

## **‘Sphinx-natures’: Herman F.C. ten Kate on matters Japanese.**

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The in-depth study by P. Hovens<sup>1</sup> on Herman F.C. Ten Kate (1858-1931) presents us with a fascinating account of this Dutch scholar and globetrotter. Reading it I was not only struck by a remark that Ten Kate had warned against Japanese imperialism 34 years prior to the raid on Pearl Harbour, but also by his prediction of a war between Japan and the U.S.A.<sup>2</sup> How could he have acquired sufficient understanding of world politics to make such observations? And, why was he concerned about Japan? These issues will now be addressed.

Ten Kate’s sojourn of almost 15 years (1898-1919) in Japan was interrupted by his travels through Asia and Europe. Serving as a medical doctor in Nagasaki, he wrote: ‘I will stay here, as long as the wanderlust wants to lie dormant.’<sup>3</sup> In this port town his patients originated from the European enclave. In 1904 he had wanted to leave Japan permanently, but could not find another job. Having moved to Yokohama a few years later, Ten Kate mainly treated Japanese patients. In 1906 he married a Japanese lady, Kimii Fuji. Together, that same year, they travelled via Argentina to the U.S.A, and finally to his mother country, the Netherlands. In 1909, during their 4-year stay in Europe, Ten Kate again tried to find a job, but there were no vacancies. In 1913 they returned to Japan, where he settled as a physician in Ashiya near Kobe. During the spring of 1917 he suffered from severe problems caused by his heart and blood circulation. Victims of the 1919 influenza epidemic, Ten Kate survived but his wife sadly died. This prompted him to leave Japan for good and start wandering again. On board of a freighter we can sense Ten Kate’s loss: ‘The long, long, and alas this time lonely voyage has begun for good. Every rotation of the screw moves me further away from this unforgettable land that I shall never see again.’<sup>4</sup>

Ten Kate was born in 1858 in Amsterdam, and moved with his parents to The Hague in 1869. Born into a family of artists, he was destined to become and was partially trained as a painter. His being accomplished in drawing proved useful during fieldwork. In 1877 he came into contact with P.J. Veth (1814-1895), the first professor of ethnography in the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup> Veth advised him to attend various academic courses and to later specialize in order to serve either as a medical doctor or as a colonial administrator. Ten Kate followed this advice and studied geography, ethnography, languages, zoology, and medicine at the universities of Leiden (the Netherlands), Paris (France) and Berlin, Göttingen and Heidelberg (Germany).

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of the biographical material was drawn from P. Hovens’ dissertation (1989). Hovens is the present Curator of North American Indians at the National Museum of Ethnology (Leiden, the Netherlands).

<sup>2</sup> Hovens 1989:226.

<sup>3</sup> Cappelle 1931:113. “Zoolang de zwerflust wil sluimeren, blijf ik hier.”

<sup>4</sup> Cappelle 1931:113. See also Ten Kate 1925:315-365.

<sup>5</sup> Pieter J. Veth (1814-1895) officiated as Professor in the History, Arts, Antiquities, Institutions, Morals and Customs of the Peoples of the Indonesian Archipelago and the Physical Geography of the Indonesian Archipelago at the University of Leiden between 1877 and 1885.

Physical anthropology became his specialization. His doctoral dissertation in 1882 (Heidelberg) is entitled ‘*On the craniology of the Mongoloids. Observations and Measurements*’.<sup>6</sup> In it Ten Kate expresses his scepticism with regard to drawing general conclusions on the basis of a limited number of series. He also held the view that ethno-historic and archaeological research should be included, in short: a strong argument in favour of an inter-disciplinarian approach. Between 1888 and 1895 he returned to the universities of Montpellier (France) and Halle, Heidelberg and Freiburg (Germany) to complete his medicinal studies by means of a thesis.

Ten Kate was certainly not unfamiliar with Japan and its culture. He had studied Japanese, Chinese and Malaysian for several years in Leiden under J.J. Hoffmann.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this was partially pragmatic but also presented him with the possibility to study local sources and to be able to converse with the indigenous population. He befriended one of Hoffmann’s students, Lindor Serrurier (1846-1901), the future Curator and Director of the National Ethnographic Museum (Leiden). Serrurier had assisted Hoffmann with his linguistic publications and would later marry Madelon, Ten Kate’s sister.

From an early age Ten Kate had been fascinated with the Indians of North America. This was brought about by Gustave Aimard’s novels, which were widely read among the youth in Europe during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> As early as 1878, in one of his first articles, he spoke in defence of the Indians who were forcibly moved to reservations while not romanticising them, but focussing on their human qualities. Although he was a social Darwinist, this did not justify any unacceptable treatment of the weaker party. Ten Kate was to stress this moral standpoint again and again, based on his fieldwork in the four corners of the globe.

In 1882-1883 his first fieldwork was carried out in North America among the Iroquois (New York State), the tribes of the Southwest and southern Plains, and in Baha California. On his return he tried to obtain a position as anthropologist. As this attempt failed, he set off on a career as an ethnographic traveller, financed by academic institutions and privately, or with the support of friends. This resulted in fieldwork in Scandinavia, Surinam, Venezuela, Algeria, North America, Mexico, several islands of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Australia, Polynesia, Peru, Argentina, Paraguay, Java, Japan, Hawaii, China, Ceylon, and finally Tunisia. When accepting a position in Japan, the seasoned traveller resided in the Dutch East Indies with his brother-in-law Serrurier, Disenchanted with the stringent government measures with regard to financing the National Ethnographic Museum in Leiden, the latter had resigned as its Director and taken up a post as a schoolteacher there. Ten Kate arrived in Japan in 1898 to serve as a medical doctor. Despite marrying a Japanese woman, he felt ambivalent towards the country and its inhabitants. This can be explained in part by the fact he had travelled to Japan in order to temporarily replace a colleague who had fallen ill. In need of an income, he had to practice medicine out of necessity, which restricted him in pursuing his academic interests. Indeed during periods of fieldwork Ten Kate could not abandon his duty as a physician. However, fieldwork interested him more than his medical practice.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ten Kate 1882.

<sup>7</sup> Johann Joseph Hoffmann (1805-1878), the first professor of Japanology at Leiden University from 1855 on. Hoffmann cooperated closely with Von Siebold on his magnum opus *Nippon*.

<sup>8</sup> Hovens 1989:17-18; Effert 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Ten Kate 1925:197; Ten Kate 1925:226: ‘I am very busy. Moreover I have to visit several patients in San José, again playing the part of *le médecin malgré lui*, as I did on other journeys.’ See also Ten Kate 1925: 232; Snelleman: Foreword in Ten Kate

Unable to leave Japan due to the outbreak of World War I, this sojourn was characterized by social and academic isolation.<sup>10</sup>

When judging his work we must realize that ethnography and anthropology were relatively new fields of study and had only acquired an academic status during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Ten Kate was raised during the rise of nineteenth-century evolutionism. To the advocates of this movement it was obvious that Western civilisation had reached an advanced level and should therefore serve to educate other Peoples. Ten Kate may be considered a forerunner in the field of ethno-psychology.

