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Provenance report regarding Model van een saron, kinderspeeldgoed [Model of a saron - children's toys]

Drieënhuizen, Caroline

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Provenance report regarding Model van een saron, kinderspeelgoed [*Model of a saron – children’s toys*]

Caroline Drieënhuizen

 <p><i>Photo: Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.no. TH-H-350a</i></p>	Title	Model van een saron, kinderspeelgoed A model of a <i>saron</i> — children’s toy
	Custodian	NMVW Tropenmuseum
	Current possessor	Dutch State
	Inventory number	TM-H-350a (<i>saron</i>)
	Material/technique	Wood, bamboo, nails, wool yarn
	Measurements	Frame: 26cm x 3.5cm x 12/22cm.

Summary of findings

Although there is no conclusive evidence, based on her collecting practices in later life, Martine Tonnet (1866-1919) probably bought this model in Yogyakarta between 1893 and 1903-1904. Tonnet came back to the Netherlands on furlough in 1903-1904. On 10 October 1907 she donated the model, together with other objects like the Chinese ointment jar (see Provenance report: Chinese ointment jar), to the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem. After the establishment of the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam the objects in Haarlem became part of the collections of what is now called the Tropenmuseum (part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen).

Reconstruction provenance

[no date] – [no date]

Probably made in Java, Yogyakarta,

Between 1893/1903-1904 – 10 October 1907

Martine Tonnet (1866-1919) in Yogyakarta

[Museum card Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen., TM-H-350a and TM-H-350b].

10 October 1907-1926

Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem

[Letter M. Greshoff to Martine Tonnet, d.d. Haarlem, 14 October 1907, Family archive Eindhoven, the Netherlands].

1926-present

Koloniaal Instituut (today NMVW Tropenmuseum)

Introduction and context

Object information

This is a model of a *saron* — a musical instrument, a metallophone, with six or seven bronze or iron keys placed on a wooden, resonating frame, which is part of the gamelan ensemble. It is played with a wooden or horn mallet.

The frame of the model is designed in unpainted board. The keys, placed in between nails, were made of iron, but today are missing. Wool yarn is wound between the nails. The accompanying mallet, which no longer exists, was made of wood and bamboo covered with wool yarn.

In museum collections one can find more examples of these kinds of model musical instruments of the gamelan. However, unadorned models like this are rather unique. Most models are nicely decorated. Three similar undecorated models of a *saron* are part of the Artis-collection: TM-A-4393d-1, TM-A-4393d-2, and TM-A-4393d-3.

These kinds of models were mostly used to provide a European audience insight into the placing of a gamelan orchestra without the need of having a big orchestra. However, this particular model is described by the museum as being a children's toy.¹

¹ See inventory card TM-H-350a (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, the Netherlands).

Biography of the donator

The miniature *saron* with mallet was probably made in Java, Yogyakarta, at an unknown date around the turn of the century. It was collected by Martine ('Tine') Tonnet (1866-1919) in that particular city in Central-Java sometime between 1893 and 1903.



Martine ('Tine') Tonnet around 1900 in *sarung* and *kebaya*. Private collection Eindhoven, the Netherlands

Tine Tonnet was educated as a school teacher, but developed herself as a specialist of Indian and Indonesian archaeology and of arts and crafts and became a renowned art and antiquities dealer in Calcutta, India. In Batavia in 1908 she was appointed as probably the first Dutch female museum curator. Tonnet's career in Asia started in 1893 when she decided to travel to the Dutch colony of Indonesia to work as a governess with a Dutch coffee planters family in the vicinity of Klaten. She did not stay very long, but remained in Indonesia until 1903 or early 1904, where she taught in schools and acquired an interest in Javanese culture and history.

