
**SAVE OR UTILIZE? HISTORY OF CHILD CARE BASED ON RELIGIOUS
INSTITUTIONS IN THE COLONIAL ERA**

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Abstract:

This article focuses on examining child care practices during the colonial period involving religious organizations. Based on archival sources, the purpose of this study examines the role of religious organizations and institutions in caring for children, particularly those deemed orphaned, impoverished, and neglected. Children in this context became the object of ideological projects of both religious institutions and the colonial government. This study not only highlights child-rearing practices but also reveals the connections between moral values, cultural norms, and colonial power dynamics in the construction of childhood. The method used in this article is historical methods (heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography). The findings of this study reveal that religious-based childcare was not only a manifestation of compassion but also part of a broader colonial power project. Childcare was not limited to humanitarian charity, but was a strategy of soft colonialism integrated into the colonial civilizing mission. Orphanages served as instruments of social control, shaping colonial identities and reinforcing hierarchical social structures. These findings are important because they challenge the singular narrative of "saving children" by highlighting the dynamics of power, cultural norms, and moral values embedded in child care practices during the colonial period.

Keywords: *Colonial Child Care; Religious Institutions; Orphanage; History of Children.*

Introduction

Everyone must have experienced childhood or been a child at some point in their life. This period is a crucial phase in the development of human life, both psychologically, socially, and historically. This phase is crucial to understand, as it lays the foundation for the journey of life and the formation of one's identity. The concept of children and childhood itself continues to evolve in response to the development of science in the social, cultural, and political realms. However, children or childhood have not yet received a proper position in the study of Indonesian historiography. Historical writing in Indonesia still focuses on reconstructing past events in the adult world, leaving children to feel lost and overlooked (Purwanto, 2001, p. 40).

The absence of children in the grand narrative of Indonesian history cannot be denied, as the majority of Indonesian history is written within the framework of political events, which is the world of adults. Even the book Indonesian National History (SNI) and Indonesia in the Flow of History (IDAS), a standard text on Indonesian history, does not provide space for children at all (Purwanto, 2024). Nevertheless, the reality of children's lives actually appears in various archives and historical sources. In Indonesia-centric historiography, children have not yet been recognized as historical actors. One of the several topics that can be studied in the history of children is childcare during the Dutch colonial period. At that time, philanthropic institutions began to emerge that cared for orphans and abandoned children.

Orphanages are one example of several philanthropic institutions that care for orphans and abandoned children. The existence of orphanages in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) can be traced back to the 17th century, when the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) was in power (Taylor, 2009, p. 42). The presence of orphanages during the colonial period was an effort to address the issue of Indo-European children, both orphaned and abandoned. The colonial government viewed this mixed blood group as a threat that could undermine the social and political stability of Europeans (Jacobson, 2018a; Wertheim, 1947). To overcome this, the colonial government granted permission to churches, both Catholic and Protestant, to establish orphanages for the care and education of children.

The Church, in addition to carrying out zending or missionary activities, is also a pioneer in philanthropic activities. Muhammadiyah, one of the Islamic Community Organizations in Indonesia, is renowned for its philanthropic activities and has also adopted the church movement's approach to establish orphanages. The orphanage was named Rumah Yatim, which was established in the early days of Muhammadiyah's establishment (Yuristiadhi, 2020). Studies on orphanages and philanthropy have become increasingly in demand among academics and social activists in Indonesia. However, there is still not much discussion about the relationship between the two, especially from a historical perspective. Using a historical approach, it will be evident how the correlation and development between orphanages and philanthropic activities have evolved.

Some academics have begun to discuss children as the leading actors of history. For example, a study on child labor in plantations conducted by Hayu Adi Darmarastri. In her dissertation, Hayu explained that children working on plantations are an economic strategy employed by farmers to increase family income. Children are willing to be paid a lower wage than adult workers (Darmarastri, 2020). Several academics have also discussed research on childcare. Such as a dissertation by Annelieke Dirks, which discusses the development of the re-education system for delinquency of Bumiputra adolescents in the Dutch East Indies. These efforts aimed to integrate children into civil society, which was beneficial for both the community and the colonial government (Dirks, 2011). In addition, there is also theses about childcare at the St. Vincent orphanage in Buitenzorg in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Tsabitta, 2023).