Judging him on his strong views on Japan would do him wrong. Ten Kate's sincere sympathy with the suppressed and his condemnation of (Japanese) imperialism must have influenced his general view on the Japanese people. His critical stance concerning Japan was prompted by its brutal colonisation of Korea and the increased tensions between Japan and China.

Ten Kate was the Nestor of Dutch ethnologists. Fluent in several languages, he delivered more than 200 publications. Although active in numerous fields of research, he did not create a school and was never attached to a university. He was held in high regard, maintaining a scholarly correspondence with a large number of colleagues all over the world. His book reviews established a connection between various academic communities. His field collections have enriched museums as well as universities in the Netherlands, France, Germany and the U.S.A. Prominent scholars appreciated him highly because of his attentive personality, vast knowledge and wide-ranging interests. No wonder obituaries were published in all major journals in the field of geography and ethnology, but also in many newspapers.

A number of articles Ten Kate wrote in Japan were published between 1901 and 1927. They can be subdivided into the following categories<sup>11</sup>: Nationalism-Imperialism, Ethnography-Folklore, Physical Anthropology and Ethno-psychology.

### **Nationalism - Imperialism**

The West had wanted to 'civilize' Japan at all costs, even going so far as to declare Japan equal to the West in 1899. However, the assimilation of Western culture in Japan was only partial and mainly concerned warfare on land and at sea. It was not to be expected of a nation of millions to completely change within 50 years. Its militarization (which Ten Kate called 'cultural achievements') had found a welcome reception because the Japanese had always been a martial and brave people.<sup>12</sup>

Ten Kate considered the art of *Jujitsu* (a sport he himself had practiced during 15 months) as the best way to form men. In it, a bout could be won through yielding and conquering. Mainly practised by Japanese officers, this explained the fearlessness and self-consciousness of the army and fleet, providing a great moral strength of which Europeans could only dream. Ten Kate compared it with Spartan youngsters or American Indian *Braves*.<sup>13</sup>

According to him, the Japanese aimed at taking over the European guardianship in the

1925.

<sup>10</sup> W. Roth confirms this when stating: 'A restless traveller like Ten Kate, who called himself a nomadic bird, and was called a 'rolling stone', had difficulty to adapt especially to a culture and an employment that was not his first choice', Roth, op. cit. In Cappelle 1931:113.

<sup>11</sup> Of the twenty-seven articles, sixteen are written in German, eight in Dutch, two in English and one in French.

<sup>12</sup> Ten Kate 1905b.

<sup>13</sup> Ten Kate 1905c; 1925:325-326.

Far East. He points to the fact that spies, agents and instructors had infiltrated into China and Manchuria, and that many Chinese newspapers were in Japanese hands. As to the Japanese policy in Korea, it was clear what they were up to. Ten Kate opined that Tonkin (Vietnam) and Siam (Thailand) would possibly be the next to be subjected to the Japanese. For the moment he held the view that this danger would be restricted to the Indian Subcontinent and South East Asia. Instead of Asia for Asians, it could well result in Asia for the Japanese. The reason hereof: their megalomania, vanity, extreme patriotism, and the fact that they did not particularly like the white race. Soon the West would reap what it had sowed. In addition, Ten Kate warned that the friends of today could be the enemies of tomorrow.<sup>14</sup>

Following Cuvier's concept of the 'yellow race'<sup>15</sup>, Ten Kate merely seems to apply this to the Japanese when writing about 'yellow imperialism'. In a broader perspective, however, he refers to the mongoloid race, which includes the Chinese and Malaysian people.<sup>16</sup>

In 1910 Ten Kate returned to the theme of imperialism by means of an article on the Japanese in Korea. In it he indicates he was certainly not blind to how Western imperial nations had dealt with their colonies. Many mistakes had been made in that respect. Nevertheless Japan would make itself even more hated in Korea as they had decided to banish the Korean language from schools replacing it with Japanese. It was in Japan's psychological makeup that Ten Kate looked for the reasons of its failure to rule Korea. In his view, the largest flaw in the Japanese character was its lack of self-knowledge and self-criticism. This resulted not only in a high degree of subjectivity but also in the impossibility to assess the position of the other. The Japanese displayed an unlimited egotism from which came the belief in their infallibility. Criticism was hardly heard due to their so-called herd behaviour, and the lack of individuality. This in turn was the result of a repressive political system. The negative sides of the colonisation of Korea and murders on Formosa were kept out of the news as much as possible in order to safeguard their own reputation.<sup>17</sup> Since Japan had taken its place among civilized nations, it believed in its sacred cause: to protect all the other Asian nations. The Japanese sons of the gods considered this their rightful mission. Therefore, according to Ten Kate, little wonder one could find large numbers of those whom Nietzsche referred to as *Übermenschen* in Japan. It would be a catastrophe if the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies were to be subjected by Japan, depending on whether the military or the peace party would gain the upper hand. Ten Kate was convinced that sooner or later the international developments in Eastern Asia would lead to what Mackenzie referred to as a 'titanic conflict'. However, as long as the self-interest of the Western Powers would not be tested, they would not react.<sup>18</sup>

### **Ethnography-Folklore**

Articles on Ethnography-Folklore published by Ten Kate<sup>19</sup> deal with: magic, fortune telling, dreams, superstition, mythology and medicine. It may be added here that his knowledge of the Japanese language was insufficient to explain the background of these subjects properly. The fact he was not able to read any relevant Japanese literature prevented him from carrying out further thorough research. As not much

<sup>14</sup> Ten Kate 1905b.

<sup>15</sup> The French natural historian-cum-zoologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) first applied this term when referring to the yellow, or Mongoloid, race.

<sup>16</sup> Ten Kate 1885:432; 1902b:261; 1925:295.

<sup>17</sup> This policy is common to all imperialist nations.

<sup>18</sup> Ten Kate 1910; 1916a:897; MacKenzie op.cit. in Ten Kate 1910:315.

<sup>19</sup> This modest collection of stories, of which he himself was well aware, counts 31½ pages. Ten Kate 1901b; 1906c; 1908a; 1912.

had been published in this field, Ten Kate's contributions can be considered building blocks. He regarded knowledge of fairy tales, proverbs, poems, songs and also superstitions as a means to acquire deeper insight into the psychology of the people.<sup>20</sup> His contacts with local cultural anthropologists were sparse. Their field of research had developed during the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was mainly based in Tokyo.<sup>21</sup> Ten Kate had visited this city occasionally, *en route* to other destinations. The research methodology in those days was rather amateur-like<sup>22</sup> and led to simple judgements concerning the Japanese traits as a basis for academic theory building. The Japanese were less interested in the study of the customs of other peoples, but focused more on the origin of their own nation and their national identity. Ten Kate's Japanese wife contributed to these articles. As did Dr. M.W. de Visser, a former translator at the Dutch embassy in Tokyo, who in 1912 acted as Curator of the Japanese collection kept at the National Ethnographic Museum in Leiden. Ten Kate states belief and superstition are predominant among the lower classes (e.g., farmers, fishermen) and especially among women. It seems fair to assume that his information of Japanese Ethnography-Folklore resulted in part from his work as a medical doctor treating patients. Needless to say, this modest study fitted into his lifelong, widespread interest in ethnography.

