

Identifying as "Indo"

Descriptions of Food in Marguerite Schenkhuisen's *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* (1993) and Anne-Gine Goemans' *Honolulu King* (2015)

Gwen Kerkhof Mogot

ABSTRACT

By analyzing Marguerite Schenkhuisen's colonial *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* (1993) and Anne-Gine Goemans' postcolonial novel *Honolulu King* (2015), the author argues that embracing and rejecting indigenous Indonesian food demonstrates protagonists' identification as Indo-European (Eurasian, or Indo). In colonial times, the distinction between European and indigenous food in the Dutch Indies, with the inherent judgments of value and status, was determined by colonial boundaries. In her memoir, Schenkhuisen describes how she moves between these boundaries. Although Schenkhuisen was raised as European, the descriptions of indigenous Indonesian food in her memoir demonstrate Schenkhuisen's identification and re-appropriation as Indo. In postcolonial times, the preparation and consumption of such food is a way of identification with the Indo culture, drawing upon colonial traditions, as the contemporary novel *Honolulu King* shows. Hardy, the protagonist of *Honolulu King*, recounts his youth in the Dutch Indies while preparing and consuming Indonesian food. *Honolulu King* presents food as a vehicle that triggers memories, using food as way to access the colonial past in a postcolonial presence. As such, Indonesian food becomes a part of the cultural memory of the Dutch Indies drawing upon nostalgia for *tempo doeloe*. However, the preparation and consumption of Indonesian food also allow Hardy to affirm his ethnic identity. This affirmation is similar to Schenkhuisen's position in *Memoirs of an Indo Woman*.

KEYWORDS

Memory, Identity, Food, Nostalgia, Colonial, Postcolonial.

INTRODUCTION

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the largest trading post of the Dutch V.O.C. (East India Company), Batavia, was located on the island of Java. Batavia was a vibrant mix of different nationalities. Although a strict separation between Europeans and non-Europeans was maintained, many children were born in mixed marriages between native inhabitants and Europeans or as children of concubines. These children became Indo-Europeans or Indos (Eurasians). If acknowledged by their Dutch (European) father, they had the same status as the new arrivals from Europe. This "tradition of equivalence" highly influenced the Dutch Indies society (Bosma, Raben

and Willems 2006, 28), and these Indo-Europeans, if acknowledged by their Dutch ancestors, became an important group in Dutch Indies (Oostindie and Paasman 1998, 349).

However, in the early twentieth century, the Dutch Indies (by now an established colony of the Netherlands) saw a rapid increase in its European population, especially European women (Locher-Scholten 2010, 122). These *totok*¹ women “were responsible for civilising the untamed colonial community, as part of what was considered to be a *civilising mission*” (Locher-Scholten 2010, 125). The focus of the “mission” was the household – a strict separation was maintained between the indigenous servants and members of the *totok* family. Although food was prepared by the indigenous servants, servants and family were not allowed to eat from the same plates (Locher-Scholten 2010, 143). A certain fear of the other or *verindischen*² through contamination should be considered here. Although the *rijsttafel*³ remained popular in the kitchen, European food was considered to be more sophisticated and returned to the menu (Locher-Scholten 2010, 142). The shift from *rijsttafel* to *totok*-food goes hand in hand with the civilizing mission of the *totok* women and the rise of imperialism. In the nineteenth century, the Dutch Indies was no longer a highly-valued trading post. The colony had become an expansion of the Netherlands and to establish and maintain power, *verindischen* has to be kept at bay. The mixed and full Indo families mentioned earlier became a place of contestation – in these families both Dutch and indigenous elements played an important role.

