COLONIAL CORRUPTION IN LITERATURE ABOUT THE DUTCH EAST INDIES

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My research project aimed to analyze how corruption was discussed in colonial literature about the Dutch East Indies (today’s Indonesia). This was a topic directly connected to my supervisor’s larger research project on corruption. However, my research approached the same topic through the study of literature rather than history. I researched five colonial novels that either directly or indirectly dealt with corruption. The project was focused on the period around 1900, as this is seen by many as the crucial time in Dutch colonial history when oppressive and corrupt systems were beginning to be criticized.
The five colonial novels I read and analyzed were:

1. "The Tea Lords" by Hella S. Haasse
2. "Max Havelaar"
3. "The Ten Thousand Things"
4. "The Hidden Force" by Louis Couperus
5. "Magi & a Man from Mann"
My research project consisted primarily of reading and analyzing the five novels. For each of these texts I wrote a report of around 1500 words. This meant that I read and analyzed approximately one novel per month. The reports were meant to analyze each novel’s portrayal of colonialism in general, as well as its representation of corruption in particular. For some of these novels corruption was a main theme, and therefore this was the focus on my report. For others, however, corruption was not a key part of the story or just was not discussed explicitly in the text. In these cases, my reports would present a broader view of colonial issues in that particular novel.