### Physical Anthropology

Ten Kate's six articles on physical anthropology contribute to the knowledge of the Japanese race and its mutual differences by means of observing the colour of hair and skin, cross-breeding with other races (Ainu, Malaysians, Negroïds) and the appearance of pygmies i.e., dwarf like people measuring c.1.40 m.

Considering the origin and kinship of the Japanese people he expressed an interdisciplinary viewpoint in which not only physical anthropology but also ethnography and linguistics should be applied.<sup>23</sup> As to the study of the 'blue birthmark', Ten Kate followed the physician E. Bälz, who had discovered this phenomenon and had named it the 'blue Mongol spot' (*Die Blauen Mongolen Flecke*).<sup>24</sup> Bälz had hypothesized that this spot was present among the Mongol race only. Ten Kate later challenged this view on the basis of research carried out by others. Apparently it occurred among the Caucasian race too, albeit less frequently.

According to Ten Kate, Western civilization had led to an increase in (functional) mental disorders. Cancer and diabetes were on the rise, not to mention tuberculosis, which remained the scourge of the population. Ten Kate would later opine that, due to or in spite of modern progress, Japan suffered from a slow and complicated degeneration process.<sup>25</sup>

Having established contacts with several well-known Japanese physicians interested in Western medicine, Ten Kate asked them to provide physical anthropological material to be sent to colleagues in Germany and the U.S.A.<sup>26</sup> This request was in line with a longstanding interest, dating back to 1879.

These articles on physical anthropology are supplementary to a discourse which when Ten Kate's final contribution was published in 1927 had become obsolete - certainly

<sup>20</sup> Ten Kate 1906c:111.

<sup>21</sup> Nakane 1980; see also Hovens 1989: 302. Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), Minagata Kumagusu (1867-1941) and Kisen Sasaki (1886-1933) were the pioneers in the field of Folklore studies.

<sup>22</sup> Oguma 2002:53-54.

<sup>23</sup> Ten Kate 1927:512-513.

<sup>24</sup> Erwin Bälz: 1885. Bälz (1849-1913) lectured at the Medical Dept. of the Tokyo University for 27 years treating high-ranking Japanese. He also carried out research in Korea and Japan.

<sup>25</sup> Ten Kate 1925:347; 1927:513.

<sup>26</sup> Hovens 1989:213.

as far as any definition of races based on body measurements was concerned.

### **Ethno-Psychology**

Ten Kate's interest in Ethno-Psychology has German roots.<sup>27</sup> The concept of 'Völkergedanken' ('folk ideas') had been coined by Adolf Bastian. His firm belief in the psychic unity of mankind influenced Ten Kate during his studies in Germany.<sup>28</sup> Having specialized in physical anthropology and the study of races, it was not a large step for Ten Kate to enter the field of psychology, which was then very much in vogue. Aware that this study was still in its infancy he argued for an ongoing methodical comparative research.<sup>29</sup> Ten Kate's remarks on the subject are very interesting, as they were forwarded when Japan was in the process of opening up. Indeed the island nation was globally accepted as a military force to be reckoned with, certainly after the victory against Russia (1904-05). Now, too, the study of mankind developed, wherein the superiority of the white Caucasian race was still considered dominant.

In his usual brisk and outspoken manner, Ten Kate's idea for his first article on the psychology of the Japanese (1902c) was to be clear and to present a judgement, even if he would be criticized for it.

In order to understand the national character of Japan, Ten Kate distinguished these main factors: (a) its social environment, (b) its psychological heredity and (c) its suggestibility (i.e., being prepared to accept and (re) act upon proposals forwarded by others.)

Ten Kate<sup>30</sup> writes on innate traits of races and peoples. Underlining his views, he quoted from other authors on Japan and mentions: a lack of personality.<sup>31</sup> This can be observed everywhere among Japanese males: 'the same ugly, distorted traits, and short cut hairs, the same good-looking traits and coquettish hair fashion among women; the same clothing and shoes, the same manners and way of talking, among both sexes.'<sup>32</sup> According to Ten Kate there were more individual differences among other peoples than among the Japanese, and this lack of personality lead to the latter to be liable to suggestion.

According to Lowell,<sup>33</sup> Japanese did not reflect upon issues. Although Ten Kate considered this an exaggeration, he claimed there was truth in this observation. He had come across 'stuporous' conduct among the working classes. It consisted of a lessening of the perceptivity in connection with inertia and a lack of any association of ideas, and of the ability to judge. He added that this trait was more common among the lower classes but could also be observed among the more educated.<sup>34</sup>

The majority of the Japanese were not at all influenced by European culture. And indeed as Lowell stated: 'the unassimilated character of the imitation that stamps the national state of mind as kin to hypnosis.'<sup>35</sup> The leading authorities on Japan: E. Bälz

<sup>27</sup> Ten Kate 1902c; 1903; 1904a,b; 1913-14; 1916a,b.

<sup>28</sup> Adolf Bastian (1826-1905). A physician and professor of Ethnology, he founded and served as a curator at the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin. According to Hovens (1989:35) Ten Kate resembled Bastian in many ways.

<sup>29</sup> Ten Kate: 1916a.

<sup>30</sup> Ten Kate: 1902c.

<sup>31</sup> Lowell 1888 & 1895 passim op. cit. In Ten Kate 1902c.

<sup>32</sup> Ten Kate 1902c:53.

<sup>33</sup> Lowell 1895 op. cit. In Ten Kate 1902c:53.

<sup>34</sup> In this respect, he is endorsed by Bousquet, op. cit. In Ten Kate 1902c:54. Bousquet 1877, Vol. 1:422 and Vol. 2 :469.

<sup>35</sup> Lowell op. cit. In Ten Kate 1902c:54. Kohlbrugge (op. cit. In Ten Kate 1902:54) held the same view on the Javanese: 'a good reproduction machine, a reliable photographic apparatus, often with artistic sense, but without initiative, without creative thought'.

(1849-1913), O. Peschel (1826-1875), G. Bousquet (1845-1937), W. Dening (1846-1913), and P. Lowell (1855-1916) agreed, according to Ten Kate, on the presumption that the inability of the Japanese to understand abstract notions was caused by their inability to look for causality.

Lacking a deeper spiritual and emotional life, the Japanese were not very interested in religious issues, in part due to their pragmatism (utilitarianism). For this reason they could so easily overcome material loss or loss by death. This probably explained the male heartlessness and display of icy cruelty.

The Japanese were not a practical people as opposed to the Chinese. However, this was slowly changing for the better. At the same time the code of honour, *Bushido*, was losing ground.<sup>36</sup>

Japanese individuals were a riddle, paradoxical and Janus-faced. Ten Kate defined them as: 'sphinx natures'.<sup>37</sup>

As among all Oriental peoples, sincerity and the love of truth were difficult to find. By and large, the Japanese behaved in an indirect way, hardly showing any affection. Nationality meant everything to the Japanese, not race. Since their victory in China<sup>38</sup> they had developed the immense delusion of being the most intelligent, brave and most powerful nation on earth. At the same time they forgot that their culture more often than not stemmed from the Chinese and/or the Caucasian race.