Given the historical context sketched above, food is an interesting aspect of colonial and postcolonial life. The role of food, memory and identity formation has mostly been researched from an anthropological perspective (Holtzman 2006). Sutton (2008, 2010) argues that preparing and consuming food provides a sensory link with the past. However, as Protschky (2009) and Adams (2013) show: “Food is an individual experience of taste as well as a sign of cultural distinctiveness” (Adams 2013, 240). In food memoirs the child’s discovery and taste of food shape its identity (Protschky 2009, Leong-Salobir 2015). Moreover, Protschky (2009) and Adams (2013) argue that food described in (post)colonial memoirs can present “a repertoire of historically specific subjectivities” (Adams 2013, 240). Little research has been done on the role of food in Dutch colonial and postcolonial literature related to the Dutch Indies. Boudewijn (2016) offers an insightful overview of Indos in literature, but she does not refer to the role that food plays in their portrayal. In 2016, *Indische letteren* published a thematic issue on *Indische* food culture in literature and war diaries,⁴ showing the illustrative and nostalgic role of food in colonial literature. However, this article argues that food plays a much larger role in literary portrayals of Indos. This paper offers

¹ Meaning Dutch in Indonesian language.

² Meaning going native in Indonesian language.

³ Indonesian rice dishes.

⁴ See also Captain 2009.

a first attempt to critically analyze the role of food in Indo identity formation through literature, arguing that food is not merely an individual sensory experience, but part of collective memory and a vehicle for identification. In doing so, I expand on Protschky's argument by linking Marguerite Schenkhuizen's "traditional colonial memoir" (Protschky 2009, 370) *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* to Anne-Gine Goemans' literary work *Honolulu King*.

The manner in which the contestation of identities at the dinner table manifests itself is examined by providing a close reading of Schenkhuizen's colonial account and by demonstrating how embracing and rejecting indigenous Indonesian food shapes Schenkhuizen's identity as Indo (Eurasian). As argued before, food became a signifier of social status and identity both historically and fictionally. While Schenkhuizen's memoirs offer a biographical and somewhat fictionalized account of colonial times, the postcolonial novel *Honolulu King* (2015) by Anne-Gine Goemans shows how the trope of Indonesian food is further developed in contemporary Dutch literature. Firstly, I argue that *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* should not be approached as a biography, but as a literary work, like Schenkhuizen intended her memoirs to be seen. Secondly, the role of indigenous and Dutch food is analyzed in Schenkhuizen's work, arguing that Schenkhuizen's sensory experience and attitude of food signify her identity as an Indo woman. Thirdly, Schenkhuizen's experience of food is linked to *Honolulu King*. This contemporary novel's protagonist looks back on his life, bringing his childhood memories in the Dutch Indies to life through the smell and taste of Indonesian food. While *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* presents food as a contestation of social boundaries in colonial society and as an acknowledgment of Indo-identity, *Honolulu King* presents food as a vehicle that triggers memories, using food as way to access the colonial past in a postcolonial presence.

REAPPROPRIATION OF "INDO"

Before continuing, a note should be made on the usage of the term Indo or Indo-European. Neither one of these two terms are neutral, and both originally served as a way to distinguish between the colonizer and the colonized (Boudewijn 2016, 15), often in a derogatory manner. After the Second World War, the term Indo was re-appropriated and became a name that was proudly used, emphasizing the Indonesian heritage and family history (Meijer 2004, 148 and Boudewijn 2016, 15). The author Tjalie Robinson (1911 –1974), a leading figure in the Indo-community in the Netherlands during the 1950s and 60s, was an important spokesman for the emancipation of this term. Robinson argued that Indos, as descendants of both Dutch and native inhabitants of the colony, have always moved between the Dutch colonizers and the natives. He continued his argument by saying that due to this hybridity Indos have a heightened consciousness of identity. He wrote: "Een halfbloed is een mens die zich van beiderlei afkomst gelijkkelijk bewust is. In mijn

opstellen zoek ik naar een formulering van die bewustheid” (as qtd by Nieuwenhuis 1992, 489)⁵. My study has emerged from this question. In the current debate, Robinson’s position is often followed, using the term Indo in an emancipatory manner.⁶ I follow Robinson’s approach of the term.

