colonial hierarchies were reproduced and sustained even within the seemingly cosmopolitan space of international sea voyages.



Figure 1. Children's costume party aboard the passenger ship S.S. *Rembrandt*, 1923.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.

Archival photographs revealed the presence of indigenous female workers on cruise ships as early as the 1920s. Several images indicated that these women were typically employed as *baboe (baboe (babu))* or nannies responsible for caring for the children of European passengers. This condition reflected the continuity of domestic labor practices that had long characterized colonial society in the Netherlands Indies, in which indigenous women frequently occupied subordinate roles. At the same time, this phenomenon provided an early glimpse into the participation of indigenous women in the maritime industry, albeit in vulnerable and highly constrained positions (see Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. European children with two *baboe (babu)* on board a cruise ship en route to Java, ca. 1918–1920.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.

Figure 2. The image represented the social dynamics between indigenous *baboe (babu)* and European children on a cruise ship bound for Java between 1918 and 1920. Visually, the social boundaries between the *baboe (babu)* and European children appeared blurred. The similarity in the winter clothing they wore and their physical proximity in the photograph suggested a degree of integration. The *baboe (babu)* were provided with the same equipment to adapt to the environmental conditions of the voyage. Their intimate interaction with the European children further reinforced the impression that social class differences were not explicitly displayed within the spatial setting of the cruise ship. Their presence on board also corresponded with the general characteristics of cruise passengers during this period, the majority of whom came from the educated upper-middle class and were more receptive to ideas of equality than the more conservative colonial elites on land.

Nevertheless, although discrimination in this photograph seemed more concealed compared to everyday colonial life on shore, the social structure still operated in a more subtle form. The *baboe (babu)* remained in a subordinate position as a domestic worker responsible for childcare. They were not part of the passenger group that enjoyed the voyage. While cruise passengers were generally more open to modernity and notions of equality, they did not entirely erase the entrenched social boundaries of the colonial system. The cruise ship served as a space of recreation and social mobility for the European upper class, yet it simultaneously reproduced colonial hierarchies that separated indigenous laborers from the colonial elite. Thus, the photograph provided an intriguing representation of how social and racial boundaries in colonial society could visually appear to dissolve but continued to function in everyday practice.

Indigenous female workers were also documented aboard the passenger ship SS *Oranje* (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). This finding illustrated how the roles of indigenous women became integrated into the cruise shipping industry during the 1920s, particularly within the sphere of domestic service. The presence of *baboe (babu)* on board reflected the extension of colonial labor relations, in which indigenous workers were not confined to the colonial mainland but were also embedded within the maritime space of oceanic travel.

These women primarily served as caregivers for European children, making their labor a crucial element in sustaining the comfort of upper-class passengers throughout the voyage. Their presence further demonstrated that cruise ships did not solely employ male workers; women were also engaged, albeit largely within the domestic service sector. Despite the seemingly modern and cosmopolitan setting of the ship, cruise travel reproduced the hierarchies of the colonial order, in which indigenous women occupied subordinated roles. They worked to support the leisure and tourism experiences of European passengers without ever being part of the privileged social milieu that benefited from such voyages.



Fig. 3. A European woman and an indigenous nursemaid (*baboe (babu)*) with twin children on board the passenger ship SS *Oranje* of the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland at Port Said, 1922.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.



Fig. 4. An indigenous nursemaid (*baboe (babu)*) with twin children on board the passenger ship SS *Oranje* of the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland, 1922.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.

The S.S. *Koningin der Nederlanden* was a Dutch passenger and cargo cruise ship operated by the Netherland Line. Contemporary accounts from *Naar Oost-Indië*, published in *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, Groningen, on June 7, 1928, provide valuable insights into the function of *jongos*, indigenous crew members, aboard colonial passenger ships. *Jongos* were primarily young Javanese men employed to assist passengers, facilitate daily operations, and maintain social order on board.

During the voyage from Genoa to Port Said and onward through the Suez Canal, *jongos* were responsible for attending to passenger needs, including delivering meals, beverages, and other personal services. They acted as intermediaries between European officers and passengers, ensuring that the hierarchical order aboard the ship was maintained. The article notes that *jongos* were tasked with calling passengers for dinner, providing attentive service during social activities, and assisting officers in managing both functional and ceremonial aspects of shipboard life.

