

Explore Lab 2024

DIARY OF A CITY

THREE REFLECTIONS ON ARRIVAL

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INTRODUCTION

The first Ashkenazi Jewish population saw its birth in Appingedam, Groningen in the early 17th century. Against the odds this community flourished in this small rural city for centuries until it was decimated in the 1940s, starting with their forceful eviction to the Dutch concentration/transit camp Westerbork. My grandmother is the last survivor of this community.

After the war, Kamp Westerbork - renamed Schattenberg - saw the arrival of a new community, the Moluccans. Intended to be a temporary stay whilst the Dutch negotiated their independence as a state from Indonesia, the years saw little progress as it became evident that this temporary stay was quickly becoming permanent. In 1960 it was proclaimed that the Moluccan community would be rehoused permanently across the province of Groningen, with the first city of permanent dwelling being Appingedam. A city which can be walked across in 25 minutes now bore witness to the birth of two significant communities within the Netherlands, centuries apart. Although there could never have been any crossover (one community terminated prior to the other starting) this is the story of how to analyse the intrinsically spiritual connections between the two, and how a new direction for commemoration - one that focuses on the power of a multiplicity of memory rather than the privacy and exclusivity of a single collective remembrance - can be brought forward.

This text explores three accounts of life in Appingedam, with a particular focus on the notion of arrival. The first is my own; my arrival - both physically and spiritually - in a city which has sat quietly in the background of my life since the very beginning. The second is that of my grandma's return to Appingedam in hiding after the war had ended. The third is that of Charles Mingus Mingus and Rudy Pattipeiluhu, two Moluccans born in the Dutch camp Carel Coenradpolder (a camp opened after Schattenberg became too small) and their arrival in Appingedam.

These three distinct chronicles of arrival weave a tapestry both infinitely intricate and gracefully lucid - a map of memory that unfurls and unfolds. As the layers of Appingedam are delicately peeled apart, disparate threads of personal narratives intertwine - a testament to collective remembrance.

Walking time
(minutes)

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

Distance
(km)

0.25

0.5

0.25

1

0.25

0.5

0.25

1

1

0.25

0.5

0.25

1

0.25

0.5

0.25

Distance
(km)