FOOD IN A COLONIAL MEMOIR

Memoirs of an Indo Woman (1993) by Marguerite Schenkhuisen

Memoirs of an Indo Woman: Twentieth-Century Life in the East Indies and Abroad (1993) presents itself as a historical account of Schenkhuisen’s life, drawing on her recollections. Although Protschky (2009) offers an insightful analysis of this memoir, it should be noted that she does not approach the work as literary, but as a personal, historical account. Yet, the author herself has said that her memories should not be approached as an account of the past or as a biography. Rather, Schenkhuisen draws a connection to Maria Dermoût’s novel *Tienduizend dingen* (1955), thus adding a literary dimension to her story and problematizing the role of memories:

This is my story – the life story of a simple and ordinary but happy woman – not a biography ... but simply a story about “10,000 things” of Maria Dermoût, the Dutch fiction writer; the ten thousand things so familiar to people from the Indies; the ten thousand things, which revealed to us the richness and the wisdom of that country and the love we feel for her (Schenkhuisen 1993, 1).

The title of this well-known novel *Tienduizend dingen* draws on a Mollucan funeral tradition where a song is sung about 10,000 things to remember the deceased by. The act of remembrance defeats the past, and memories play an important role in Dermoût’s oeuvre (Freriks 1990, 9). It is an interesting start of these memoirs: Schenkhuisen rejects the biographical element, by following a literary tradition and invoking the Dutch Indies through memory. This tradition is infused by nostalgia for *tempo doeloe* (Pattynama 2014 and van Leeuwen 2008). Nostalgia for *tempo doeloe* romanticizes the Dutch colonial past in Indonesia in the 19th and 20th century, lamenting the splendor that is lost. However, nostalgia, as a phenomenon, refers to a longing for a home that no longer exists (Boym 2008). Critical nostalgia is reflective and also looks at the influence of the past over the present. Schenkhuisen attempts to approach her nostalgia reflectively by drawing upon *Tienduizend dingen*. Her book *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* memoirs offers an account of the development of her identity as Indo woman, as the title *Memoirs of an Indo woman* implies. The observation that Schenkhuisen problematizes the role of memories and her explicit connection to the literary tradition concerning the Dutch Indies allow for a literary analysis of this biography.

⁵ Roughly translated: A mestizo (Indo) is a person that is aware of both sides of his descent. As an author, I am searching for a way to articulate such a consciousness.

⁶ See for example: Boudewijn 2016, Captain 2003, Meijer 2004 and the artistic work *Twijfelindo* by Armando Ello (2016).

Moreover, *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* can be linked to contemporary fiction that presents a similar relation to food, as this paper will demonstrate.

Marguerite Schenkhuizen describes her life in the Dutch Indies in great detail. As a child of a Dutch father and a Javanese mother, she was raised to consider herself European. Schenkhuizen spoke Dutch fluently and was sent to Europe in her early twenties to finish her education. This implies that her family was wealthy and that they enjoyed a high social status. The reader gets a sense of the glamorous European life Schenkhuizen lived during the interbellum, yet indigenous aspects are present in her life as well. Schenkhuizen's book carefully describes the customs, preparation, and distribution of food. Protschky argues that these elements "define [Schenkhuizen's] colonial subjectivity" (2009, 371). In the light of nostalgia for *tempo doeloe*, it is important to note that many of Schenkhuizen's memories involve food. The *rijsttafel*, for example, is "enthusiastically" described in *Indische* fiction (Locher-Scholten 2010, 141). In modern times, Indonesian food is the medium used by Indos to connect to their roots (Kerkhof Mogot 2017). In this paper, I will show that *Honolulu King* also presents a nostalgic relation to food. *Honolulu King*'s protagonist remembers his youth in the Dutch Indies through the preparation of Indonesian food. In this way, food becomes part of the Indos' cultural memory.