Although it is not completely possible to trace Tine Tonnet's whereabouts in Indonesia at this stage of her life, she was invited for dinner and a ball at the palace (*keraton*) in Yogyakarta in January 1899² and lived there to "study the customs and manners of the Javanese and their industry" probably toward the end of 1902 and first months of 1903.³

In this latter period she stimulated the production of artefacts by Javanese craftsmen for the European market ensuring these craftsmen could profit financially.⁴ In this she joined other European ladies in Yogyakarta, like Catharina 'Trijntje' ter Horst-de Boer (1861-1938) who, inspired by the Ethical Policy, shared the same outlook on the "uplifting" of local art and culture.⁵ It is a fact that they knew each other in 1916, but perhaps their relationship was already much older.⁶

In the spring of 1903, Tonnet traveled back to Holland and lived in both Haarlem and The Hague. In Leiden she started to study Sanskrit and continued studying Javanese. Between 1904 and 1907 she maintained a lively though sometimes cumbersome correspondence with several scholars on colonial Indonesia, such as the ethnographic museum directors in Leiden, J. Schmeltz and H.H. Juynboll, the director of the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem, E.A. von Saher, the archaeologist and man of letters, J.L.A. Brandes, and J.E. Jasper, a specialist on Indonesian arts and crafts.⁷ She also exchanged letters with the founding father of the Ethical Policy, C. Th. van Deventer.

² Invitation from the resident on behalf of the sultan of Yogyakarta, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

³ 'Kantwerk van leer,' *De Locomotief*, 6 April 1903. 'Het bestudeeren van de zeden en gewoonten der Javanen en van hun industrie.'

⁴ *De Locomotief*, 2 april 1903.

⁵ 'Mw Ter Horst-de Boer,' *Het Vaderland*, 5 June 1938.

⁶ Letter Martine Tonnet to H.J. Boelen, d.d. Yogyakarta, 8 March 1916, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

⁷ See the correspondence archives of the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden and Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (both part of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen), 302, inv.nr. 2, KITLV-archive, University Library Leiden, Leiden, the Netherlands; Family archive Heemstede and, Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

In these years, Tonnet researched *wayang* and the decoration programs of temples like Candi Panataran and wrote on leather processing. Furthermore, she reviewed local Dutch colonial exhibitions.⁸ To the exhibition of the “arts, crafts, and home manufacturing” of colonial Indonesia in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1906, she donated a *bokor*, a copper bowl.⁹ Other artefacts from colonial Indonesia she donated to the museum of antiquities in Leiden and to the Koloniaal Museum in Haarlem.¹⁰ In the same year, Tine Tonnet was also involved in the exhibition on colonial Indonesia in Krefeld, Germany, which also set the objective of promoting the Indonesian arts and crafts for the financial benefit of the Indonesian people.¹¹

Provenance report

The *saron* and mallet were part of a larger collection of objects that Tonnet donated on 10 October 1907. At least 34 other “very diverse objects” were also provided, amongst which were sewing tools, a pipe, jewelry, musical instruments, the Chinese ointment jar (which is discussed in its own provenance report), and two antique spear-points unearthed in East-Java.¹²

The still existing inventory card of the museum, made just after the Second World War, mentions Yogyakarta as place of manufacturing of the *saron*. Although the original inventory book only mentions the donation as a whole (and the accompanying more detailed list has not been found yet), the credibility of the origin of Yogyakarta as place of origin is strengthened as a newspaper mention the sewing tool’s origin as Pasar Gedeh, near Yogyakarta.¹³ Furthermore, Tine Tonnet lived in Yogyakarta in 1902-1903, and her activities and interests at that time (researching the “customs and manners of the Javanese”¹⁴ and promoting the arts and crafts in order to help the Javanese craftsmen) make it likely that she collected the *saron* with mallet in Yogyakarta at the end of 1902 or the first months of 1903 and took it with her when she sailed to Holland in April 1903.

Her collecting practices in later life when she settled in India, which are documented, might shed some light on her manner of acquiring objects. When she ran antique stores in Calcutta, India (sometimes working on commission), she made use of middlemen, “merchants,” and “hawkers,” who could visit her there and offer her their goods.¹⁵ Poor people visited her, too, selling her their valuables, such as the widow in Calcutta who sold Tonnet her napkin ring.¹⁶ Occasionally, Tonnet had personal assistants

⁸ *Apeldoornsche Courant*, 27 July 1907.

⁹ *Catalogus van de tentoonstelling van Ned. Indische kunst, kunstnijverheid en huisvlijt in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam, 8 Aug.-8 Sept. 1906* ([?]: Amsterdam, 1906) 53.