These academic works demonstrate that children can also feature in the narrative of Indonesian history. Children have their own history and can be key actors. There is still much to be explored about children and childhood during the colonial era that previous research has not yet addressed. This article aims to reinforce and deepen previous research on child-rearing during the colonial period. It seeks to both strengthen and expand upon prior studies concerning child-rearing in the colonial era. Its primary focus is to analyze the roles and functions of religious organizations and institutions in child-rearing, as well as to examine how these practices were integrated into the colonial power project. Furthermore, this article seeks to critically unpack the interconnections among moral values, cultural norms, and colonial power relations in child-rearing practices, ultimately positioning children as objects of ideological construction.

The primary issue to be discussed in this study is the role of religious institutions in childcare practices during the colonial period, as well as the power relations of the colonial government that utilized children as an instrument of social control. This research is limited to the temporal scope of the Dutch East Indies colonial government, namely 1800-1942. This period was used to see the policies and political mechanisms of the colonial government in regulating and shaping colonial children. This research is classified as qualitative research, utilizing historical research methods, which consist of four stages: heuristic, verification, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). At the

heuristic or data collection stage, this research combines various historical sources, including archives, reports, and newspapers, to inform its analysis. Archival sources and reports are available at the National Library and the National Archives of Indonesia (ANRI). For newspapers, they can be obtained online through Delpher. The secondary data used in this study included books, journal articles, and academic works such as theses, Master's theses, and dissertations. These sources were obtained from the library of Gadjah Mada University, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, as well as through online access to Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Leiden University's Digital Collection.

Once all the data is collected, the next stage is to verify the authenticity, credibility, and relevance of the source. This process includes sorting, reducing, and selecting data that are directly related to childcare practices in the colonial period. Following the verification stage, an interpretation was conducted using Michel Foucault's conceptual framework of social control to examine how colonial power relations were operationalized through the practices of childcare and education. The final stage is historical or historiographic writing with a socio-political approach. It is written descriptively and analytically, presenting the facts chronologically and providing a critical analysis of the interconnections between religious institutions, moral values, cultural norms, and colonial power projects in shaping ideological constructions of children.

Results & Discussions

Finding Place in the Colonies: Indo-European Children and the Spectrum of Vulnerability of Colonial Children

Colonial societies in the Dutch East Indies established a rigid social order, yet ironically also gave rise to a unique spectrum of vulnerabilities affecting children. These vulnerabilities are not only race-based but also influenced by factors such as social class, legal status, and prevailing societal morality. This vulnerability stems from the meeting of various cultures in the colonial area, a consequence of colonialism. The interactions that occur not only produce new forms of acculturation and cultural adaptation but also give rise to hybrid communities with dual identities. Mixed-race groups became one of the tangible manifestations of the encounter, occupying a complex social position within the colonial structure. They are often seen as a link between bumiputra and colonial societies, as well as a symbol of ambiguity. In the Dutch East Indies, the term "Indo" or "Indo-European" is used to refer to the descendants of bumiputra (residents) with Westerners (mainly Dutch). This group of other colony areas is also referred to as Mestizo (Mixed Blood) and Eurasian (C. E. Firpo, 2016; Kroef, 1955; Stoler, 2010).

The root of the vulnerability of these mixed-race children often stems from the way they were born. Children of this mixed race in all colonies were born through three ways. First, a valid marriage; second, a legal marriage but the father leaves the family; Third, born out of a valid marriage (Jacobson, 2018b, p. 77). The lack of European women in the colonies drove the rise of the practice of illicit marriage or concubinage. This practice is mushrooming in military barracks, plantations, and urban bureaucracies, creating generations of children whose status is ambiguous or unclear (Baay, 2017; Stoler, 1997, p. 200).