Schenkhuizen's attitude towards food: identifying as *Indo*

The first mention of food in *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* is a description of Schenkhuizen's early school years. Schenkhuizen describes how she loathed the traditional pre-school breakfast of oatmeal porridge, and, with the help of Koki (the cook), sneaks away to buy "stick rice or deep-fried cassava" (1993, 11) from street vendors. Schenkhuizen explains: "These snacks tasted delicious, not only because I far preferred them over oatmeal porridge, but also because Moes [mother] didn't like us to eat from the street. Forbidden food tastes extra good" (1993, 11). Eating from the street was considered to be highly improper, both children and adults alike were strictly forbidden to purchase such food (Protschky 2009, 379). This prohibition of local street food shows a form of mysophobia (Captain 2009, 221) that can be seen as characteristic of colonial relations. In this case, the street could be conceptualized as the space where boundaries are crossed and where indigenous people and Europeans meet. When being careful to maintain social status, the consumption of local Indonesian food is the crossing of a boundary that leads to *verindischen* (Protschky 2009, 379). It is striking that Schenkhuizen's Javanese mother insists on keeping up appearances, considering that Protschky argues that parents function as cultural gatekeepers with the indigenous mother introducing the child to the Indonesian culture (2009, 375). Schenkhuizen is supported by Koki to circumvent the breakfast of oatmeal. Koki, being one of the indigenous servants, has been set the task to prepare and buy the family's food. As Locher-Scholten remarks,

the indigenous cook was a valuable asset to the household (2010, 143), but was kept under strict control. The cook had the paradoxical task of handling the food because the indigenous servants' food and the food of the family were strictly separated (2010, 143). When Koki helps young Schenkhuizen to buy street food, she subverts the set boundaries and enables the child to access her Indonesian roots.

Schenkhuizen's *totok* father is much more at ease crossing social boundaries than her Javanese mother. Schenkhuizen remembers:

I remember something very odd. We would always have potatoes and vegetables after we had finished with the *rijsttafel*. That was our own custom. My father, the *totok* [European/ Dutch], helped himself generously from the *rijsttafel* dishes, only to join all of us right after when the European-style course was served. It's doubtful, therefore, that we had this strange custom simply to please him (1993, 92-93, emphasis added).

The father's actions are contradictory. He does not join the family during the *rijsttafel*, but does consume this food. Although consuming a meal with the family seems to be a very intimate action, directly joining the *rijsttafel* would reduce the father's social status as a European who has *verindischt*⁷. The consumption and preparation of food are not merely intimate. Protschky writes: "food was (like sex) at the ambivalent heart of intimate colonial encounters because of its role, at once biological and cultural, in the embodiment of values" (2009, 379). Moreover, Holtzman argues that "food intrinsically traverses the public and the intimate" (2006, 373). Although tasting the meal is a very individual sensory experience, the consumption and preparation ties into numerous traditions that are publicly shared. Therefore, sitting down at the dinner table and joining his family would make the serving of "potatoes and vegetables" redundant. In doing so, Schenkhuizen's father would reject the typical Dutch menu, accepting that the Indo culture is more dominant in his household. However, in contrast to Schenkhuizen's Javanese mother, her father is able to permit himself such an indirect crossing of social boundaries. As a Javanese, her mother's status is far less established than her father's, which is an aspect that is not mentioned by Protschky (2009). At the beginning of the twentieth century, interracial marriages had become less common and the indigenous women became obsolete (Buikema 2017, 81). Although, Schenkhuizen's parents were safely married, her mother must have been aware of the fate of the many indigenous women that were not legally acknowledged as wives. Such women could be used and rejected without ceremony, losing agency and dying in childbirth or starving in the *kampong*⁸ (Buikema 2017, 81).⁹ Consequently, her position is delicate, and, in order to maintain status, she must do

⁷ Gone native.

⁸ Kampong could be described as a ghetto. The poorest members of society lived there.

⁹ Buikema (2017) argues such women are the silent force that haunts the characters in *De stille kracht* (Couperus 1900).

everything to avoid public association with indigenous culture. She is therefore adamant in her attitude towards street food.

