

## Under the Western eyes: Representation of cultural difference in 19th century French travel writing on the Dutch East Indies

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### ABSTRACT

The 19th century as the peak period of colonization and the golden period of Western travel writing creates a complex context in intercultural interactions and representations of foreign cultures. The travel writing highlights the interactions of Western explorers with cultural diversity and the dynamics of power in intercultural relations. The research aims to analyze the representation of cultural difference and intercultural power relations reflected in 19th century French travel writings. The travel writings used are *Voyages autour du monde et naufrages célèbres* by Gabriel Lafond de Lurcy (1843) and *Un Séjour dans l'île de Java* (1898) by Jules Leclercq. Grounded in Said's theory of Orientalism, the research shows that representations of cultural difference were shaped by narratives of othering and ethnocentrism, and that intercultural encounters reflected unequal power relations that sustained Western dominance. In this context, 19th century French travel writings reinforced the discourse of orientalism and ethnocentrism, with representations of the East serving as a tool to sustain Western dominance and superiority. This study contributes to the understanding of how 19th century European literary narratives participated in cultural hegemony.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The 19th century was a significant period involving European expansion into various regions of the world, including Africa and Asia. During this period, many explorers, intellectuals, and writers traveled and recorded their journeys in various travel writings. The travel writings in the 19th century are not just a record of physical adventures, but also record the social, political, and cultural conditions that occurred when the exploration was carried out. The era, as the peak period of colonization, created a complex context for intercultural interactions and representations of foreign cultures. The travel writing that

emerged in that century not only demonstrated European interest in the outside world, but also created critical questions about how foreign cultures were explained, understood, and represented in colonial contexts.

Travel writing contains not only scientific and ideological prejudices, but also specific statements and choices of diction that play an important role in representing foreign cultures. According to Thompson (2011), travel writing contains varied perspectives and judgments on the other, on the philosophical and ideological concepts of the other in space and time, and on social conditions related to the other. Thus, travel writing is a place for expressing perceptions of the other and self which acts like a mirror that reflects self and other. In this context, the postcolonial paradigm provides a critical lens for analyzing 19th century travel writing, particularly its entanglement with colonial power dynamics, as Said's (1978; 2003) *Orientalism* reveals how narratives framed non-European societies as exotic or inferior. Building on this foundation, Hauthal and Toivanen (2021) shows how postcolonial theory deconstructs Eurocentric representations in travel literature, exposing the ways colonial authority shaped narrative structures, while Bonvini and Jacobson (2022) underscores how travelogues reinforced imperial ideologies by portraying colonized lands as spaces ripe for domination. A related perspective is offered by multiculturalism, which illuminates how these texts handled cultural difference: Boumlik (2014) points to their oscillation between fascination and condescension; Kennedy (2023) and Chen (2021) emphasize their reliance on asymmetrical power relations; and Mazurkiewicz (2020) demonstrates how multicultural rhetoric often masked only superficial engagement with diversity. At the core of such representations lies ethnocentrism, the evaluation of other cultures through the lens of one's own norms (Bizumic et al., 2021), which encouraged European travelers to universalize their values while marginalizing non-Western traditions (Sikka, 2016). As Khan (2024) argues, ethnocentrism was not simply an individual bias but a structural feature of colonial discourse itself.

Previous studies have examined representations of cultural difference and intercultural encounters from various perspectives, including Aziz (2015) who raised multiculturalism in the novel written by Chinua Achebe, Wiyatmi and Nurhadi (2021) who examined the issue of ethnicity and multiculturalism in Indonesian novels from the 2000s, Suminto A. Sayuti and Wiyatmi (2017) who described multicultural values, ways of expressing multicultural values, and the dynamics of multicultural values in Indonesian novels of the 2000s, and Adji (2017) which explored multicultural relations in the novel *Spring* by Almino Situmorang. Morris (2017) and Suárez (2017) highlighted the complex relationship between multiculturalism and national identity, with Morris focusing on the Australian context and Suárez on the Canadian context. Karim and Nasir (2014) investigated the relationship between multiculturalism and feminist concerns, with Karim examining novels of the South Asian diaspora and Nasir exploring New Zealand literature. Mustofa (2023) analyzed views and stereotypes towards ethnic Chinese in French travel writing. Meanwhile, Sentana, Felayati, and Blace (2023)

identified Javanese historiography during the Dutch colonialism period. Mustofa, Udasmoro, and Saktimulya (2023) analyzed the development of Western explorers' self-construction through their travel writings in the Eastern world. The above studies collectively underscore that multiculturalism often involves negotiating cultural identities and power dynamics.