The narrative emphasizes the visibility and importance of *jongos* in passenger interactions. While European officers managed navigation and operational command, *jongos* supported the smooth functioning of the ship's daily routines and facilitated social protocols, such as seating arrangements during meals and assistance during festive events. Their role extended beyond labor; they were integral to the hospitality experience of passengers, particularly during long oceanic crossings where social and recreational activities were significant for morale.

The account also illustrates the broader context of colonial labor structures. *Jongos* represented a specialized class of indigenous employees whose work was essential for both operational efficiency and passenger comfort. Their presence exemplified the dependence of European passenger cruise ships on local labor while simultaneously reflecting the hierarchical and intercultural dimensions of maritime service in the Dutch East Indies.

In conclusion, the S.S. *Koningin der Nederlanden* relied heavily on *jongos* to maintain service standards, facilitate social interactions, and support the functional operations of the cruise ship. The historical record underscores the critical role of these indigenous crew members in sustaining colonial maritime travel and the structured social environment aboard luxury passenger ships [12].

The presence of indigenous crew members, known as *jongos*, aboard Dutch passenger cruise ships is further documented in the visual record of the early twentieth century. In December 1930, the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* published an image capturing the arrival of the musical ensemble Trio Speenhoff at Amsterdam after returning from the Dutch East Indies. The trio, consisting of Koos Speenhoff, Caesarine, and a young child referred to as "kleine Cees" is depicted standing on the deck of the passenger ship Johan van Oldenbarnevelt alongside a *jongos* who is engaged with the group.

The photograph not only documents the return of a prominent performing family but also serves as evidence of the active presence of *jongos* on passenger ships. These indigenous attendants were responsible for assisting passengers, facilitating daily operations, and maintaining social order on board. The fact that the trio posed for a photograph together with a *jongos*, and that this image was subsequently published in a major colonial newspaper, highlights both the visibility and social integration of *jongos* within the milieu of European passengers. This record confirms that *jongos* were not merely functional laborers but also a recognized part of the shipboard environment, engaging with passengers in ways that were considered noteworthy by contemporary media.

This visual source thus provides both a concrete illustration and a primary documentary reference demonstrating the essential role of *jongos* in Dutch passenger shipping during the interwar period. Their inclusion in a published photograph with prominent cultural figures reinforces their presence as integral participants in maritime life rather than peripheral or invisible laborers (See Fig. 5) [13].



HET TRIO-SPEENHOFF UIT INDIË TERUG. — Koos, Caesarine en de „kleine" Cees met den „djongos" aan boord van de "Johan van Oldenbarnevelt" bij hun aankomst te Amsterdam.

Fig. 5. The trio, consisting of Koos Speenhoff, Caesarine, and a young child referred to as "kline Cees" is depicted standing on the deck of the passenger ship Johan van Oldenbarnevelt alongside a *jongos* who is engaged with the group.

Source: *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* Amsterdam 8 December 1930.

In the 1930s, indigenous male workers were frequently employed on board cruise ships as servants referred to as *jongos* [14]. They were particularly visible on cruise ships operated by the Stoomvaart Maatschappij "Nederland" and were deliberately recruited to enhance the exotic appeal of the voyage for foreign tourists traveling to Java. These workers performed their duties wearing specially designed attire that combined local cultural elements with colonial expectations of service. Their uniforms consisted of a modified *beskap*, featuring a high, closed collar and frontal buttons commonly associated with Javanese formal wear, rendered in *lurik* patterns that were traditionally linked to the working-class milieu. This was complemented by plain white trousers, a head covering resembling the

blangkon, and slip-on sandals, which together constructed a carefully curated image of "indigeneity" within the colonial framework (see Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Indigenous servant on board a Stoomvaart Maatschappij "Nederland" cruise ship, ca. 1930.

Source: *De Eeuw van De 'Nederland': Geschiedenis en Vloot van de Stoomvaart Maatschappij 'Nederland' 1870–1970*.