Nieuwstraat

The Synagogue

Archive

Moluccan Quarter

Nicolaikerk

Moluccan Church

Adamistraat

Appingedam
City Map

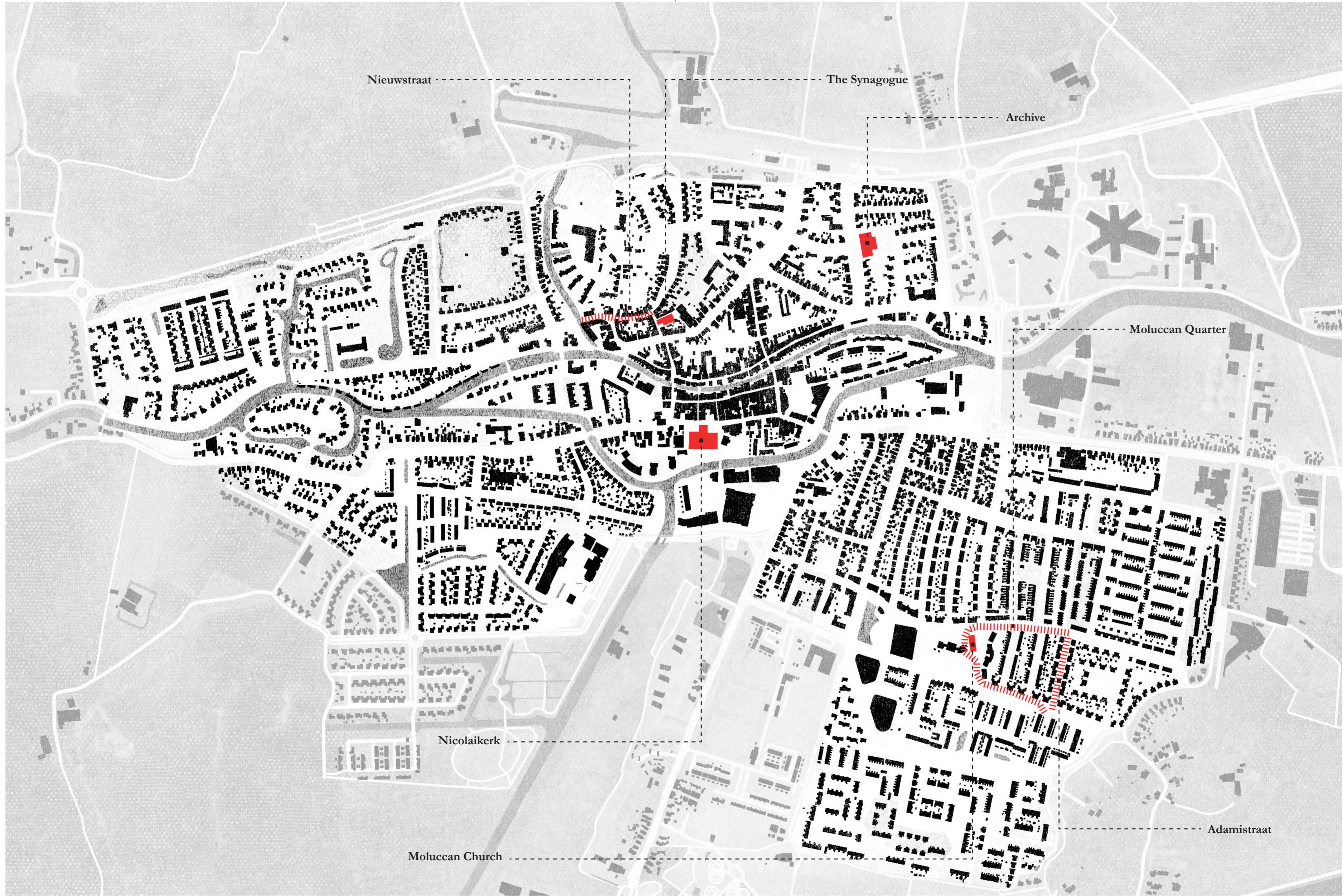


0m

100m

500m

1km





- Jewish life in Nieuwstraat, Appingedam -



- Moluccan life in Adamistraat, Appingedam -

SCENE I

From day to night, a city happens twice -

- let's begin with the sight of me with a scarf that is too short looped and tucked around my neck, uncomfortable and comfortable in equal measure trying to keep the chill of a basement room at bay. Some hours earlier Jeroen, the head archivist led me down metal stairs that flex and creak just too much under the weight of two people but this is clearly something that is easy to get used to after years of existence in such a building since the agility with which Jeroen flittered down the steps displayed a total confidence in his territory. There is a certain baritone bitterness to the timbre of the voice of a man who used to smoke a pack a day for decades but has long since abandoned that habit -

'Haf you come far?'

I had.

Jeroen welcomed me into the archive with a long, slender arm ending in a hand with seemingly too many knuckles that wouldn't look out of place amongst the desperate, gezellig company of van Gogh's *Potato Eaters*.

The archive squeezed into the bowels of the *Stadskantoor* Appingedam was so ordinary it could have been dreamt.

Rereading Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995) prior to my arrival in Appingedam I was struck by an intense sense of profundity behind the symbolism of this visit. With ink

spilled in Derrida's typically dense prose, the transcribed lecture hops from self-indulgent paranoia to beautiful musings on the psychoanalytical and societal force of the Archive (capitalised to indicate the difference between Derrida's arguably over-intellectualised theoretical archive and the cold basement room of Appingedam's *Stadskantoor*). His etymological dissection lends a certain weight to *archive* as a verb: "Arkhe we recall, names at once the commencement and the commandment. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, there where things commence-physical, historical, or ontological principle-but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given-nomological principle" (p. 9) To place an archive in such a theoretical context simultaneously aids and distracts from the act of remembering. To be hyper-aware of my actions when thumbing through the thinning, yellowing transcriptions of local council meetings concerning street lighting in the Moluccan quarter of Appingedam in 1976 was equally important to the act itself. To analyse the significance of this act is to crystallise it twice, but to some degree the over-analysis can lead to the dilution of a true purpose within an archive. Whilst gently picking up the ever-softening leaves of paper with typewriter ink slowly seeping into the pulp over the decades I couldn't help but question the relevance of Derrida's postulations. "...the archive is made possible by the death, aggression, and destruction drive, that is to say also by originary

finitude and expropriation. But beyond finitude as limit, there is, as we said above, this properly in-finite movement of radical destruction without which no archive desire or fever would happen” (p. 59). Is it true that no desire for archiving would exist without the ‘in-finite movement of radical destruction’? Reading the documents nestled inside the cool taupe cardboard jackets that lined the Stadskantoor’s basement I began to wonder if it was not the infinite movement of radical creation. To remember is to create and re-create, it is to put into the world. The vein of remembrance found in archives is purely didactic; we are represented with documentation as the most raw form of commemoration, without the smokescreen or psychological curation of an artistic object of remembrance. The Archive as memorial is placed within a larger context of artistic representations of memory. Along the scale of methods of memory at one end there is the purely didactic - the archive - , at the other there is the purely abstract - the artist’s flourish - .