The colonial law of the Dutch East Indies divided society into three categories: Europeans, Bumiputra, and Foreign Easterners. The legal status of an Indo-European child directly determines his vulnerability, which depends absolutely on the recognition of his European father. If recognized, it acquires the status of "European" and the rights attached to it. Nevertheless, if not, he is legally treated the same as a local (Bumiputra), cut off from European privilege (Coté, 2009, p. 131). In

practice, many Indo children do not get recognition, or even if they do, the process often takes a long and uncertain time (Baay, 2017).

For unrecognized Indo children, the struggle to "find a place" means working hard to achieve legal equality. This effort is a complex socio-cultural process: they must embrace Christianity, be fluent in Dutch, receive a European-style upbringing and education, and demonstrate a suitable lifestyle—from their attire to their daily habits to their social interactions (Stoler, 2010, p. 39). The Indo-European group itself eventually underwent rapid development. In 1854, it was recorded at about 14,000 people, and jumped to 134,000 people in 1930 (representing 56% of the total "European" population) (Van Der Veur, 1954, pp. 124–125).

As Van der Veur emphasizes, being "Indo" is not a purely biological concept, but rather a social, economic, and cultural construct (1968, p. 191). European legal status is a ticket to social and economic upgrading; Without it, they are aligned with bumiputra coolies. Despite legal assimilation, identity ambiguity remains an inherent aspect of the process. The Indo Group sees itself as the main bridge between the Eastern and Western worlds (Van Der Veur, 1954, p. 126). But Europeans, Totok (pure), never considered them equal (Thompson & Adloff, 1955, pp. 135–136; Wertheim, 1947, pp. 292–293). They are stuck in the middle: legally, it may be European, but socially, it is still seen as inferior.

It is essential to note that this vulnerability was not exclusive to Indo-European children. On the one hand, some indigenous children were neglected due to poverty, whose fate was often left unrecorded in history. Some of these children were even exploited as cheap labor by plantation companies (Darmarastri, 2020). In addition to poverty, indigenous children frequently faced outbreaks and diseases because of the poor environmental conditions in which they lived. In Surabaya, impoverished indigenous neighborhoods became breeding grounds for diseases such as plague, smallpox, cholera, malaria, tuberculosis, and other illnesses (Basundoro, 2013, pp. 38–40). These diseases affected not only adults but also children. For instance, smallpox in nineteenth-century Java led to high child mortality (Wertheim, 1999). Epidemics also afflicted European and Indo-European children. For example, in 1861, beri-beri struck children in an orphanage in Semarang, with hundreds infected and 12 deaths recorded (Schoute, 1936).

Pauperism (poverty) also occurred among Europeans during the colonial period. This impoverished group largely consisted of Indo-Europeans, whom the colonial government regarded as a social burden because they undermined the image of white superiority (Stoler, 2010). Within the colonial hierarchy, poor and unrecognized Indo-Europeans occupied a low position and were perceived as a threat. According to Stoler (2010), they were seen as a potential danger to political stability, since many lived in poverty and held only minor positions, such as administrative clerks or overseers. Colonial authorities feared that Indo-European boys dissatisfied with their social status might develop anti-colonial attitudes. At the same time, there was anxiety that Indo girls would follow their mothers' path as concubines or prostitutes, which was considered to undermine the morality and prestige of the European race (Jacobson, 2018b, p. 75).

In response to these "threats" and vulnerabilities, the colonial government established schools, provided vocational training, and founded child care institutions, such as orphanages (Baay, 2017; Jacobson, 2018a). In practice, however, the colonial administration of the Dutch East Indies was not alone in addressing the problems faced by the Indo-European community. Many private charitable organizations also played a role in tackling the social issues that arose among Indo-Europeans. Examples include *Oranje-Nassau* in Magelang and *Witte Kruis* in Salatiga. Both were Christian organizations operating in the Dutch East Indies, dedicated to caring for and re-educating young

people. The presence of these institutions reflected civil society's involvement in addressing juvenile delinquency while simultaneously promoting social reform during the colonial period (Dirks, 2011). In addition, both Catholic and Protestant churches took over the care of orphans as well as poor and neglected children. Motivated by religious spirit, these churches not only raised and cared for Indo-European children but also provided education, serving at the same time as instruments of social control.