This article was written as a response to the gap found in the literature above which tends to highlight postcolonial studies in various contexts and focuses attention on general literature or literary works from various colonial contexts. This article emphasizes the relatively under-explored perspective of 19th century French and Belgian explorers in representing cultural difference and narratives of intercultural encounter. Based on the postcolonial paradigm, this research is expected to provide new insights and make substantial contributions to understanding the complexity of intercultural relations at that time. This research has two main questions: first, how are representations of cultural difference articulated in 19th century French travel writing about the Dutch East Indies? And second, how do these representations reflect the asymmetries of intercultural power relations? Within this framework, the study pays close attention to themes of orientalism, ethnocentrism, and the construction of cultural hierarchies, showing how European travelers' perspectives both reflected and reinforced colonial authority.

By exploring the travel writings *Voyages autour du monde et naufrages célèbres* (1843) by Gabriel Lafond de Lurcy and *Un Séjour dans l'île de Java* (1898) by Jules Leclercq, this research seeks to uncover narratives that reflect stereotypes, cultural colonialism, and respect for local culture. This research aims to deepen understanding of the complexity of representations of cultural difference in French-language travel writing in the 19th century, by investigating how Europeans responded to and represented local identities as part of cultural diversity in a colonial context, where European culture was often considered superior.

## **II. METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on text analysis and interpretation of 19th century French travel writings. In this study, "French travel writing" refers broadly to travel accounts written in French, regardless of the author's national origin. The two primary sources analyzed are *Voyages autour du monde et naufrages célèbres* by Gabriel Lafond de Lurcy (1843) published by Pourrat frères (Paris) and *Un Séjour dans l'île de Java* (1898) by Jules Leclercq published by Librairie Plon. The selection of these texts is not intended for a direct comparative analysis between Lurcy and Leclercq but rather for their contribution to a shared discursive field of 19th century colonial travel writing. Both authors, though from different national backgrounds (French and Belgian), wrote in French and engaged with similar colonial contexts, particularly the Dutch East Indies under Dutch rule. Their writings are thus examined as representative articulations of a dominant Western discourse that framed the East through orientalist and ethnocentric lenses. Accordingly, the

study treats these texts less as individual expressions of national difference than as part of a common cultural and ideological repertoire that reinforced Western cultural superiority.

The data collection employs the review method. Textual analysis using a postcolonial paradigm was carried out on the data that had been collected to see the representation of cultural difference in French travel writing. To systematize the process, the texts were coded thematically: passages were segmented and labeled according to categories such as cultural description, colonial perspective, and power relations. The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, identifying local cultural representations. The analysis focuses on identifying and understanding the representation of local culture in French travel writing which includes how the authors described the daily life, traditions, and cultural values of the local community. Second, mapping the authors' views on colonialism. Postcolonial analysis involves mapping French authors' orientations towards colonialism which includes identifying ethnocentric or orientalist views in their travel writing. Third, analyzing the inequality narratives. The aspects of inequality in intercultural relations are the focus of analysis to see how travel writing narratives reflect power dynamics such as signs of superiority of certain cultures, both explicitly and implicitly. The analytic strategy combined discourse analysis to uncover how language constructs images of the Other and power relations with thematic categorization to classify recurring motifs across the texts. For validation, peer debriefing was conducted with colleagues familiar with postcolonial literary analysis to cross-check interpretations.

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Food and Exotic Identity of the Dutch East Indies in the Eyes of Western Explorers**

Travel writing becomes a medium for recording explorers' interactions with local culture (Lisle, 2006). Various forms of Dutch East Indies culture and traditions were observed by Western explorers and narrated in their travel writings. Lurcy and Lecrecq's journey to the Dutch East Indies was an important moment in their interaction with the rich and diverse local culture. In the 19th century, the Dutch East Indies, now known as Indonesia, were under the strong influence of the Dutch Kingdom, which had a significant impact on local culture, including in the context of culinary culture. One aspect that Lurcy and Lecrecq paid attention to was the food culture that existed in the Dutch colonial region.