Maintaining high social status meant behaving as European as possible, and Schenkhuizen's mother is passionate in following all things European. However, Schenkhuizen herself is not. In fact, her indigenous Indonesian roots seem quite attractive to her. She uses her ethnic background as a way to draw attention to herself. During her trip to Europe, she dresses up as a Javanese princess (Schenkhuizen 1993, 122), winning the admiration of many men. Schenkhuizen celebrates her dark skin and exotic habits and refuses the marriage proposal of a young Swiss. Not only are Schenkhuizen's indigenous roots attractive to highly eligible candidates for marriage, Schenkhuizen also uses them to prevent herself from sharing the same fate as her mother. She does not marry a white European. Instead, she finds a husband with the same mixed background as herself. Upon her return from Europe, she gets engaged to an Indo man, but before their wedding she wants him to meet her *babu*¹⁰. The visit to her *babu* in the kampong involves consuming food and conversing in Javanese: “[S]oon we were gossiping together in Javanese, enjoying a glass of *kopi tubruk*, *ondeh-ondeh*, *kwee apem* and *nasi pecil*¹¹” (Schenkhuizen 1993, 143, original italics). Her soon to be husband witnesses this account, but is unable to communicate with the *babu* himself and promptly gifts her “no less than three cookbooks” (1993, 143) as a wedding present. Schenkhuizen's contact with *babu* emphasizes the connection to her indigenous Javanese roots. The gift of the cookbooks establishes traditional gender roles between husband and wife, but it is also an acknowledgment of Schenkhuizen's awareness of the Indo culture, which her Indo husband lacks. As a wife, Schenkhuizen can establish the tradition of Indonesian food in their new household, and her Indo husband uses Schenkhuizen as a way to access his own indigenous roots. The cookbooks are a free ticket for Schenkhuizen to compose the menus in their shared household to her own liking. The episode of the family dinner discussed above shows that Schenkhuizen's mother has not been granted such freedom. By marrying an *Indo* man instead of a Dutchman as her mother had done, Schenkhuizen's social status is much more equal to that of her husband.

The Second World War changes the attitude towards food in the Dutch Indies. Firstly, food became scarce. Secondly, the status of local and European food changed. European food was harder to obtain, and many Dutch women and male prisoners of war in the camps depended on Indo and indigenous women outside the camp to provide them with local food (Captain 2009, 223). Although Schenkhuizen dedicates much space of her memoirs to descriptions of food, there is no mention of

¹⁰ Nanny.

¹¹ Here are mentioned: coffee, some sweet delicacies and a rice dish.

it during the Second World War. Schenkhuizen returns to the topic when she herself is transferred to a camp during the *Bersiap*.¹²

We had far too few vegetables and so we ended up "grazing." Every scrap of edible green was harvested and put in the *sayor*, the vegetable soup. The well-known *daun kentut*¹³, also called *daun sembulan* grew there. It was very nutritious and tasted good, but it did stink of fart, for which it was named. Soon enough, the whole camp smelled of *daun knetut* (1993, 188, original italics).

Although it tasted "good," Schenkhuizen no longer uses the adverb "delicious" in describing the food and unceremoniously highlights the unsophisticated smell of "fart" that the herb produces. In describing the food in this manner, it loses much of its grandeur and appeal. This is not surprising because Schenkhuizen's situation has revealed to her the hostility of her Indonesian roots. These roots are no longer something exotic and attractive, as they were during her European trip. Instead, they are violent and reject the colonizer. This trope is strengthened through the episode where Schenkhuizen describes her food cravings for cheese, as she is rescued by the allied English soldiers:

[W]e were transported to Semarang, Java, in warplanes from which the doors had been removed, flown by English pilots. Soon, we were asking each other what kind of food we would ask for on landing. Most of us called out "Me, a cheese sandwich! Aduh, cheese, mmmm, so delicious!" It was strange that we craved cheese above all other foods. Not nasi goreng, fried rice, *sambal trasi*¹⁴ or anything like that, but cheese (1993: 193, original italics).

In craving the typical Dutch cheese sandwich and later by describing her relief to see the Dutch national flag, Schenkhuizen demonstrates her loyalty to and embracing of the Dutch side of her identity.

Schenkhuizen's ambivalent attitude towards Indonesian food – being drawn to it in her formative years, and rejecting it during the Second World War – is not mentioned by Protschky (2009). After this period of rejection and after migrating to the Netherlands, Schenkhuizen's attitude changes again. Stranded in The Netherlands, she describes how her family shared their *rijsttafel* with Dutch friends of her children, presenting it as a delicious novelty to the Dutch (Schenkhuizen 1993, 217). Once again, her Indonesian roots become something attractive and exotic, but this time it is filled with nostalgia as Schenkhuizen emphasizes that they are not able to return to the Dutch Indies,

¹² *Bersiap*, the violent period after WWII in which Indonesia declared independence. People were put into the (former) Japanese camps to protect them from the angry Indonesians. Within the Indo community there was a need to show and prove their patriotism towards the Dutch kingdom (Meijer 2004: 241). This led to hostility, because the Indonesians cherished strong national feelings. The Indonesian nationalists also increased displays of power and violent behavior against everyone who did not share their nationalist feelings.