Ten Kate was completely aware of the fact that his opinion was quite opposite to the views many Europeans held on the Japanese. Unwilling to destroy this well-established illusion, this cliché, he pointed out that his ideas concerned the national character, not the individual one. All in all the Japanese were quite pleasant and did not suffer from obligations or pressure (e.g., power of money, treadmill existence) as people in the West.

He summarized the main spiritual traits of the Japanese as: an absence of truth as well as of a deeper spiritual and emotional life, and the incapability of understanding abstract notions. More specifically they lacked individuality, were often in a pseudo-stuporous frame of mind, suffered from suggestion, instability, lack of endurance and paradoxicality, to which modern traits (vanity, chauvinism) ought to be added.<sup>39</sup>

A supplement (Ten Kate 1903) followed. In it he acknowledged that, of course, the Japanese had positive traits, adding that other authors had dealt with them extensively (*ad nauseam*). What he had come across thus far could be applied to the Chinese and the Japanese. Reacting on criticism Ten Kate held the view he had attempted to define the Japanese free from any value judgements and would not withdraw even a single word.

Needless to say, his first article on this topic proved controversial and led to a short polemic with Bälz<sup>40</sup> in a journal named *Globus*. In it the latter accused him of slander as well as pessimism, and criticized him for his one-sided, negative views. As Ten Kate did not master the Japanese language he had not been able to acquire sufficient inside knowledge. Bälz opined that the 'soul of the people' could not be extracted from the present generation of Japanese (now in their adolescence) who found themselves in an intermediate phase between the old Japan and the modern era. According to Bälz the Japanese were no longer ashamed to belong to the same race as the Koreans and the Chinese. The Japanese felt they were called upon to play a leading role at the cost of the 'white people', a justifiable wish in Bälz's view. A

<sup>36</sup> See also Ten Kate 1925:347-348.

<sup>37</sup> Munzinger op. cit. In Ten Kate 1902c:55. „*Sphinxnaturen*“: Ten Kate 1902c:55.

<sup>38</sup> i.e., the first Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895).

<sup>39</sup> Ten Kate 1902c.

<sup>40</sup> Bälz 1903.

further extensive and deeper study into Japanese culture was required in order to arrive at sensible conclusions with regard to their psychology, all the more because the Japanese were very reserved by nature. Bälz challenged Ten Kate regarding issue after issue and concluded by means of a recount of the positive Japanese qualities: martial and brave, an enthusiasm for all things innovative, cheerful frivolity, high spirits and humour. ‘How could the Japanese people have undergone all these momentous changes and progress if Ten Kate’s opinion was valid?’ Bälz asks. In a reaction<sup>41</sup> Ten Kate stated he had simply been misunderstood. Not taking back a single word, he added several explanations in which he emphasized his mainly mentioning the negative qualities because the positive ones had been reiterated so many times before in stereotypes. Both men had arrived at dissimilar opinions based on experience and therefore both were to a certain degree one-sided. Furthermore Ten Kate considered Bälz, who had immersed himself completely into Japanese culture and was seen as a great friend of the Japanese Government, to be inevitably biased towards the Japanese. Ten Kate believed to be free of any racial prejudices and referred to his earlier critical stance against white Christian nations and his defence of minorities, adding that this did not whitewash the Japanese.

Years later Ten Kate would return to the theme of ethno-psychology.<sup>42</sup> In two articles he now expresses cultural pessimism, which is understandable as they were written on the outbreak of and during World War I. Their contents are often non-specialist and again display his disapproval of matters Japanese. Numerous themes return, e.g., supposed psychological traits, aestheticism, religion, nationalism and imperialism. Examples of pseudo-stuporous behaviour seemingly occur more in Japan than in the West, as do accidents involving trains, trams and ships. However, this perhaps points to a difference in culture as well as to the effects of modernisation rather than to an inherent or acquired psychological shortcoming.

As for the arts, Ten Kate held the view that a mix of Oriental and Western art can only produce monstrosities. Western influences had corrupted Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian art. The idea of beauty expressed in the Hellenistic conception of the nude was unknown and not understood in the Oriental world.<sup>43</sup>

The love of parents for their children, especially for daughters, seems to be less than among white people. Certain classes consider girls as merchandise. According to Ten Kate, the emergence of prostitution and the large number of prostitutes can be explained in this way. The Japanese also show less shame whenever calling things by name. Especially when speaking of venereal diseases, they seem to be less prudish than Westerners.

Ten Kate also mentions the urge for orderliness, the fear of uncomplicated matters (*horror simpliciter*) and of formalism, whereby any unexpected deviation calls for problems. He now describes the constant removal or changing of shoes as well as the loud closing of all windows and doors of the houses in the cities at night. Here he also informs us of the fact that houses are designed for warm weather and not suited for cold winters.

According to Ten Kate, the Japanese are not very religiously minded, which would explain their so-called unequalled tolerance. In his view this absence of religion was a euphemism for total indifference. He then goes on to describe the incoming Mikado-

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<sup>41</sup> Ten Kate 1903; 1904a.

<sup>42</sup> Ten Kate 1913-1914; 1916, but written in the last quarter of 1915.

<sup>43</sup> Ten Kate had also pointed to this fact in 1903. See also Ten Kate 1925:324.



worship and Japan-worship.<sup>44</sup> This ‘religion’ started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It considered not only the Emperor and his forebears as gods but also the country and its sons. Being taught at schools, it marked a difference with the past and went hand in hand with an innovative form of nationalism. Race and nationality were two separate matters to the Japanese who looked down upon the Chinese and the Koreans, who expected nothing anymore from Japan to free them from Western imperialism. Asian nations without any intensive contacts with Japan as yet, regarded it as a possible rescuer. Ten Kate queries: ‘Asia for Asians or Asia for the Japanese?’ The answer to this question lies in the future.

Ten Kate interestingly remarks he held the view that perhaps only the Islam could bring together certain racial elements. He had observed this phenomenon when the Turks and Arabs stood up against Christians from Italy and the Balkan during the early stages of World War I. On the other hand the Crusades had also combined various races, whereby the binding factor in all these cases was a common religious cause.

In general Ten Kate did not highly appreciate the work of missionaries. As far as religion was concerned he believed in the strength and survival of the native culture and spirit, as was also the case in Europe. Here Christianity had influenced races and culture for 2000 years, but the nations had retained their own culture and soul. Christian missionaries on Java had not been able to change the ‘spirit of the East’. By and large, Ten Kate disapproved of the zeal with which missionaries converted, especially in Islamic countries.<sup>45</sup> Easing the suffering of people was a more important goal than preaching dogmas and converting heathens.<sup>46</sup>

During his lengthy career Ten Kate had observed how Asian ethnic groups kept to each other after immigrating. On the other hand the Westerners in America stayed away from people of the East.<sup>47</sup> Assimilation was therefore problematic. A reason for this seemed to be a lack of ethno-psychological insight of the Western tutors.<sup>48</sup>

It can be argued that, in our present society, the assimilation of refugees still meets with the same problems: Do the authorities have sufficient insight into the various ethnicities? Are they doing enough to create an understanding of these people among their own population? Are sufficient measurements taken in order to allow integration to really succeed?