In the 1930s, indigenous servants were employed on board the *Dempo*, a passenger liner that regularly docked in Surabaya. These servants were assigned to the second-class smoking lounge and the dining hall (see Fig. 7). In the photograph, several servants were positioned behind the bar or lounge tables, while others attended to European passengers who were seated leisurely in the smoking room. Their attire was particularly distinctive, characterized by a head covering resembling the Javanese *blangkon*. This costume, which combined local cultural markers with the demands of maritime service, became a common uniform for indigenous servants on cruise ships during this period.



Fig. 7. Indigenous servants wearing head coverings resembling the Javanese *blangkon* on board the *Dempo* passenger liner in the 1930s.

Source: Edward P. De Groot, *Varen op de Oost*.

On the other hand, indigenous servants were depicted standing near the staircase of the second-class smoking room on board the *Dempo* passenger liner, welcoming foreign tourists (see Fig. 8). This scene reflected a unique cultural encounter. The second-class smoking room, designed in the European Art Deco style that was popular between the 1920s and 1940s, was juxtaposed with the presence of indigenous servants who wore modified versions of traditional Javanese attire.



Fig. 8. Second-class smoking room on board the *Dempo* passenger liner, 1930s.

Source: Edward P. De Groot, *Varen op de Oost*.

In addition to serving in the smoking room and the dining room, indigenous attendants were also observed assisting passengers on the ship's deck, where travelers sat leisurely while enjoying the maritime scenery. As shown in Fig. 9, an indigenous servant attended to passengers relaxing on the deck of the *Dempo* cruise ship during the 1930s, wearing a distinctively modified form of traditional Javanese attire.



Fig. 9. Indigenous attendants on the deck of the *Dempo* cruise ship in the 1930s.

Source: Edward P. De Groot, *Varen op de Oost*.

In addition to their presence on the *Dempo* and other cruise ships of the Stoomvaart Maatschappij "Nederland," indigenous attendants were also employed on the *Willem Ruys*, one of the most renowned passenger ships of its era. The cruise ship was widely regarded as a symbol of maritime luxury, offering a variety of entertainment and leisure facilities for its passengers. Among the most notable attractions was a cabaret performance known as *Le Cheval Noir*, staged in the main hall as a prominent form of evening entertainment. While adult passengers were provided

with refined amusements, the shipping company also devoted special attention to children, organizing parties and festive events during each voyage. Children dined separately in a designated *kinderkamer* and were consistently accompanied by caretakers. Festivities for children were facilitated by indigenous attendants, some of whom played musical instruments, while others served food and beverages. These attendants wore hybridized forms of traditional dress, including batik *lurik* blouses or plain *beskap* jackets, paired with white trousers and head coverings resembling the *blangkon* (see Fig. 10 and Fig. 11).



Fig. 10. Native servants attending children in the *kinderkamer* of the cruise ship *Willem Ruys* during the 1930s.

Source: Edward P. De Groot, *Varen op de Oost*.



Fig. 11. A native servant dressed in a batik-lurik patterned costume carrying a musical instrument during a children's party on board the cruise ship *Willem Ruys*.

Source: Edward P. De Groot, *Varen op de Oost*.

In the 1930s, native servants were also found on board the cruise ship *Jan Pietersz Coen*, wearing the same modified *beskap* with a *batik lurik* motif, accompanied by a head covering resembling a *blangkon* and plain white trousers. However, on this cruise ship, the native servants were barefoot, unlike those on other cruise ships who typically wore slippers. An illustration of native servants on board the *Jan Pietersz Coen* can be seen in Fig. 12.