Finally, children in the colonial era faced vulnerability in terms of both their status and their socio-economic circumstances. The experiences of Indo-European children, in particular, served as a stark reflection of the contradictions of colonialism. Their efforts to 'find their place' within the colonial hierarchical structure clearly demonstrated how race, law, and economics were intertwined in determining a child's fate in the colony. When viewed within the broader spectrum of colonial children's vulnerability, their fate underscores that the colonial system not only exploited natural resources but also categorized and determined the value of human life, even from birth.

Orphanage as a Representation of Philanthropy

The first orphanage in the Dutch East Indies was located in Batavia at the end of the 18th century (Niemeijer, 2005). Orphanages began to be established in the Dutch East Indies in the 19th century, as philanthropic activities by religious institutions and other social organizations became increasingly prevalent. Since the arrival of Europeans in the Dutch East Indies, philanthropy has flourished. Etymologically, the word philanthropy itself comes from the Greek "Philos," which means to love, and "Anthropologists," which means human beings (Thaha, 2003). In simple terms, philanthropy can be interpreted as a form of human love or concern for others. In English, philanthropy has a meaning equivalent to the word "Charity", which means generosity. Philanthropic activities, which include charity, donations, cooperation, and volunteering, are inherent in everyone. All of these categories of activities are the backbone of the orphanage's operations and services.

To distinguish philanthropic and non-philanthropic activities, there are four leading indicators based on Amelia Fauzia's reading of Mike W. Martin's work entitled "Virtuous Giving, Philanthropy, voluntary Services, and Caring": voluntary, personal, the existence of social giving and services, and involving the public interest (Fauzia, 2016; Martin, 1994). The concept of philanthropy is not limited to charitable activities, but must also produce a collective impact of change (Latief, 2010). Philanthropic activities have a universal interest that is generally shared. Philanthropy can be found in various historical periods, civilizations, and traditions that exist around the world (Ilchman et al., 1998). This concept is also known in various existing religious traditions. Philanthropy comes from a sense of humanity, but on the other hand, religion also has a vital role as a driver (Curti, 1961; Lai, 1992; Latief, 2010).

Philanthropy itself cannot be separated from the concept of civil society. Civil society is a key concept in European thought on society and politics. In modern political science, the concept of civil society is still popular. However, there is significant controversy regarding its meaning, importance, and normative value (Kopecký & Mudde, 2003). Historically, this concept has been widely used around the world, in a variety of political climates, from political-centric, left-wing, liberal, communist, and anti-globalization activists (Kocka, 2004). Historically, this concept has been widely employed globally, across diverse political climates, including those characterized by a strong focus on politics, left-wing liberalism, communism, and anti-globalization activism (Kocka, 2004, p. 71). Meanwhile, according to CIVICUS, an international organization that monitors the development of civil society, it provides an

understanding that civil society is an arena that is not the domain of families, countries, or markets, where people gather to present common interests (Malelak, 2014). It is a public space where people can meet, discuss, and contribute to the general public.

According to Azyumardi Azra, Civil Society is a society that is grouped outside the state that can govern itself (an independent group vis-à-vis the state) (Fauzia, 2016; Thaha, 2003). The existence of civil society groups can serve as a balance to the power of an authoritarian and corrupt government or state. Civil society itself has a symbiotic relationship with the state, where both can be partners in building a more advanced, prosperous, and civilized society (Elfia, 2018). The idea of civil society directing voluntary efforts for the betterment of society greatly influenced the concept of philanthropy. Philanthropic activities themselves are primarily driven by civil society. Many studies on philanthropy have concluded that philanthropic activities give rise to civic values, such as the emergence of social capital, including trust, networks, and norms that foster a sense of care for the welfare of others (McCarthy, 2003; Putnam, 2000).