*Le repas javanais par excellence est le rijsttafel, sorte de carry tellement compliqué qu'il faut renoncer à le décrire. L'élément fondamental du plat est une immense montagne de riz cuit à l'eau, mais il y a tant d'accessoires, tant d'épices, servant d'assaisonnement, qu'il faut plusieurs allées et venues des coulies pour les apporter de la cuisine, en sorte que servir un rijsttafel est un travail de près d'un quart d'heure ce sont des morceaux de bœuf ou de buffle, des volailles, des légumes nageant dans le bouillon, de petits poissons rouges de macassar, une demi-douzaine de savantes sauces de carry, des salades, des piments qui laissent dans la bouche les plus cuisantes sensations, vingt friandises inconnues disposées sur un même plat par*

*compartiments distincts. Heureux vétéran qui connaît le nom et le goût de toutes ces choses; mais malheur au novice qui ne peut en prendre qu'au hasard!* (Leclercq, 1898, pp. 19–20)

A typical Javanese dish is *rijsttafel*, a type of curry so complex it is difficult to describe. The basic ingredient of this dish is a mountain of rice cooked in water, but there are so many side dishes and spices that the servants have to bring from the kitchen, that serving the *rijsttafel* takes almost a quarter of an hour. This dish consists of pieces of beef or buffalo, poultry, brothy vegetable soup, small red carp from Makassar, half a dozen complex curry sauces, salads, chilies that leave a spicy sensation in the mouth, twenty unknown delicacies arranged in the same plate with different compartments. Blessed are the seniors who know the names and tastes of all these dishes; but woe to the novice who can only take it at random!

*Rijsttafel* is a dish consisting of complex components with rice as the important part and served with various side dishes served by servants in several servings (Nurlitasari & Ikaningtyas, 2022; Rahman, 2016). In the context of the quote above, Leclercq admires the complexity and completeness of the *rijsttafel* which consists of various types of side dishes and seasonings served alternately. For Leclercq, *rijsttafel* culture is a luxurious and challenging culinary experience. However, he also noted in his travel writing that for those unfamiliar with the taste and variety of *rijsttafel* dishes, it can be a confusing and even frightening experience. The narrative underscoring the confusion and fear of the *rijsttafel* served to strengthen Leclercq's position as part of the West. The foreignness encountered in food culture creates distance and boundaries between himself and others. In other words, the narrative about *rijsttafel* reflects Leclercq's strategy to utilize food narratives to strengthen the concept of otherness in colonial culture. This resonates with Edward Said's notion of the "exotic East," where difference is emphasized and exaggerated to sustain Western cultural superiority. Furthermore, Leclercq's self-positioning as an observer who categorizes and interprets local practices reflects what Mary Louise Pratt (1992) terms the "monarch-of-all-I-survey" gaze, a rhetorical stance through which European travelers claimed authority over foreign spaces and cultures. By constructing distance through food, Leclercq not only exoticizes Javanese culture but also situates himself within a discourse of spatial and cultural dominance, aligning with Pratt's theory of colonial representation. Therefore, the representation of the East through the typical Dutch East Indies food culture is used as an identity for the other that is different, exotic, and full of mystery *vis-à-vis* typical European food culture.

The strengthening of the boundary between self and other is underlined by the following food narrative.

*Le rijsttafel est suivi d'un dessert composé des fruits les plus savoureux de l'Inde, la mangue, le mangistan, le ramboetan, le doekoe, la papaye, la banane, et surtout le succulent pamplemousse, sorte d'orange à chair violette, plus grosse qu'un melon, dont Bernardin de Saint-Pierre a propagé le nom dans le monde entier par son immortel poème de Paul et*

*Virginie. La plupart de ces fruits ont un goût exotique qui ne plaît guère au nouveau venu, et auquel il faut s'habituer (Leclercq, 1898, pp. 19–20)*

Rijsttafel is served with a dessert consisting of the most delicious fruits from the Dutch East Indies such as mango, mangosteen, rambutan, duku, papaya, banana, and especially the very delicious orange, which is a type of orange with purple flesh, bigger than a melon whose name Bernardin de Saint-Pierre made famous throughout the world through his eternal poetry, Paul and Virginie. Most of these fruits have an exotic taste that is not very popular with newcomers and requires getting used to.