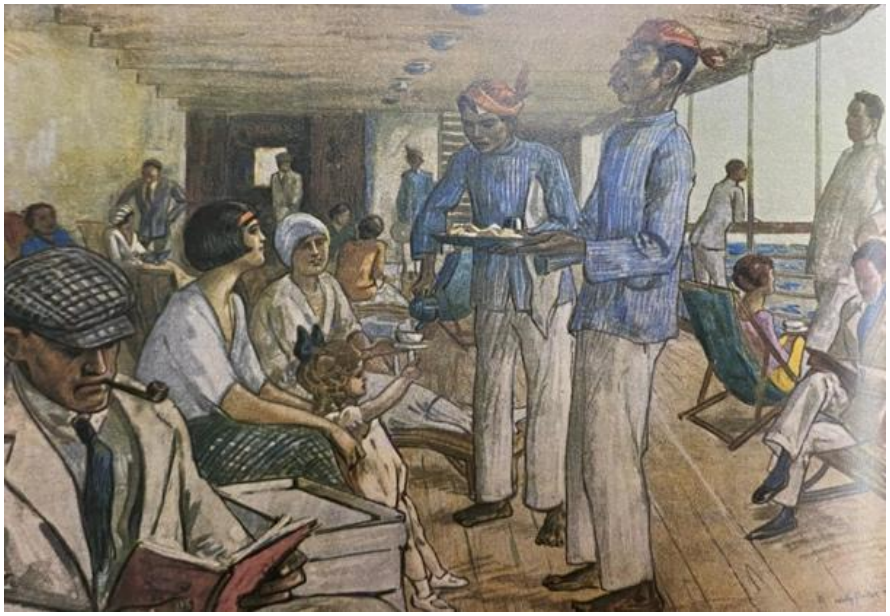


Fig. 12. Native servants on board the cruise ship *Jan Pietersz Coen*, 1930s.

Source: A. Alberts, *Per Mailboot Naar de Oost*.

Furthermore, aboard the cruise ship *Jan Pietersz Coen* there were also native female workers employed as *baboe (babu)* or nannies for the children of European passengers. They typically wore traditional kebaya with jarik cloth as the lower garment, went barefoot, and styled their hair in a bun. These nannies worked on board while their employers vacationed on the cruise and brought their children along, or they were hired temporarily when European tourists traveling with children required the service of a native caregiver. A general depiction of the activities of native female workers aboard the cruise ship can be seen in Fig. 13 and Fig. 14.



Fig. 13. Native female worker aboard the cruise ship *Jan Pietersz Coen*, 1930s.

Source: A. Alberts, *Per Mailboot Naar de Oost*.



Fig. 14. Native female worker on the deck of the cruise ship *Jan Pietersz Coen*, 1930s.

Source: A. Alberts, *Per Mailboot Naar de Oost*.

In 1931, a tragic incident aboard the luxury passenger ship Van Oldebarneveld was documented, highlighting the responsibilities and vulnerabilities of indigenous maritime staff, particularly the *baboe* or nanny. According to archival reports, a wealthy Chinese family from Surabaya had rented a luxury cabin and entrusted their infant to the care of a *baboe* while disembarking in Singapore. The *baboe*, apparently prioritizing the passenger's comfort over attentive childcare, wrapped the child in a blanket and left it unattended. Upon returning around five o'clock, the family discovered the infant had suffocated in its bed. Both the child and the *baboe* were taken ashore by the authorities [15].

This episode underscores the structured role of indigenous staff aboard passenger cruise ships, who were responsible not only for routine cleaning and meal service but also for the care of passengers' children. Such tasks required constant vigilance and adaptability, yet the hierarchical and cross-cultural dynamics aboard colonial-era ships often placed these workers in complex, high-stakes positions where oversight lapses could have fatal consequences. The incident illustrates the critical yet precarious position of indigenous attendants within the luxury maritime system of the Dutch East Indies.

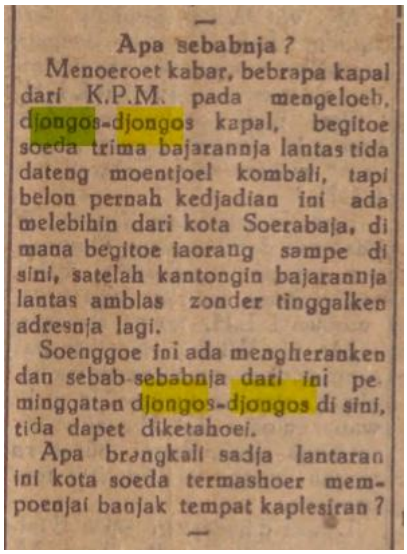
In addition to the aforementioned cruise ships, several luxury ships operated by the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland (SMN) also employed indigenous men as stewards. The MS *Marnix van St. Aldegonde*, for instance, employed male servants dressed in the same attire previously described, namely a striped *lurik* garment paired with a traditional head covering resembling a *blangkon/iket* (see Fig. 15).