Ten Kate compared Japan to a secular tree deeply grounded in the earth. Old branches would die and young ones would form. Nevertheless, that which existed in the roots from the beginning would continue to appear in the furthest branches and blossoms. In his view Japan was living in the past<sup>49</sup>, as material evidence of historical memories disappeared at a greater speed when compared with Europe.<sup>50</sup>

Ten Kate argued that a better understanding of the languages, morals and customs of the natives could have prevented many wrongdoings caused by colonial policies. In general, the white man displayed racial prejudices as well as a lack of psychological and ethnological insight, and wished to convert any exhibited greed, lust for power and cruelty. A better understanding would not be possible if the West did not recognize the huge dissimilarities between peoples as, for instance, geographical

<sup>44</sup> After Chamberlain 1912. See also Dale 1986:210.

<sup>45</sup> Ten Kate 1913-14.

<sup>46</sup> Ten Kate 1925:294. See also Ten Kate 1905d.

<sup>47</sup> After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (1941), those of Japanese descent residing in the U.S.A. were placed in Internment Camps for the remainder of World War II.

<sup>48</sup> Ten Kate referred here, for instance, to Bastian’s lecture entitled *Die Aufgaben der Ethnologie*, as delivered in Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia) 1897.

<sup>49</sup> Ten Kate 1908a:373.

<sup>50</sup> Ten Kate 1901a.

surroundings and the stage of development indicate.

The thought processes of the Japanese differ from those of the white man, not fundamentally, but according to the degree of intellectual development. Consequently Ten Kate did not except a term such as 'people like us'.<sup>51</sup>

Another of his objections concerned the idea, that 'Christian civilized' nations would automatically be the heralds of the blessings of Western civilization. Considered this an egocentric point of view, as if Western people were indeed role models in every respect, Ten Kate rejected imperialism and exploitation. The history of imperialism had brought death, slavery, and moral decline to large parts of America, Africa and Asia. Furthermore he asked the question: Is a life spent working the land or in mines and factories in the sweat of your brow for self-interested employers better than hunting and gathering, and horticulture?<sup>52</sup>

More proof can be found regarding Ten Kate's degree of sympathy towards disappearing cultures, or cultures in general, and of his difficulties with 'modern' progress and mechanization. His indignation was understandable, as this article was written in 1915 during the horrors of World War I, which he considered the demise of the innocence of the white race, and which kept him confined in Japan.

Racial prejudices and racial hatred were of all peoples, not only the white man. He goes on to discuss the so-called gratitude of the Japanese that would appear as soon as the chosen 'people of the Gods' would provide their former educators and current friends with a taste of their own medicine. That day was to come, Ten Kate added: the friends of today would be the enemies of tomorrow.

Pointing at the Japanese term *hakubatsu*, the white peril, and at M. Inouye's opinion on the non-Christian population of the Dutch East Indies, Ten Kate states: 'Supposing it is a mission of the Japanese people to guide and lead the semi-civilized natives of these regions towards the path of modern civilization, I think the Indo-Japanese Association ought to pioneer the new field, and this, I believe, was one of the objects of the Association in extending its sphere of work to Dutch India (sic)'.<sup>53</sup>

Ten Kate sensed the same danger with regard to the Philippines, British India and Indo-China. The Chinese had lost their faith in Japan due to its atrocities. As for Formosa and Korea, both had nothing to expect from Japan's despotic rule.

This led him to conclude that all nations looking to Japan to liberate them from the white oppressor and intimidator should expect nothing good from that process. White colonialism was preferable to Japanese domination, as Ten Kate firmly believed these nations would benefit from civilization on condition it could be embedded in mutual understanding.<sup>54</sup> He foresaw a conflict between Japan and the U.S.A., Japan would unexpectedly remove its mask and attack either the Philippines or Hawaii. This comment was made in a letter to an American colleague 34 years prior to the attack on Pearl Harbour.<sup>55</sup>

The Government of Japan lacked any ethno-psychological insight into the minorities as well as the nations it had colonized. It was unfit to colonize and educate others.<sup>56</sup> It might be added here that the same applies to the Dutch colonial policies in the East Indies. Therefore the question arises: Do the Dutch or any colonial power possess the necessary ethno-psychological insight to give them the right to colonize others and educate them?

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<sup>51</sup> Ten Kate 1916a.

<sup>52</sup> Ten Kate 1916a; see also 1916b.

<sup>53</sup> M. Inouye (*Journal of the Indo-Japanese Association*. Tokyo, August 1915) op. cit. In Ten Kate 1916a:718-719.

<sup>54</sup> Ten Kate 1916a.

<sup>55</sup> Hovens 1989:226. The colleague referred to here was the American anthropologist F.W. Hodge (1864-1956).

<sup>56</sup> Ten Kate 1916a.

In Japan, in 1915, Western science was taught in the Japanese language. Gradually Japanese teachers had taken over from Western ones. According to Ten Kate this was proof of overestimation. Technical terms, which did not exist in Japanese had either been imported from other languages or invented. In Fokker's view, the Japanese people wanted to be civilized, but first and foremost to remain Japanese.<sup>57</sup>

Returning to the Japanese policy concerning China, Korea and Formosa, Ten Kate concluded: the influence of religion on Peace was nil. Several Christian nations were at war and a Buddhist country felt an urge to expand. Although Peace was high on the religious agenda, these religions supported war or were indifferent towards it.<sup>58</sup>

### **Ethno-psychology or personal opinions**

Now and again one gets the impression Ten Kate thought he was able to judge someone by his or her looks, as if the study of races and racial elements had presented him with an automatic insight into the character of individuals. For example, during a visit to a Buddhist monastery in Kashun (China), he concludes that the monks do not behave in the serene, religiously ecstatic manner like true followers of Buddha should. The same applies to Japanese monks, as Ten Kate observes. The numerous roguish faces lead him to remark that there is obviously no harmony between this sacred place and its inhabitants. As a result his dream is shattered, his attention distracted.<sup>59</sup>

Concerning the celibacy of priests of certain Buddhist sects, Ten Kate mentions that everyone who has resided in the Far East for a long time knows they have the reputation of being virtuosos in *ars amandi*.<sup>60</sup>

Among the Ainu people, he deplors the 'hideous' fashion of shaving the face: 'The absence of beard and moustache, that blue-black, thick stubble field on the cheeks, upper lips and chin, added something appalling, villain-like to the already primitive features.'<sup>61</sup>

Researching the occurrence of pure Ainu and the intermingling of this race with the Japanese, he mainly relies on observations concerning the exterior appearance, some of which were forwarded by the Consul of the Netherlands and only partially substantiated by measurements. Ten Kate did not choose to verify these observations.<sup>62</sup>

In general Ten Kate held the view that Japanese people were in general, not good-looking. He even speaks of the 'endemic ugliness' in certain parts of Japan. In order to prove he was not subjective a Spanish travel companion who regarded the Japanese residing in a specific region as 'monsters' is cited.<sup>63</sup> When Ten Kate wrote this 1927 article that he was suffering from a cardiac disease. His cultural pessimism had come into prominence as is indicated by means of his frequent complaints regarding the people he meets, with whom he travels and with whom he has to work. He finds them too talkative, lazy or unreliable.<sup>64</sup> These impressions (caused by loneliness and carrying out fieldwork under strenuous circumstances far away from home) are shared with many other anthropologists, as is laid down in their fieldwork diaries and letters. Whenever Ten Kate expresses his strong personal opinions their subjectivity prevents him from presenting a fair judgement. On the other hand he did not close his eyes to the possibility of Western bias. We read: 'Most Japanese do not love us, the hairy

<sup>57</sup> Fokker's publication: *Op een dwaalspoor*, op. cit. In Ten Kate 1916a:896.