¹⁰ *Catalogus van de tentoonstelling van Ned. Indische kunst, kunstnijverheid en huisvlijt in het Stedelijk Museum te Amsterdam, 8 Aug.-8 Sept. 1906* ([?]: Amsterdam, 1906) 53.

¹¹ *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 7 November 1906. This was the ‘Niederländisch-Indische Kunstausstellung’ in the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Museum in Krefeld. The exhibition took place from 5 October until 4 November 1906.

¹² This is the amount of objects listed in the current museum database TMS. However, this does not mean the original donation of 1907 was larger; *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 17 August 1908 ; “Een aantal zeer verschillende voorwerpen (volgens lijst).” Inventory book Colonial Museum Haarlem, Tropenmuseum (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen), Amsterdam.

¹³ *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 17 August 1908.

¹⁴ *De Locomotief*, 2 April 1903.

¹⁵ Letter Martine Tonnet to her sister Anna Maria Klinkenberg-Tonnet, Calcutta, 15 July 1918, Family archive Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

¹⁶ Incomplete letter from Martine Tonnet to an unknown recipient, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

working on her behalf.¹⁷ She also traveled, for instance, to Darjeeling to collect objects in order to sell them elsewhere: some of these objects from her trip to Darjeeling in the first two months of 1913 were donated to the ethnographic museum in Leiden.¹⁸ Tonnet also bought modern Indian miniature paintings of her friend Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), the founding father of modern Indian art, and exhibited and sold his paintings to the public.

Furthermore, Tonnet imported artefacts from Indonesia, mainly Java, to show the Indian Art Circle in Calcutta and to sell them.¹⁹ She also collected on request. Sometimes she even wrote the director of the ethnographic museum in Leiden asking if he already had a specific object, indicating that if he would like to have such an artefact, she was able to buy it in certain districts in Calcutta.²⁰ One of the venues where she was able to sell her objects was at the exhibitions she organised or helped to organise: the British India Art-exhibition in Medan in 1914 and the Colonial Exhibition in Semarang in 1914, among others.

But this was ten years *after* her donation of the *saron* and mallet and *after* she had made a name for herself as a former curator of the Bataviaasch Genootschap (from 1908 until 1910), collector and expert of Indian and Indonesian artefacts. Just before her untimely death in 1919 she wrote to her sister about her reputation: "as you can see I am considered here a seasoned art dealer, which is not that bad and I have, if I say so myself, a lot of experience of goods gained by the fact that a lot passed through my hands."²¹ Perhaps Tonnet's donation twelve years earlier was intended to introduce herself and her knowledge to the Dutch museums.

The donation of the *saron* and mallet ("children's toys") resembles Tonnet's regular gifts to her nieces and nephews in Holland. In 1916, for instance, she sent them what she called "toys:" a Chinese compass, the skin of lizards, silver paper, a tea set, a small *keris*, and a small Japanese box.²² For her, apparently rarities like a compass or box could be children's toys. It is uncertain whether models like the *saron* and mallet were solely made for the European market (in consideration of their prevalence in Dutch museum collections one tends to believe so) or for Indonesian children.



Martine Tonnet in later life,
Family archive

¹⁷ Letter Martine Tonnet to her mother Anna Maria Thiel, Calcutta, 10 March 1917, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

¹⁸ This is inventory number RV-1850-* (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, the Netherlands).

¹⁹ Letter Martine Tonnet to H.J. Boelen, d.d. Semarang, 6 March 1917, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

²⁰ Letter Martine Tonnet to museum director Hendrik H. Juynboll, d.d. Calcutta, 24 April 1913, Folder 84, Correspondence archive, Archives of the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden, the Netherlands.

²¹ "Je ziet ik word hier als een geroutineerde handelaarster beschouwd, wat zo kwaad nog niet is en ik heb, al zeg ik het zelf, veel ervaring opgedaan van goederen daar er ontzettend veel door mijn handen is gegaan." Letter from Tine Tonnet to her sister Stans Berends-Tonnet, 9 January 1919, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

²² Letter Martine Tonnet to her nephew Akietje (Adriaan Klinkenberg), d.d. Yogyakarta, 8 March 1916, Family archive Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.