¹³ A herb.

¹⁴ Trasi: fermented shrimps. It has a very pungent odor.

mourning the loss of a wonderful youth. Boym writes: “Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (2008, xiii). This form of nostalgia for the Dutch Indies (nostalgia for *tempo doeloe*) becomes widely spread after the loss of the Dutch colony.

FOOD IN A POSTCOLONIAL NOVEL

Food and cultural memory in *Honolulu King* (2015) by Anne-Gine Goemans

Honolulu King ties into the previously mentioned form of nostalgia for *tempo doeloe*, as described by Pattynama (2014) and van Leeuwen (2008). *Honolulu King* by Anne-Gine Goemans (2015) is a recently published novel that deals with the experiences of a contemporary Schenkhuizen. Unlike Schenkhuizen’s memoirs, this account is purely fictional. Moreover, it is the only recent literary publication that explicitly deals with Indo-identity and food. The protagonist Hardy is the owner of a *toko*,¹⁵ and the Indonesian food prepared and sold by Hardy is the main motif throughout the novel. While Hardy’s wife suffers from dementia and loses all her memories of the Dutch Indies, Hardy remembers his youth in the colony quite vividly. The juxtaposition of memory and memory loss is worth paying attention to. Hardy’s wife becomes distant, and she is even attracted to another man at the nursing home. By losing her memory of the Dutch Indies, she also loses the connection to her Indo husband. While his wife is losing her memory, Hardy recounts scenes from his past. By remembering his youth, Hardy reflects on how his life has taken shape. Like Schenkhuizen, the protagonist of *Honolulu King* looks back at his life by recalling significant childhood memories. Unlike Schenkhuizen’s story, the food here does not play a significant role in childhood memories. Rather, it is the smell or taste of food that induce Hardy’s memories. This different perspective allows for an insightful comparison of sensory encounters in *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* and this contemporary novel.

The preparation of food such as *pisang goreng*¹⁶ triggers Hardy to recount several memories: “Ruim zeventig jaar later zorgt de geur van de in olie sidderende bananen voor herinneringen die zo hevig binnenwalsen dat het Hardy duizelt” (Goemans 2015, 49)¹⁷. While preparing the *pisang goreng* Hardy remembers how his mother prepared the bananas during the Japanese occupation of the Dutch Indies. On the one hand, the preparation of the dish is a ritual that triggers personal memories and the trauma of the violence that Hardy witnessed. On the other hand, in preparing this typical dish, Hardy performs a tradition of Indo culture. He affirms his membership of the large group of Indos that migrated to the Netherlands after the Second World War. The memory of his mother

¹⁵ Shop for Indonesian food.

¹⁶ Fried banana.

¹⁷ Translation: Roughly seventy years later, the smell of bananas being fried in oil caused such a wave of memories that Hardy is almost drowned.

preparing the dish during the war is transcended by the nostalgic role that *pisang goreng* plays for many Indos in the Netherlands. By connecting his personal memory to a tradition practiced in Indo culture, the preparation of food moves between the collective and the individual, as Sutton (2008) argues. Moreover, Hardy prepares the *pisang goreng* for the inhabitants in his wife's nursing home. Preparing the dish distinguishes Hardy from his wife and the other inhabitants. Hardy possesses the faculties and memories to perform such a ritual, while his wife has lost the ability to identify with Indo culture. Like Schenkhuisen in *Memoirs of an Indo Woman*, the exotic food is used as a way to affirm both protagonists' identities as Indos. Unlike *Memoirs of an Indo Woman*, the sensory experience, such as smell of food in *Honolulu King* is presented as a trigger of memories. In the postcolonial world where Hardy lives, the Dutch Indies no longer exist. However, his youth in the colony and his identity as an Indo have been very important for Hardy. The way he leads his life in the postcolonial Netherlands and the preparation of food are active means to present himself as an Indo and show his connection to the colonial past.