<sup>58</sup> Ten Kate 1916b.

<sup>59</sup> Ten Kate 1925:296-297.

<sup>60</sup> The art of lovemaking, Ten Kate 1916a.

<sup>61</sup> Ten Kate 1925:288; see also p. 361.

<sup>62</sup> Ten Kate 1927:501, 506-507.

<sup>63</sup> Ten Kate 1927:508.

<sup>64</sup> Ten Kate 1925: passim.

barbarians. The less illusion we have about this, the better it is.’<sup>65</sup> And, ‘In general Westerners are not popular with the Japanese; and one can hardly blame them. Racial prejudice, racial hatred, often has a much deeper cause than we would normally assume: it is in part founded physiologically. And what about our Christian civilized Europe, including the Netherlands, and America? If one does not follow the herd, but one’s own path, if one thinks completely otherwise and acts differently from the ordinary man, one is either mocked or hated.’<sup>66</sup> This is characteristic of Ten Kate, a completely independent mind, who was certainly able to bring things into perspective. It is possible that Ten Kate’s studies on various peoples, now and again led to biased views. The German physician Bälz refers to this matter, when he wonders if the knowledge of exotic peoples could lead to evaluate yet another people by means of bias.<sup>67</sup> The lengthy period of fieldwork in all corners of the globe and a deteriorating health had perhaps had a profound influence on Ten Kate’s psyche. Nonetheless, his lifelong, genuine, emotional attachment to the fate and future of autochthonous peoples did not withhold him from expressing himself in an explicit manner, critical of science and politics.<sup>68</sup>

### **The recurrence of Ten Kate’s themes**

Ten Kate’s ethno-psychological studies can be seen as a forerunner of that which, in c1930, developed into the Culture and Personality school among American scholars, especially in the work of Ruth F. Benedict (1887-1948), the anthropologist-*cum*-folklorist.<sup>69</sup>

Ethno-psychological knowledge and studies in Japan were still in its infancy in Ten Kate’s days. However many of his themes can also be seen as part of the study of psychoanalysis, a relatively innovative field. Dale<sup>70</sup> emphasizes the fact: “though rudimentary knowledge of psychoanalysis was circulating in Japan as early as 1912, real attention only became focused in the 1930s.”

It is interesting to note that the following of Ten Kate’s themes are recurrent in time with other authors, Japanese and non-Japanese: (a) Responsibility, (b) Spirituality and emotionality, (c) Individualism versus group thinking (which Ten Kate referred to as formalism), (d) Non-rationality and causality, (e) Xenophobia and tolerance, and (f) Nationalism.

Regarding the above-mentioned (a) Responsibility, Richie<sup>71</sup> mentions mindless devotion, and the fact that no one will take responsibility for anything. Kingston<sup>72</sup> argues for the determining of responsibility, holding individuals accountable for their actions.

As to (b) Religious feelings, Richie<sup>73</sup> observes that the Japanese completely lack the religious sense.

According to Nakane<sup>74</sup>, the Japanese are devoid of any religious practice as a control of individual thinking and behaviour on the strength of a supernatural being. Religion nor philosophy but very human morals play an important role in their lives.

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<sup>65</sup> Ten Kate 1925:323.

<sup>66</sup> Ten Kate 1925:356.

<sup>67</sup> Bälz 1903:313.

<sup>68</sup> Hovens 1989:225.

<sup>69</sup> This school is characterized by the application of psychoanalytic principles to ethnographic material. Hovens 1989:128. Benedict 1946; see also Bennett et. al. 1953 and Dale 1986:176-187.

<sup>70</sup> Dale 1986:119.

<sup>71</sup> Richie 1970:91-92.

<sup>72</sup> Kingston 2004:190.

<sup>73</sup> Richie 1970:114-115.

<sup>74</sup> Nakane 1970:150.

Iga<sup>75</sup> refers to a census of 1973 and 1978, indicating that the majority of the Japanese have no religious feelings. In that sense Iga does not consider Buddhism as a Japanese religion, which would regulate daily life. Shintoism is seen a system of rituals to beg the gods for profit or help, while Buddhism is seen as a system of rituals concerning ancestor worship and burials.

With regard to (c) Individuality versus group thinking, Richie<sup>76</sup> opines that the Japanese were never strong on individuality in any eccentric sense. They have never learned to develop a strong personality.

Kingston<sup>77</sup> remarks they tend to be pliable and do what others want them to do – they do not question authority.

Doi<sup>78</sup> discusses the negation of the Self and the importance of the group, which is basically a vital spiritual prop. To be isolated from it would mean, more than anything else, to lose its ‘self’ completely in a way that would be intolerable to a person.

Iga<sup>79</sup> also states that the strong group orientation of the Japanese tends to impede them from developing beliefs in abstract and universal ideological systems and furthermore points to the authoritarian family system.

Linked to this are remarks forwarded by Kerr<sup>80</sup> on the desire for peace, and for no surprises. No society has ever gone to such extremes to reign in spontaneity.

However, the emphasis on shared responsibility and obedience leads to a situation in which nobody is in charge.

Dale<sup>81</sup> has amply proven the origins of many so-called Japanese concepts of uniqueness as stemming from European discussions of nationalism from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards up to the development of fascism. He criticises (a) the Japanese tendency of formulating pseudo-scientific theories and (b) applying linguistic juggling in order to disguise either the occidental origin of concepts or to create an ideology of Japanese uniqueness. Individuality is denied in favour of the group. This enforces, certainly among the *nihonjinron*,<sup>82</sup> an authoritarian and totalitarian view of Japanese society. The *nihonjinron* literature not only counts Japanese but also many Western authors, who stress the uniqueness of the Japanese, as if they have been born with a certain kind of brains that suppress their own individuality.

Oguma<sup>83</sup> has written a history on how the imported Western methodologies of anthropology and ancient history have served to reconstruct ancient Japanese myths in an effort to create a modern nationalism by the *nihonjinron*. He defines the research methodology at around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Japan as amateurish. The research Japanese anthropologists immersed themselves in was not the survey of customs of other peoples, but the search for the origin of the Japanese nation, or the search for the national identity of the Japanese. In other words the aim of their studies was inwards, not outwards.

As to (d) Non-rationality, Iga<sup>84</sup> mentions it being characteristic of Japanese culture: indifference to logical rules, emotionality, avoidance of complex ideas, fondness for simple symbolic expressions, and lack of knowledge concerning the objective order.

Doi<sup>85</sup> states that most scholars agree that Japanese thinking is not logical but intuitive.