Fig. 15. An indigenous male steward (*jongos*) aboard the MS *Marnix van St. Aldegonde*, 1931.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.

The newspaper *Swara Publik*, published on June 6, 1931, referred to the term *"jongos"* in the context of tourism aboard ships owned by the Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (KPM) (see Fig. 16). This reference further reinforces the fact that many indigenous male workers were employed on these cruise ships to serve passengers and tourists.



Apa sebabnja ?

Menoeroet kabar, bebrapa kapal dari K.P.M. pada mengeloeh, djongos-djongos kapal, begitoe soeda trima bajarannja lantas tida dateng moentjoel kombali, tapi belon pernah kedjadian ini ada melebihin dari kota Soerabaja, di mana begitoe laorang sampe di sini, satelah kantongin bajarannja lantas amblas zonder tinggalken adresnja lagi.

Soenggoe ini ada mengheranken dan sebab-sebabnja dari ini peminggatan djongos-djongos di sini, tida dapet diketahoei.

Apa brangkali sadja lantaran ini kota soeda termashoer mempoenjai banjak tempat kaplesiran ?

Fig. 16. *Jongos* as depicted in *Swara Publik*, June 6, 1931.

Source: khastara.perpusnas.go.id.

Building upon the discussion of indigenous labor aboard Dutch East Indies passenger ships, the luxury cruise ship MS Marnix van St. Aldegonde, operated by the Netherland Line, exemplified the integration of indigenous maritime labor within early twentieth-century European passenger shipping. The ship sailed from the Javakade in Amsterdam to the French Riviera and Egypt, frequently stopping at ports such as Southampton and Algiers. Archival evidence from 1934 indicates that the company consistently arranged brief excursions for passengers at ports where the cruise ship remained for several hours. These excursions, including trips to the Isle of Wight from Southampton, were often of secondary interest to international travelers, who prioritized major metropolitan destinations such as London, where ceremonial events like royal weddings attracted attention.

Crucial to the ship's service and social operations were the *jongos*, primarily Madurese attendants. The employment of Madurese staff represented a deliberate innovation in colonial labor practice, as these attendants were perceived as more resilient and less influenced by Western norms than other indigenous workers. Recruitment frequently followed family lineage, establishing multi-generational traditions of service. The *jongos* communicated in Malay, understood Dutch, and could engage with English-speaking passengers to a functional degree. Their labor was characterized by discretion, punctuality, and meticulous attention to detail; tasks included precise table setting, unobtrusive maintenance of public areas, and attentive service that combined efficiency with quiet composure. Even when seated in corners or along heating radiators, attendants maintained alertness without drawing notice, likened metaphorically to a cat observing birds.

The presence of *jongos* also revealed cultural nuances in passenger behavior. English travelers generally exhibited greater courtesy and appreciation toward the darker-skinned attendants than Dutch passengers. Dutch passengers, often seasoned travelers to the East, tended to romanticize their experience, whereas English passengers focused on pragmatic respect for service and discipline. Supervision of *jongos* followed a hierarchical system: ethnic mandors oversaw their peers under European supervision. Advancement was merit-based, allowing exceptional attendants to attain mandor status and replace standard uniforms with dark garments adorned with gold stripes, signifying authority. This structure maintained operational order and encouraged professional development.

During the Southampton–Riviera leg, Marnix passed landmarks such as the Isle of Wight and the Needles, while *jongos* continued to perform their duties with seamless efficiency. Historical records note that the Madurese attendants' combination of inherited skill, disciplined comportment, and cross-cultural adaptability significantly contributed to passenger satisfaction, particularly among English tourists who valued decorum, cleanliness, and unobtrusive service. The structured management of *jongos*, alongside their family-based recruitment, reflects broader colonial labor practices and highlights the centrality of indigenous labor in sustaining luxury maritime operations during the early twentieth century [16].