Another aspect of the connection between food and memory in *Honolulu King* is Hardy's relationship to his granddaughter Synne. Synne helps her grandfather to prepare food in the *toko*. Synne and Hardy do not talk much about the past, as Hardy finds it inappropriate to involve his granddaughter in his trips down memory lane. And yet, Synne is very much interested in history. She studies the subject at university, but finds herself unable to connect to the theoretical matter. However, in the *toko* she does feel closely connected to her grandfather's past. The stories and memories that are told by Indo customers of the *toko* almost feel as her own: "Mijn heftigste herinneringen zijn die van een ander. [...]. Wanneer beginnen mijn herinneringen? Waar begin ik?" (Goemans 2015, 26)¹⁸. In this way, she is closely connected to her grandfather's past without actually accessing it through Hardy's memories. Her presence in the *toko* enables her to form postmemories. The cultural memory scholar Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as follows:

I see it [...] as a structure of inter- and transgenerational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall, but (unlike post-traumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove (2008, 106).

Synne experiences a "personal/familial/ generational sense of ownership" (Hirsch 2008, 104), and the food served in the *toko* becomes a way to identify with her family roots in the Dutch Indies. In Synne's life the *toko* plays a dual role. It enables her to have an intimate relationship with her grandfather. Hardy teaches her how to cook Indonesian food because they share an interest in cooking. However, the preparation of food also helps both Hardy and Synne to connect to their

¹⁸ Translation: My strongest memories are those of others. [...]. Where do my own memories start? Where do I start?

ethnic background. Each time the food is prepared and consumed, the memory of an Indo culture is enacted and sustained (Sutton 2008, 160).

The involvement of Hardy's granddaughter is significant. Synne's role in the novel might be an attempt to appeal to a generation of readers that is of the same age and has the same connection to the Dutch Indies as Synne. Moreover, it should be viewed as a continuation of the literary tradition about Indo-identity dominated by writers such as Marion Bloem, Alfred Birney, Theodor Hollman and many others. These authors are the children of the first generation Indos that migrated to the Netherlands after the Second World War, and, in their work, these authors describe Indo identity has a hybrid identity that moves between the colonial and the postcolonial world. These authors are generally regarded as the second-generation of Indo writers and they are all well into their sixties. However, they still dominate the literary scene, discussing similar themes. In 2003, *Indische letteren* wondered when the third-generation authors would rise and represent their Indo-roots through literature (Captain 2003, 257). Goemans' novel gives a first literary answer to this question. By introducing a third-generation character into the story, the novel offers a contemporary interpretation of Indo identity.

CONCLUSION

Similar to Schenkhuisen's presentation of food in *Memoirs of an Indo Woman*, the leitmotif of food in *Honolulu King* shows a way of connecting to Indo culture. The recently published *Honolulu King* also demonstrates that food is still a recurring symbol of identity. In Schenkhuisen's *Memoirs of an Indo Woman* food offers a way in which she can subvert the colonial norms: by eating local food from the street vendors or by consuming food together with her indigenous *babu*¹⁹ Schenkhuisen crosses the strict boundary between indigenous and European customs. It is indigenous women, not tied in marriage to the Dutch, who enable Schenkhuisen to do so. In her own marriage, Schenkhuisen's contact with her indigenous roots is celebrated, but during *Bersiap* Schenkhuisen rejects this connection by craving the typical Dutch food – cheese. When the Dutch Indies has become Indonesia, Schenkhuisen identifies again with her Indonesian roots by serving the *rijsttafel* to her Dutch friends. In *Honolulu King*, the Indonesian roots are also celebrated with the preparation of food, in which even the granddaughter, who did not live during colonial times, is able to participate. In both the memoir and the novel, the acts of consuming and preparing food are not merely individual sensory experiences, but are also a part of a collective memory, therefore suggesting that food becomes a part of cultural memory.

¹⁹ Nanny.

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