Leclercq narrated that the enjoyment of *rijsttafel* is not only limited to the main dish, but is also complemented by various exotic fruits that were only found in the Dutch East Indies region. Fruits such as mango, mangosteen, rambutan, duku, papaya, banana and pomelo are said to be an important part of the gastronomic experience in the Dutch colony. For Leclercq, these fruits not only enrich the dish, but also become a symbol of the exoticism and uniqueness of the Dutch East Indies. However, he also noted that the exotic taste of these fruits was often difficult for Europeans to accept. This attitude reflects what Edward Said (1978, 2003) identified as the orientalist gaze: a way of framing the East as exotic, different, and ultimately inferior when measured against European norms. The simultaneous fascination with and rejection of local fruits can also be read through Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, where colonial discourse produces attraction and repulsion at the same time, reinforcing the instability of colonial authority. Furthermore, the emphasis on culinary difference works to clarify the boundary between self and other, echoing Pratt's (1992) notion of "contact zones" in which cultural encounters are narrated through asymmetrical power relations. In this way, Leclercq's descriptions of fruit both exoticize local culture and reinforce a sense of Western superiority, revealing how food becomes a symbolic marker of cultural distance in colonial discourse. Appreciation of multiculturalism in the above context is carried out while still emphasizing the differences and isolation of these cultures. This means that the boundaries between the self as the West and the other as the East are clarified through the contradiction between European culinary norms and local culinary norms which are considered wild and unusual.

### **Between Religion and Superstition: Western Perceptions of the Dutch East Indies**

Everything outside the Western explorers' self-culture was considered part of the other, including belief systems. For European explorers, the people of the Dutch East Indies, especially Javanese, were described as a society that believed in mystical, superstitious and irrational.

*Il [le Javanais] croit aux génies et aux sorciers, et lorsqu'une maladie a fait périr quelque membre de sa famille ou détruit ses bestiaux, ou bien encore lorsque, plusieurs fois de suite, sa pêche n'a pas été heureuse, il pense qu'on lui a jeté un sort ; alors, il s'enivre en buvant de l'opium, et il n'est pas rare qu'il commette un meurtre pour briser le charme qui pèse sur lui. (Lurcy, 1843, p. 196)*

Javanese people believe in spirits and shamans, and when a member of their family dies of disease or their livestock dies, or if their catch is not successful in a row, they assume that someone has cast a spell on them; then they intoxicate themselves by consuming opium and often they commit murder to break the curse that befalls them.

Javanese people were described as a jealous and vengeful society, and believed in spirits and the occult. When facing misfortune such as the death of a family member or a bad harvest, Javanese people thought it was caused by magic. The solution that was often taken is violence, opium consumption, or even suicide as a way to break a curse. Illogical attitudes and full of superstitions are the characteristics of Eastern nations as discoursed by Western nations (Said, 2003). Narratives that highlight stereotypes about Eastern peoples are explorers' attempt to denigrate Javanese as a reinforcement of the orientalist discourse which shows that the East is the other that must be civilized. Placed in dialogue with Leclercq's culinary narratives, this portrayal of superstition reveals a recurring colonial trope: Javanese life is abundant and varied, yet irrational and lacking refinement. Just as rijsttafel and tropical fruits are represented as excessive without true sophistication, so too are Javanese beliefs reduced to magical thinking and superstition. Together, these depictions function as a systematic rhetorical strategy to frame Javanese society as complex on the surface but deficient in rationality and civilization, thereby legitimizing Western cultural hegemony.

*En général l'industrie agricole, malgré la fécondité de son sol, y est encore fort arriérée, car la population tient beaucoup à ses anciennes coutumes et superstitions* (Lurcy, 1843, p. 229)

In general, the agricultural industry, despite the fertility of its soil, is still very lagging, because the population is very attached to its ancient customs and superstitions

In telling self, explorers often denigrate the foreign objects they encounter. The other becomes different from the self. Therefore, travel writing tends to highlight things which are different. Travel writing tends to have an ownership imagination of everything encountered, which Pratt (1992) calls the monarch-of-all-I-surveys. As a result, explorers often show an arrogant and superior attitude in their encounters with others, which in the next stage creates a process of othering. In the context of the quote above, from an economic perspective, Western explorers noted that although Java's land was fertile, its agricultural industry was still lagging behind because the population adhered to ancient customs and superstitions. This reflects how European writers saw deficiencies in local economic development as a result of the people's unwillingness to abandon their traditions. This means that the Javanese's illogicality in life was an obstacle to becoming a superior nation. Western intervention was important to help get out of uncivilization.