Philanthropic activities carried out by Europeans in the Dutch East Indies, through Shipments and missionaries, have a dual purpose: as a social service as well as the spread of religion (Surjomihardjo, 2008, III; Yuristiadhi, 2020, p. 125). This social service is carried out through assistance to the poor and needy, including the establishment of educational institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, and orphanages. Through this philanthropic practice, the church was enabled to carry out religious propagation activities, and the colonial government did not intervene, as it had implemented a secular system (Fauzia, 2016).

Many churches have established orphanages because of the large number of cases of orphans and abandoned children that the government has not resolved. In addition to providing nurturing, orphanages are there to re-educate the children with proper care and mold them into Christians so that they can become part of European society. The orphanage, established through the church's philanthropic efforts, focuses exclusively on children from Indo-European backgrounds. This is due to their focus on European and Indo-European children. In addition, missionaries and zending were not allowed to carry out social service activities to the Bumiputra population until the 1850s (Dirks, 2011).

Table I in appendix is some examples of orphanages in the Dutch East Indies. These orphanages are not only supported by Catholic and Protestant churches, but also by foundations such as the Salvation Army and Xaverius. These orphanages utilize philanthropic funds to provide care, nurturing, and education. Funding sources include donations and grants from worshippers, as well as fines for company workers (G.P.H, 1997). In addition, the orphanage also uses the lottery to support the children in its care, as seen in the *Weezengesticht der Protestantsche Gemeente Te Soerabaja*, *Djatigesticht* in Batavia, and *Protestantsche Weeshuis te Semarang* (Rees, 1901). The lottery is a type of gambling that originated in China and was banned by the colonial government. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, it transformed into a more modern form, and playing it no longer required face-to-face interaction between players, but instead involved buying lottery tickets that were usually advertised in newspapers (Sena Utama, 2012).

The orphanage management can also request subsidies for operational funds from the colonial government by submitting a letter of application to the Governor General. For example, *Weezengesticht der Protestantsche Gemeente te Soerabaja*, which requested subsidies to cover the financial deficit and sought funds for the expansion of the orphanage (ANRI, *Algemeene Secretarie GB-BT 1891-1942 No. 2826, K87*). The colonial government did not immediately accept such applications; it would test or review them first. Sometimes, there are even those who are rejected because they are not suitable, as happened to *Djatigesticht te Batavia*. After conducting a review, the

government's finance director assessed that the orphanage in 1859 was not eligible for subsidies because its cash account shows a balance of almost f 6000, plus an acceptance of the same amount (Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië, 1931, p. 19).

Orphanages that have been granted legal status must also print their annual reports and are obliged to send a copy to the governor general and Javanese Courant (Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië, 1931, p. 31; ANRI, Algemeene Secretarie MGS 26 August 1907 No. 2333). They are sometimes also use advertisements to open job vacancies. For example, in newspapers, The Preanger Bode (1907) reported that the Orphanage of the Protestant Congregation in Surabaya was seeking a female administrator, with registration requirements including a certificate of good behavior and church membership (De Preanger-bode, 1907). However, in general, the appointment of administrators is usually based on an agreement or meeting of the board of trustees of the church or orphanage (Korsters, 1932; Von Faber, 1931).

Typically, every church-run orphanage features several facilities, including dormitories, dining rooms, study rooms, and recreation areas. Children also don't have to worry about daily concerns such as healthcare, education, and food. For example, at St. Vincentius Orphanage in Buitenzorg (Bogor), the children's meal schedule consists of three meals a day, with food menus rich in nutrients (Tsabitta, 2023). At *Weezengesticht der Protestantsche Gemeente te Soerabaja*, the orphanage children also receive three meals: morning at 7:00, afternoon at 1:00, and evening at 8:00. Every meal the orphanage begins and ends with prayer and thanksgiving (Reglement voor het Gestich van Wezen der Protestantsche Gemeente van Soerabaya, 1866).

Picture 1. St. Vincentius Orphanage in Buitenzorg.