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<sup>75</sup> Iga 1986:125-126.

<sup>76</sup> Richie 1970:144; 269.

<sup>77</sup> Kingston 2004:196.

<sup>78</sup> Doi 1973:135.

<sup>79</sup> Iga 1986:129.

<sup>80</sup> Kerr 2001:87-88; 232.

<sup>81</sup> Dale 1986: passim.

<sup>82</sup> *Nihonjinron*: texts/discussions on Japanese nationality and cultural identity.

<sup>83</sup> Oguma 2002:XVIII; 53-54.

<sup>84</sup> Iga 1986:120.

<sup>85</sup> Doi 1973:76.

He points to the dominance of *amae*<sup>86</sup> mentality in Japan, as it is illogical from the outset in the attempt to deny the fact of separation and generate, mainly by emotional means, a sense of identity with one's surroundings.

Kerr<sup>87</sup> writes that Japanese have not been taught analytical thinking, or the ability to ask unusual or creative questions or to develop a love for the natural environment. Even with regard to mathematics their scores drop as soon as tests diverge from the application of cookie-cutter techniques and focus on questions involving analysis or creative thought.<sup>88</sup>

Other authors blame the educational system too; McVeigh<sup>89</sup> opines that a dark spirit plagues the Japanese university premises: the ghost of suppressed opinions, lost voices, discouraged self-expressions, and restrained individuality.

Iga<sup>90</sup> mentions that probably the most marked difference between Japanese and American democracies is the lack of genuine debate in Japan. This absence is largely due to Japan's educational system, which does not develop an analytical and critical attitude. Moreover, due to Japanese religions, one does not develop supra-societal values and principles on which lay members can establish an evaluation of the status quo.

With regard to (e) Xenophobia, Richie<sup>91</sup> deals with a politely hidden suspicion for the wanderer and with a suspicion in general for the outside world as numerous authors mention.

Kerr<sup>92</sup> holds the view that very early in school the basis was laid for the fact that foreigners are aliens and should not be allowed to mix with the Japanese.

Oguma<sup>93</sup> mentions that the treatment of minorities in present Japan is caused by the existence of the Emperor, the last relic of a system dictating that class is defined by birth, and the xenophobic myth of the homogeneous nation.

As to (f) Nationalism, Kingston<sup>94</sup> writes that Japan's experience during the 1930s and 1940s has left the world with certain mistrust as to the intentions of especially the nationalists in Japan. It leads to the same weary eyebrow rising as with the media report on Neo-Nazism in Germany. Is it possible that Japan will slip back into the 'valley of darkness' and will go on the warpath again?

Japan<sup>95</sup> as one of the status quo powers, however, has more to risk than gain from projecting its military power into a wary region bristling with modern weapon systems.

On youth culture we read<sup>96</sup>: 'The meek, self-deprecating, stoic, and terminally reserved and conformist automatons imagined overseas suddenly came to life, sporting various shades of dyed hair, diverse fashions, and a bubbly zest. These effusive displays of nationalism and patriotism have been conflated with militarism and associated with past excesses and atrocities. This new 'nationalism lite' seems light years away from the valley of darkness.'

The majority of authors agree that nowadays the chances of regression are slim.

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<sup>86</sup> *Amae*: the creation of feelings without concrete language, such as the bond between an infant and its mother. Doi seems to have concentrated too long and too much on this concept and tries to explain the complete Japanese society from the past to the future, including student's protest with the help of this *amae* concept.

<sup>87</sup> Kerr 2001:294; 303.

<sup>88</sup> See also Kerr's interesting chapter on Education, 2001:282-306.

<sup>89</sup> McVeigh 2002:3.

<sup>90</sup> Iga 1986:164.

<sup>91</sup> Richie 1970:154.

<sup>92</sup> Kerr 2001:287-289.

<sup>93</sup> Oguma 2002:343.

<sup>94</sup> Kingston 2004:225-226; 250-251; 253; Masaru 2001 op. cit. in Kingston 2004:257.

<sup>95</sup> Kingston 2004:245.

<sup>96</sup> Kingston 2004:249.

Nonetheless the situation has changed, nationalism and its numerous causes are present. Not only has Japan always gone out of its way in order to come to terms with its military past, it also experiences: an uneasy relationship with the U.S.A., the supposed nuclear threat by North Korea, the competition with China, tensions raised by taking part in military peacekeeping programmes, and the strains of the economic downfall since the 1990s.<sup>97</sup>

Another voice can be heard from Smith<sup>98</sup> blaming the mistakes of modern Japan on all that the U.S.A. made of Japan after the World War II: highly corrupt, obsessed with controlling the market, ecologically reckless and suffocating its individuals. Moreover it has non-functioning politics without a leader and is not capable of making decisions. The Americans pretend that Japan is an independent country, but in effect it is a military protectorate. Their orientalist perception of Japan was created after World War II, where the observer feels superior to the observed.

If Ten Kate's ethno-psychological observation originated from a Western feeling of superiority, the present research focuses more on explanations coming from Japanese history and culture. Current discussions on the Japanese psyche are very lively and diverse.

### **A critical rationalist**

Ten Kate was always an outsider, never allowing himself to serve any kind of policies. He was the archetypal scholarly traveller, adventurous, wrote with a sharp pen, firmly believed in humanity and the rights of minorities, and a strong advocate of inter-disciplinary research.

According to Hovens<sup>99</sup>, Ten Kate always critically opposed the popular representations and stereotypes of his time.

His personal life resembles a fragmented puzzle. Ten Kate worked in many places with many peoples. Due to the temporary nature of his work, he never stayed in the same location for a long time. In France he was known as the 'man who is never at his last address'.<sup>100</sup> In general his ethnographical notes were, out of necessity, fragmentary and superficial. Thus his travel- and research reports provide the spectacle of an ethnographic patchwork.<sup>101</sup>

Ten Kate opined that ethnology, including psychology and sociology should form the basis of native policies.<sup>102</sup> This remark in itself reflected his viewpoint on the study of ethnology. After colonial wars based on greed and power, and missionary activities aiming at converting the natives, it was high time to learn from other societies. This was to be carried out through the method of comparing and in-depth studies of native cultures in order to not only avoid colonial excesses which were so much part and parcel of imperialist reality, but also to learn more about one's own societies. The latter point was certainly also true regarding Ten Kate who proved to be very critical of the white race at several points during his career. He is even characterized as a paternalistic humanist and an explicit moralist.<sup>103</sup>

By and large Ten Kate was opposed to missionary work, which had led to a downfall in cultural values and was in line with the colonial experience. He made an exception

<sup>97</sup> See also Kingston:243, 244. Oguma 2002:321-349.

<sup>98</sup> Smith 1997:15-34.

<sup>99</sup> Hovens 1989:84.

<sup>100</sup> Heijink *et. al.*, 1931:417.

<sup>101</sup> Hovens 1989:105.

<sup>102</sup> Ten Kate 1916a:904.