The pretext for civilization by the West is constructed and represented through science and literary works. Western explorers, as well as writers of literary works about the Eastern world, continuously maintained this imaginary construction through massive reproductions of travel writing. Travel writings to European colonies in the 18th and 19th centuries contain

the interests of Europeans who wanted to bring the non-European world into a position where it could be influenced, exploited, or directly controlled (Huberman, 2008; Khair, 2008).

## **Orientalism and Cultural Hierarchy**

French travel writings in the 19th century reflect European ethnocentric views of non-European cultures. Although some explorers demonstrated curiosity and appreciation for cultural diversity, their views were often influenced by beliefs in the superiority of European culture and biases that placed non-European cultures in an inferior position. This results in representations of others that are often exotic and stereotypical and reflect the attitudes of Western nations at that time towards multiculturalism.

In the context of travel writing, the various cultures and traditions encountered by explorers are not simply described narratively, but are judged and positioned through the eyes of explorers as part of the West. Judgment and the power to categorize others in a hierarchy became the specialty of Western nations in hegemonizing non-European nations through various linguistic, military, economic, social, and cultural devices (Staszak, 2008). The positioning of Western explorers towards others appears in various narratives that denigrate others. Condescension is made towards various elements of life encountered while traveling in a foreign world. The religious system adopted by the Javanese people, for example, is also a highlight for Lurcy. His presence in Java created an opportunity to witness religious practices in Java and the attitudes and views of Javanese people regarding belief in God.

*Les Javanais ont embrassé la religion mahométane depuis plus de trois siècles [...] Ils n'ont en général qu'une connaissance vague et superficielle de leur religion, et se contentent d'en suivre quelques pratiques extérieures, telles que la circoncision, les ablutions, le jeûne annuel, etc. Il n'y a même qu'un très-petit nombre de prêtres qui soient en état de lire et de comprendre le Coran ; les autres sont de l'ignorance la plus complète* (Lurcy, 1843, p. 195)

Javanese people have followed Islam for more than three centuries [...] Generally, they have only a vague and surface understanding of their religion, and are content with merely following a few practices such as circumcision, ablution, annual fasting, and so on. In fact, only a small number of priests are able to read and understand the Koran; others are in utter ignorance.

For Lurcy, Javanese people in the 19th century was part of a society that had adhered to Islam for more than three centuries. Religious attitudes can be seen in the rules of the Islamic religion that are practiced, such as fasting and prayer. However, according to Lurcy, this religious practice was carried out superficially and not in depth. Lurcy wrote that only a few truly understand and read the Koran, while many only follow ritual practices without deep understanding which makes the Javanese considered bad followers of Islam. Lurcy judged the behavior of the Javanese people as ignorance. Religious practices that were only carried out partially and an apathetic attitude towards understanding the holy book are the driving force for Lurcy to judge Javanese society. The stereotype narrative of Eastern society becomes a form of Lurcy's judgment as a Westerner. This stereotyping of Eastern society illustrates what Edward Said (1978, 2003) conceptualizes as the orientalist discourse, in which

the East is portrayed as irrational, backward, and inferior in contrast to the rational and civilized West.

Lurcy's judgment shows his superiority as part of the West, reflecting ethnocentrism by assessing local religion and education based on European standards. The narratives developed by Western explorers show a representation of multiculturalism that is dominated by European ethnocentric views. This narrative produces an exotic and stereotypical image of others as disadvantaged groups.

*Les indigènes ont en grande vénération ces vestiges de leurs anciennes croyances populaires, qui sont encore plus profondément enracinées dans leurs cœurs que l'islamisme qu'ils professent actuellement.* (Leclercq, 1898, p. 25)

The natives deeply revere the remains of their ancestral beliefs which are more deeply rooted in their hearts than the Islam they currently adhere.

Islam in Javanese culture does not create a big influence in the lives of Javanese people. This is due to the strong beliefs of their ancestors and past religious practices which are still preserved by the Javanese people. For Leclercq, Islam does not appear to have had much influence on Javanese civilization. On the contrary, Leclercq believes that the Javanese civilization tends to stagnate and even decline.