Source: https://javapost.nl/2014/11/29/de-weeshuizen-van-buitenzorg/buitenzorg_vincentius/

Picture 2. Orphanage of the Protestant Congregation in Surabaya In 1913.



Source: <https://javapost.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/weeshuis-boeboetan-1913.jpg>

Picture 2. Orphanage in Batavia (1935)



Source:

https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/782621?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=9893cfe1a2ce969fbc93&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=2

Children in the orphanage are typically given clothes and other essentials, such as ties, hats, and socks. For example, in an orphanage in Surabaya, every child is required to wear clothes provided by the institution, both within the internal environment and when outside (Reglement voor het Gestich van Wezen der Protestantsche Gemeente van Soerabaya, 1866). This provision applies without exception, including when they are visiting relatives or friends. Their daily routine schedules have also been arranged by the orphanage administrators, including schedules for church, school, play, and sleep. At the children's home, skills such as handicrafts, carpentry, and music are taught to the children. Meanwhile, during vacation, there are usually those who are allowed to visit their relatives or can spend vacation time at a rest home that is part of an orphanage (Indische Courant, 1931; Korsters, 1932).

Apart from Catholic and Protestant religious institutions, Muhammadiyah, an Islamic community organization born in Yogyakarta, has also established orphanages since the colonial period. Muhammadiyah-owned orphanages focus on caring for Bumiputra orphans. They raise children with a strong focus on individual improvement and advancement by providing a modern education while still instilling the teachings of Islam. The Muhammadiyah orphanage was part of the work of PKU (Penolong Kesengsaraan Umat), which identified a significant number of poor street children and orphans in Jogjakarta during the 1910s and 1920s. Finally, PKU Muhammadiyah established the first orphanage in Yogyakarta with land given free of charge by Sultan Hamengkubuwono VIII. Members of the orphanage committee are actively searching for abandoned and homeless children living on the north side of the Yogyakarta city square. The orphanage also accepts children who live in very poor and neglected or malnourished families (Dirks, 2011, III).

One of the fundraising efforts carried out by PKU and Muhammadiyah to support childcare in orphanages involves creating and selling charity stamps (Fauzia, 2017). In addition to covering daily operational costs, the orphanage's management relies on various forms of donations from the people of Yogyakarta and members of Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah orphanages through PKU also received assistance or subsidies from the colonial government, the Yogyakarta Palace, and the Pakualaman Duchy (Yuristiadhi, 2020, pp. 128–131).

Childcare as an Element of Power Control

The practice of childcare during the colonial period was often found in orphanages, dormitories, and reform institutions. The colonial government also supported this program by providing subsidies. However, the question is whether this is purely done for the benefit of children? Childcare in the colonial period could not be separated from the power relations involving multiple actors, including the colonial government, churches, missionaries, and even the Bumiputra people themselves. Children and adolescents were targeted by colonial intervention because they were key to colonial government policies. After all, they were easily accessible, regulated, and shaped (Mak et al., 2020, p. 12).

Many studies have shown that the colonizers always echoed the civilizing project, which often made children and adolescents objects to be controlled and controlled. On the missionary side, children can also play an important role in the success of the mission by spreading civilization and conversion among adults and local communities (Derksen, 2021, p. 9). To carry out this civilization

project, there are many practices of separating children from their parents, families, and environment. In various colonies, this practice of separation was used by the colonial government by using orphanages, dormitories, and reform institutions to form or re-educate children in accordance with the wishes and expectations of the colonial government (Dirks, 2011; Duff, 2015; C. Firpo & Jacobs, 2018; Sen, 2005; Vallgård, 2015). Ironically, these policies or practices are legitimized as charitable and humanitarian projects in which children are 'saved' from the so-called conditions of their poverty, primitiveness, uneducated, infidels, etc. (Mak et al., 2020, p. 11).