<sup>103</sup> Hovens 1989:225.

for the medical mission caused by the shortage of physicians hoping not only that their psychological insight into exotic peoples would lead to an interest in ethnographical issues but also that, through learning local languages, they would be able to bring the oppressors and the oppressed together.<sup>104</sup>

As a critic of Japanese imperialism, Ten Kate did not stand alone. Especially in the Dutch East Indies, there was a great concern about the Japanese plans for Eastern Asia. Every week opinions and discussions on this perceived threat were published in magazines and newspapers, such as *De Indische Gids*, and *Het Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, to name but a few.<sup>105</sup> Ten Kate certainly was a visionary with regard to the disastrous course, which Japanese nationalism was going to take. Thanks to his broad experience with foreign policies concerning natives in the colonies, he instinctively realised this would lead to ruin in the case of Japan. He very clearly arrived at this conclusion due to a combination of Japanese traits coupled with militarism and nationalism.

Ten Kate can be positioned within the tradition of the Enlightenment Philosophers who were critical of European Christian civilisation and considered missionary activities as just another way to open up overseas territories. In the Netherlands, Ten Kate fits in with publications by J. Haafner (1807) and Multatuli (1860). Because of their adverse standpoints and criticism towards (Dutch) colonial policies these men drifted into a somewhat isolated position, during an era when colonies and the spread of Christian civilisation were the norm.

The superiority of Western civilisation had long prevented manners and customs of native peoples to be seen as equal. Having crossed that line, albeit convinced of a 'Western mission', Ten Kate is a strong advocate of indigenous rights, and of justice and tolerance.

While working and living in Japan, Ten Kate was often not able to carry out proper scholarly research as he had to earn a living as a medical practitioner. He did not master the Japanese language sufficiently. His health was slowly deteriorating. Nevertheless his research on Japan provides us with ample proof of his wide ethnographical interest.

Always orienting himself as extensively as possible on the available research, he seems, in the case of Japan, to lean more heavily on writers with an anti-Japanese sentiment.

Ten Kate shows on the one hand a sharp criticism concerning certain Japanese psychological traits and attitudes. On the other hand he expresses his admiration for 'things Japanese' such as the landscape and life in Japan in general. The latter fully complies with his love for nature and his desire to be alone, while the former confronts him with the acts of human beings he does not understand or does not agree with.<sup>106</sup>

Why did Ten Kate write in such terms about the Japanese?

He was obviously highly annoyed with the Japanese imperialism and especially with the treatment of Koreans and Chinese under Japanese rule.

Having carried out fieldwork in the Americas, Polynesia, and the Dutch East Indies during 20 years, Ten Kate had become rather critical of the white man's policies concerning the rights of natives. Firmly believing that Western civilization was the best thing that could happen to other nations, he was also well aware of the negative

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<sup>104</sup> Ten Kate 1916a:908-909.

<sup>105</sup> See the below References under Anonymous.

<sup>106</sup> See also Hovens 1989:230-231.



sides of this policy. On various occasions he had raised his voice in defence of natives, forced assimilation, and the negative side effects of colonialism. In his opinion, numerous white men (e.g., politicians, colonists, soldiers, colonial servants, missionaries) behaved worse than the natives they encountered. To him it did not matter if it was white or yellow imperialism, its downsides had to be condemned. He simply felt that, in the long run, Japanese policies would turn into a disaster. Another reason for reacting so sharply was a belief that, in this case, the positive picture of the Japanese as painted by the English and Americans was incorrect. In the same manner he had considered it necessary to improve the negative image many had formed with regard to the North American Indians.<sup>107</sup>

The question may be raised here if Ten Kate simply did not engage in the art of polemic for controversy's sake. Many remarks on the psychology of the Japanese were not based on thorough scientific research. Indeed they were very sketchy and often straightforward generalizations. At times he seems embittered and lashes out against his surroundings. Ten Kate's opinion on Japanese ethno-psychology could not win him many friends. The debate with Bälz, whom he considered as biased and too much on the hand of the Japanese, was now and again acrimonious. On the other hand they often agreed on matters concerning with physical anthropology.

Another reason for Ten Kate's critical views is the fact he was a nomad. His restlessness could easily lead to a negative opinion on people if their culture or behaviour did not suit him.<sup>108</sup> His deteriorating health caused problems that increased in the course of time.

### **Exoticism and Romanticism**

If we take a look at authors on Japan at around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can roughly divide their publications in those pro and contra Japan. Hearn and Chamberlain fit in with the first, and, Bousquet and Lowell with the second.

Another distinction is useful here, too: whether authors held a romantic view of Japan as a mythical, time-honoured or traditional society. For them a modern Japan being a fast changing country had far less appeal. For Western readers a strange and far-off country in the East offered more attractions than a nation striving to get on equal footing with the other industrialized nations and colonial powers.

Initially Ten Kate must have had a romantic idea of Japan, as one more unknown country and a link in the chain of discoveries that ran parallel to his lifelong travelling frame of mind.

Exoticism<sup>109</sup> had a scholarly attraction for him. However the question arises: was this restless traveller that dissimilar to those others of the end of the nineteenth century, e.g. Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Gauguin, Rudyard Kipling or Lafcadio Hearn, to name but a few?<sup>110</sup>

If an outsider does not understand the culture he or she visits, this results in either a negative or positive judgement on the people in question. Negative if the visitor is for whatever reason annoyed with what he finds; positive if the visitor is enchanted by the otherness, the strangeness of the country in question. The picture becomes more and more blurred when the Japanese themselves stress their otherness, the uniqueness, the oneness of their culture as opposed to others. In the latter case something else must

<sup>107</sup> See Hovens 1989:127-128.

<sup>108</sup> See e.g. Ten Kate 1925:199-200, where he shares his view on white Australians.

<sup>109</sup> Exoticism: The literary treatment of outer-European countries and peoples in novels and poems. Ten Kate 1919:63.

<sup>110</sup> Plischke 1951:148-159; Hovens 1989:192, 207.

play a role: the need to define oneself as different from the other, either based on feelings of superiority or on feelings of inferiority or a combination of both.

Ten Kate developed a basic ambivalence with Japan: a criticaster of Japanese politics and showing a romantic side especially in his recurring descriptions of the Japanese nature. This places him in a German tradition where culture was considered as unique, as a historically grown entity with its own individual character.<sup>111</sup>

Ten Kate had to make the best of his stay in Japan, leaving Japan several times, travelling with his wife to Europe and America. After his return in 1913, he is confined to Japan due to the outbreak of World War I. The horror and the magnitude of this conflict, mainly between Christian nations, undermined him completely. He must have felt more alone and on his own than ever. His romantic vision of a world filled with varied, interesting cultures and the idea of Western civilization helping these nations on the ladder of progress is drowned in the horrors of the all-out trench war. When he leaves Japan in 1919 his health and faith are broken. Aged 61, he is alone once again and has to find a new destination, which proved very difficult indeed.

Ten Kate as an anthropologist-*cum*-traveller now and again fell into the pit of ethnocentrism and subjectivism, or tendentiousness. However, his wide knowledge of sources and his ability to read numerous languages played a positive role in his work as an ethnographer. Through his writings not only the academic world but also the general public have acquired further knowledge of other peoples and cultures. Presenting them with innovative and more humane opinions was certainly the strength of Dr. Herman F.C. ten Kate.

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