

The Empire Illuminated: Electricity, ethical colonialism and enlightened monarchy in photographs of Dutch royal celebrations, 1898-1948.

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The Empire Illuminated: Electricity, "ethical" colonialism and enlightened monarchy in photographs of Dutch royal celebrations, 1898-1948

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Abstract

This article examines photographs of royal festivals in the Netherlands and the Netherlands Indies (colonial Indonesia) during the reign of Queen Wilhelmina (1898-1948). The association of electricity with the royal House of Orange in vernacular visual culture expressed the idealised connections made, in colonial as well as in Dutch politics, between the queen and the Ethical Policy in the Indies. Electric lights and nocturnal illuminations featured strongly in images of royal celebrations in the Indies from the early 1900s onwards—a

pattern that was not followed in the Netherlands until the late 1930s. Monarchy was thus particularly linked with modernity in Dutch colonies in Asia during the twentieth century.



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