The practice of child separation in various colonies (including the Dutch East Indies) was colored by the tendency of control, the spirit of rescue, and the efforts of civilization. To understand this phenomenon, Michel Foucault's approach remains a relevant perspective. Foucault proposed the theory of social control in 1975 with "*Surveiller Et Punir: Naissance De La Prison*" (Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison), which can be used as an interpretive framework to dissect childcare in the colonial period. The work is important for understanding Foucault's genealogical method in analyzing the relationship between power, knowledge, and the body in modern society (Hardiyanta, 2022).

Foucault's theory of social control argues that the concept of freedom of life, from a humanistic perspective, is flawed. He argued that the Enlightenment was actually more concerned with power and social control than with human ideals. Foucault supports this thesis by examining the history of the French prison system from the *Ancien Régime* era to the nineteenth century. In his explanation, individuals are not free, but are controlled by new technology, which he calls the power of discipline. He used the prison system to observe the shift in modern human behavior towards discipline, which often involves an element of controlling power. There has been a shift from brutal corporal punishment in the *Ancien Régime* to the use of more subtle 'moral' methods in modern prisons. The end goal remains the same—to discipline the individual—but the focus shifts from disciplining the body to disciplining the soul through moral improvement, no longer physical punishment (Foucault, 1995, pp. 16–31).

According to Foucault, the power of discipline is a mechanism of control over the body to produce obedient and helpful individuals (Foucault, 1995, pp. 136–137). To be obedient and helpful, the body is no longer subjected to torture but is trained, regulated, and habituated in productive activities. It develops in various settings within society and institutions, such as prisons, hospitals, factories, army barracks, schools, orphanages, and reform houses. Through this network, power is no longer centralized; instead, it is dispersed throughout society.

Social control is not solely in the form of punishment, but also includes discipline, training, supervision, recording, and care. In the context of colonial orphanages, this disciplinary power was manifested through two main mechanisms: Hierarchical Supervision and Normalization. This hierarchical supervision is reflected in the physical layout of the institution, which includes dormitories, dining rooms, and classrooms that enable continuous supervision of children. Strict architecture and routine systems, such as schedules, ensure that children are always under the gaze of authority. Colonial nurturing institutions also established ideal norms to shape them into civilized beings according to their own standards.

This theory is inherently critical of the state, the legal system, and even private interventions in the family and the individual's life. Foucault interpreted social control as an instrument used by elites to organize and control society. This can also be found in the Dutch East Indies, where the colonial government was concerned about control and reform of vulnerable children. This can be illustrated through the phenomenon of the emergence of orphanages, dormitories, and reform institutions. With

the narrative of rescue and mitigation, children become objects that are indirectly controlled. It is not only for Indo-European children, but also for Bumiputra and ethnic Tionghoa children (Derksen, 2020; Dirks, 2011; Kamphuis, 2022; Monteiro, 2020). It also applies to orphanages owned by Muhammadiyah. The orphanage was initially established to comply with religious orders, which mandated that it protect orphans and the poor. At first glance, this has positive implications for humanity and the community's welfare. However, if we look at it from the other side, Muhammadiyah also attempts to expand its reach by creating new cadres through the establishment of orphanages (Dirks, 2011, p. 139).

Conclusion

This study shows that child-rearing practices in colonial Dutch East Indies cannot be separated from the power relations between the colonial state and religious institutions. Orphanages established by Catholic and Protestant churches, as well as Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah, operated within a complex socio-political framework. Religious institutions and philanthropic organizations played an important role in childcare. However, these practices were inseparable from the colonial power project that positioned children as objects of social and ideological control.

The experiences of children in the colonial era reflect the contradictions of colonialism: on the one hand, they were protected through philanthropic institutions, but on the other hand, they were used as instruments to maintain colonial political and moral stability. The narrative of "rescue" employed was essentially a form of soft colonialism aimed at controlling and reproducing the colonial social structure. Children were not merely victims, but also actors who revealed how race, law, economics, and morality intertwined in shaping colonial life.