The MV *Marnix van Sint Aldegonde* was a Dutch luxury passenger and cargo cruise ship operated by the Netherland Line KPM, transporting European travelers and cargo across the Dutch East Indies. Evidence from the newspaper article *Met de 'Marnix' naar Europa*, published in *De Koerier* on January 16, 1935, provides a detailed

account of the daily operations aboard the cruise ship and highlights the essential role of indigenous crew members known as *jongos*. These individuals were responsible for maintaining passenger comfort, performing labor-intensive tasks, and serving as intermediaries between the passengers and the ship's broader operational system.

The article describes *jongos* actively delivering casks of cold beer to passengers, exemplified by the command "*Jongos, lekas, sepuloe bier lagi, het is weer een regeling van Jan Kalebas hier vandaag*." This statement indicates the immediacy and responsiveness required of *jongos*, emphasizing their central role in the passengers' leisure experience. The description situates *jongos* within a hierarchical labor system where their service was indispensable for providing a seamless travel environment while European passengers enjoyed the amenities of luxury travel.

Beyond their practical duties, *jongos* contributed to the social environment aboard the MV *Marnix van Sint Aldegonde*. They facilitated interactions between passengers and ship operations, ensuring a controlled and orderly environment while performing socially symbolic functions, such as attending to passengers' personal requests. The ship is described as fully staffed and carrying numerous passengers, making *jongos* essential not only for routine service but also for ceremonial and leisure activities that defined the luxury travel experience.

The account further highlights the demanding nature of *jongos*' labor. Their duties required physical agility, attentiveness, and social awareness as they navigated crowded decks, addressed passengers' immediate needs, and followed instructions from European supervisors. This dual role, functional and social, positioned *jongos* as crucial actors in both the operational efficiency and the perception of comfort aboard the cruise ship.

In conclusion, the MV *Marnix van Sint Aldegonde* exemplifies the dependence of Dutch luxury passenger shipping on indigenous labor in colonial contexts. The article from *De Koerier* provides primary evidence that *jongos* were more than subordinate workers. They actively contributed to operational efficiency, social order, and the leisure experience aboard the ship. Their presence reflects broader dynamics of colonial hierarchies, labor organization, and intercultural interaction on maritime passenger cruise ships in the Dutch East Indies [17].

Below is visual documentation depicting a group of jongos dressed in their traditional attire, posed on the deck of a luxury cruise ship. This image provides insight into the professional appearance and material culture of indigenous maritime staff, while also illustrating their roles and symbolic presence within the hierarchical and colonial service structure aboard early twentieth-century luxury cruise ships.

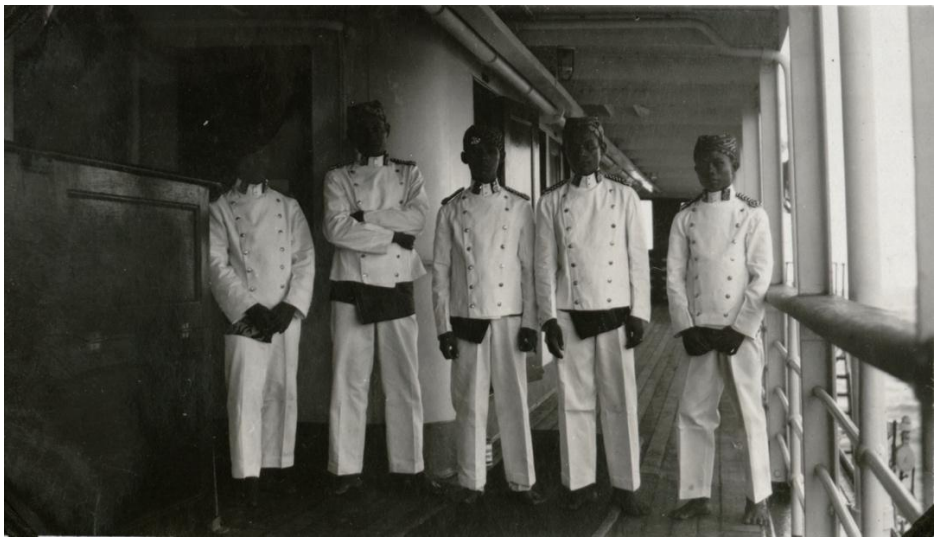


Fig. 17. Indigenous attendants aboard the S.S. Zuiderkruis near Tandjong-Priok, 1930s.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.