*Quand on compare les pauvres mosquées que construisent aujourd'hui les Javanais aux majestueux monuments qu'édifièrent leurs ancêtres, on reste confondu de la profondeur de la déchéance. Les Javanais ont perdu l'art de ces admirables bâtisseurs du Boroboedoer et des Mille Temples ; ils ne savent plus faire des arches, des coupes, des voûtes. L'introduction de l'Islam a étouffé chez eux le génie de l'architecture. Quoi d'étonnant qu'une religion aussi sensuelle soit contraire au développement des arts!* (Leclercq, 1898, p. 152)

When we compare the fragile mosques built by Javanese today with the magnificent monuments built by their ancestors, we are struck by the severity of their fall. The Javanese have lost the art of the builders of the magnificent Borobudur and Thousand Temples; they no longer know how to make curves and domes. The arrival of Islam has stifled the soul of their architecture. What is surprising that such a sensual religion is contrary to the development of the arts!

The quote above shows that the Javanese had lost their ability to create magnificent buildings that show their high civilization. For Leclercq, the existence of Islam is the main factor that reduces the capabilities of the Javanese people. In this context, the exploitation of Islamic stereotypes shows and strengthens Western sentiment towards Islam. Stereotypes, whether linked to age, race, ethnicity, or gender, function by amplifying cultural disparities and often reproduce negative images of marginalized groups (Arifatin, 2019; Ayedoji, 2021; Prasetyaningrum & Ahdiani, 2024; Trisnawati et al., 2024). As Apriyani and Rosly (2024) emphasize, knowledge is inseparable from power, and the production of knowledge generates forms of power that can legitimize and sustain stereotypes. In this sense, stereotypes are not merely descriptive but operate as instruments of domination, reinforcing

hierarchical relations between self and other. The 19th century French travel writings reinforce stereotypes that position the explorers' self as hegemonic *vis-à-vis* the other being viewed. When read together with food and superstition narratives, architecture and religion are folded into the same discursive pattern that Javanese society is represented as capable of producing visible variety (be it dishes, fruits, rituals, or monuments) but ultimately framed as stagnant, corrupted, or inferior. The argument is consistent across domains that the East is acknowledged for its surface richness yet simultaneously denied true depth or progress, a strategy that sustains the orientalist logic of Western superiority.

The attitude of European explorers towards others shows their view as part of 19th century white society. The views of orientalism and ethnocentrism are intertwined and position Europe as a superior nation.

*Les Javanais ont coutume de battre le tambour au clair de lune, parce qu'ils croient que, sans cette précaution, la lune viendrait en contact avec la terre. Ces naïves populations en sont encore aux superstitions des peuplades de l'Afrique centrale* (Lecrecq, 1898, p. 182)

Javanese people have a custom of beating the drum in the moonlight because they believe that the moon would be in contact with the earth without the beating. These naive people are still caught up in the superstitions of central African tribes.

Javanese's belief in things beyond reason strengthens the orientalist view that developed in European society. Eastern nations in the orientalist view of European colonialists are positioned as nations lagging behind in beliefs and civilization (Said, 2003). The relationship between Eastern and Western nations is conditioned in a hierarchical position, placing Eastern nations as inferior. Western superiority in the quote above, for example, can be seen in the condescending narrative of the Javanese in terms of science. The low level of Javanese civilization compared to African nations strengthened the superior position of Belgian explorers as part of Western nations.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The journey of Westerners to the Eastern world in the 19th century showed the potential for strengthening orientalism and ethnocentrism. French travel writings reflect the authors' orientation towards colonialism. This means that travel narratives that highlight the diversity of other cultures tend to position the explorers as a superior entity. Hegemony is perpetuated through othering that strengthens oneself as the center while negating the position of others. Other cultures are understood and explained through various inferior traits so that they can be hegemonized through narratives of denigration and exploitation of others's stereotypes. In other words, travel writing records various forms of exploitation that lead to the condescension of others.

The 19th century French travel writings as a product of the West do not yet reflect multicultural values. The value of intercultural equality failed to be demonstrated by Western explorers during their encounters with others in the Eastern world. The differences

encountered do not give rise to an open attitude and tolerance, but instead create a hierarchical relationship between self and other. In other words, the superiority attitude of the explorers is actually strengthened through the negative narratives presented in their travel writings.

Beyond the historical context, these findings remain relevant today, particularly in ongoing decolonial discourse, where critical engagement with colonial-era narratives is essential to fostering intercultural understanding. This study highlights the need to revisit and reassess travel literature not only as cultural artifacts but also as tools that have shaped perceptions of the Other across time. For future research, comparative studies with English or Dutch travel writings, as well as analyses of texts written by women travel writers, could provide a broader perspective on how cultural hegemony and orientalist discourses were negotiated across linguistic, gendered, and colonial contexts.

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