This study emphasizes that children's history must be placed within the broader narrative of Indonesian historiography. By highlighting the role of religious institutions, philanthropy, and colonialism in child-rearing, this research opens space to understand how the colonial system not only exploited natural resources but also categorized and determined the value of human life from birth. This is crucial for enriching historical perspectives and addressing research gaps that have long focused primarily on the adult world. Suggestions for future research include re-examining religious and humanitarian practices in relation to colonial government politics, as well as further investigating the phenomenon of "soft colonialism" that occurred.

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Appendix

Table 1. Data on Orphanages in the Dutch East Indies.

No.	Area	Name of the Orphanage	Translation
1.	Singkawang	<i>R.K. Jongens Weeshuis te Singkawang</i>	Boys' Roma-Catholic Orphanage in Singkawang
		<i>R.K. Meisjes Weeshuis te Singkawang</i>	Girls' Roma-Catholic Orphanage in Singkawang
2	Semarang	<i>Protestantsche Weshuis te Semarang</i>	Protestant Orphanages in Semarang
		<i>R.K. Jongens Weeshuis Van Den H. Aloysius te Semarang</i>	Van Den H. Aloysius Children's Roma-Catholic Orphanage in Semarang
		<i>R.K. Mesijes Weeshuis Van De Zusters Franciscanessen te Semarang</i>	The Roman-Catholic Orphanage of the Franciscan Sisters' Daughters in Semarang
3	Surabaya	<i>Weezengesticht der Protestantsche Gemeente te Soerabaja</i>	Orphanage of the Protestant Community in Surabaya
		<i>R.K. Jongensweshuis te Soerabaja</i>	Roman Catholic Boys' Orphanage in Surabaya
		<i>R.K. Meisjesweeshuis ST. Ursula te Soerabaja</i>	Orphanage of Roma-Catholic Girls ST. Ursula in Surabaya
4	Padang	<i>R.K. Mesijesweeshuis ST. Franciscus te Padang</i>	Roman Catholic Girl Orphanage ST. Franciscus in Padang
		<i>R.K. Weeshuis Voor Meisjes</i>	Roma-Catholic Orphanages for Girls
		<i>R.K. Weeshuis Voor jongens</i>	Roma-Catholic Orphanages for Boys
5	Magelang	<i>R.K Meisjesweeshuis ST. Ursula te Magelang</i>	St. Ursula Catholic Girls' Orphanage in Magelang
6	Batavia (Jakarta)	<i>Parapattan Weezengesicht</i>	Parapattan Orphanage
		<i>Het Djatigesticht te Weltevreden.</i>	Djati Orphanage in Weltevreden.
		<i>Het Vincentiusgesticht jongenshuis en meisjeshuis te Weltevreden</i>	Vincentius Orphanage for Boys and Girls in Weltevreden
7	Buitenzorg (Bogor)	<i>Buitenzorg's Vincentius Stichting</i>	Buitenzorg's Vincentius Foundation

		<i>Het Kinderhuis van de stichting Jeugdzorg</i>	The Children's Home of the Youth Care Foundation
8	Madiun	<i>R.K. Meisjes Tehuis</i>	Catholic Girls' Home
		<i>Het Tehuis voor arme kinderen te Madioen.</i>	The Home for Poor Children in Madioen.
9	Palembang	<i>Xaverius Stichting</i>	Xaverius Foundation
10	Salatiga	<i>De Tehuizen van het Heilsleger voor arme kinderen te Salatiga</i>	The Salvation Army Homes for Poor Children in Salatiga
11	Bandung	<i>De Tehuizen van het Heilsleger voor arme kinderen te Bandoeng</i>	The Salvation Army Homes for Poor Children in Bandung
12	Toeloengagoeng	<i>De Javaansche weezeninrichting Pangepokoro Botjah Lolo te Toeloengagoeng</i>	The Javanese orphanage Pangepokoro Botjah Lolo in Toeloengagoeng

Source: Handboek voor Philanthropisch en Maatschappelijk Werk in Ned.-Oost en West-Indie (Korsters, 1932), Verzameling van Bescheiden en Voorschriften Betreffende de Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch – Indië (Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië, 1931).