Fig. 18. *Jongos* had a meal on the deck of a luxury cruise ship alongside fellow indigenous crew members, 1930s.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.

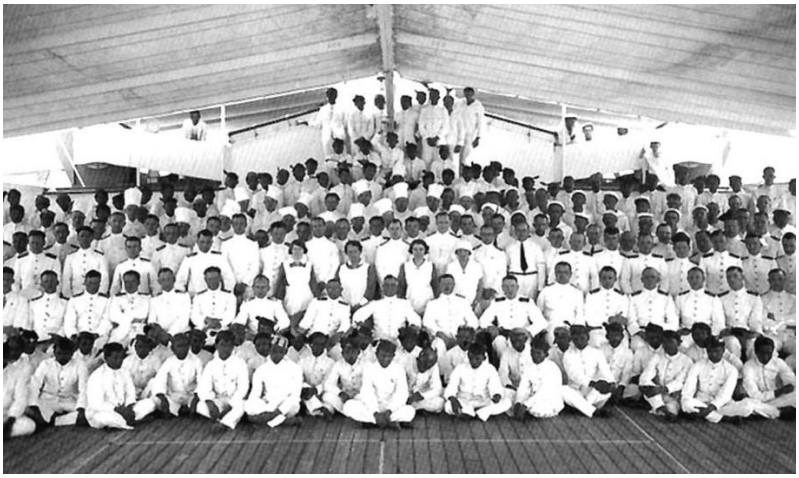


Fig. 19. Cruise ship crew posed for a group photograph, with *jongos* seated in the front row, 1930s.

Source: digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the presence and labor of indigenous attendants, including *jongos* and *baboe (babu),* aboard luxury cruise ships in the Dutch East Indies between 1918 and the 1930s reveal a complex intersection of colonial hierarchy, maritime labor, and cultural mediation. Archival documents and contemporary photographs indicate that these attendants performed a wide range of duties, encompassing cabin maintenance, meal service, childcare, ceremonial assistance, and passenger supervision. Their work ensured that voyages proceeded smoothly while maintaining the leisure and comfort of European travelers. Such responsibilities required not only technical skill but also acute social awareness and adaptability to diverse passenger behaviors and expectations.

The tragic incident aboard the Van Oldebarneveld in 1931, in which an infant under the care of a *baboe* suffocated, underscores the high-stakes nature of indigenous attendants' responsibilities, highlighting both the trust invested in them and the vulnerabilities inherent in their roles. Recruitment frequently followed family lineages, establishing intergenerational traditions of service. Cruise ships such as the Noordam, SS Rembrandt, MV Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, and SS Oranje relied heavily on these attendants for functional operations, ceremonial events, and recreational activities. Indigenous women employed as baboe (babu) extended domestic labor into maritime contexts, reflecting the replication of colonial hierarchies at sea.

Visual and textual sources further demonstrate nuanced interactions between passengers and staff. While foreign travelers, particularly English tourists, typically engaged attendants with courtesy, Dutch passengers often exercised hierarchical authority, reflecting broader colonial social stratifications. Despite these structural inequalities, indigenous attendants maintained operational efficiency, facilitated social protocols, and sustained the comfort and leisure expected aboard luxury cruise ships.

Ultimately, the labor of *jongos* and *baboe (babu)* illuminates the mechanisms through which colonial labor systems were both enforced and adapted within maritime spaces. Their indispensable contributions reveal that the apparent grandeur and effortless cosmopolitanism of luxury passenger cruises were underpinned by the skill, vigilance, and cultural navigation of indigenous workers, whose labor sustained the functioning and social order of these voyages across the Dutch East Indies.

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