Our emotional connection to the past is fragile. Abstraction versus archaeology, banality versus boisterousness and conceptuality versus conservation all contribute to the dicta and declarations forming the pursuit of crystallising memory. Global traumas throughout the 20th and 21st centuries have led to a rise in the use of artistic abstraction as a commemorative device, rejecting traditional visual notions of monumentalism which typically prioritise the grandiose, scale, ritual, architectural seduction and an inherent sense of cultural pride (Mitchell, 2003). This is the

aforementioned artist’s flourish. Young (2006, p.4) argues that “in the last century, the very idea of the memorial-monument and its place in modern culture...has nearly [been relegated] to the margins of modern discourse”. The 20th century saw Europe in the aftermath of two world wars, the Holocaust and the Cold War - the need for remembrance was more potent than ever and in a *Zeitgeist* of artistic critique and historical inquiry, the contentiousness of the self-serving monument begged a new discourse. The complexity and profundity of these collective traumas coincided with “...the emergence of a history of history, the awakening... of a historiographical consciousness” (Nora, 1989, p.9). Thus emerged the popularity of abstraction as a design tool for public art commemorating world-changing events.

Such formalisations of memory are the object gifted by the artist, the end of the spectrum between didacticism and abstraction. It is the artist’s flourish as a ‘sacred object’. But the potency of the memorial as ‘sacred object’ is fading drastically. It became a gift to a community who could never forget and a symbol to outsiders who should always remember. Typically constructed in societally significant public spaces and on sites in which certain atrocities occurred, the value of conceptual artistry and abstraction elevated these objects to a sacral status. The object-ness of these memorials can easily be interpreted as belonging to or owned by a specific community. This typology of memorial inherently exhibits certain shortcomings; the nature of the physical object-symbol-gift in conjunction with the

exclusivity of the owner-recipient-possessor constructs strict divisions as effectively as it can break them down. The spatial enforcement of such an unnegotiable object has the potential to drive forward a prominent us-and-them narrative. This is not a call for the rejection of the memorial as 'sacred object' but an analysis of its pitfalls and a suggestion for a new perspective in the act of collective memory. Perhaps this new perspective relies not upon the exclusivity of a single group's collective memory, but the agglomeration of a multiplicity of collective memory. Where multiple communities, however distant, share common experiences it can be profoundly beneficial to inspect the relationship between such collective memories as opposed to the simpler - arguably more convenient - method of segregative memory. Holocaust memory, in particular, can be particularly disparate as demonstrated in the constellation of monuments comprising the Memorial to Europe's Sinti and *Roma Murdered Under Nazism*, the *Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism* and the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* scattered within a 100m radius of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, each demonstrated through their own sculpturally abstract flourishes. I put forward the question of the visual manifestation of such layered collective memories; collected memory. It's true, abstraction can provide a convenient broad-brushstroke of collective semiotics, but this strength also acts as its biggest weakness; vagueness promotes exceptionally individual reflection. Such individuality can be distractingly democratic for space with such didactic purposes. A search for a spatially multi-layered storytelling can

be explored through media other than abstraction. To make a space for multiple communities, within which an individual can find both personal and collective reflections can be explored through the most unsuspecting connections -

- and so we return to the cold white basement room in Appingedam with my scarf that is too short and my fingers getting too cold as I labour through the stacks of information in its purest form, yet to be tarnished with the subjectivity of the curator of memory.



- A Jewish music group in the early 20th century, Appingedam -



- A Moluccan music group in the late 20th century, Appingedam -

SCENE II

When did I first notice that night had fallen in Appingedam? Although the pair of clerestory windows in the fluorescent white basement room of the Appingedam Archives gave ample view to the outside world, it is difficult to recall. Twilight sets in quickly in the quiet, mediaeval city surrounded on all sides by rural farmland. The city's nocturnal beauty, amplified by its mediaeval skin, had transformed it into a realm where history lingered in the shadows.

To experience a city in the dark for the first time is to retrace and restructure your understanding of the place you thought you knew. It is as if the streets go to sleep and the houses wake up; the daylight renders the glass window panes obscuring and opaque. Where the glass is transparent, the windows are opaque. As is typical of old Dutch dwellings, glimpses of domestic comfort within flutter from window to window. The night time window is far less forgiving, proudly demonstrating to the passers by the intimacy of dwelling. There is a peculiar duality to the night time window; the excitement of another life so perfectly framed, on display just for you is countered by the somewhat perverse voyeuristic nature of the scene. A carefully curated diorama of another's microcosmic existence is as intriguing as it is disquieting. The windows of Appingedam wake up; the mass of the textured brick walls shrink into the all-encompassing darkness, and it is dark. Growing up in a big

city forced me to find solace in the well-lit street. The buzz of the city became the ambience without which I struggle to sleep. A night without sirens is noticeable. As I left the dingy basement room of the Appingedam Archives, the silence was palpable. Dusk had crept up on me and the streets showed no signs of life. I was struck by the sudden awareness that I was in a city no larger than a 25 minute walk from North to South that was entirely surrounded by countryside. I felt the pearl-like quality of the city; satellite images of the earth at night with glowing orange specks came to mind as I understood that I was currently in a minute orange speck surrounded by black.

Appingedam is small. Being one of the two mediaeval cities in the province of Groningen, its historic significance seems vastly disproportionate to its village-like size. Tucked away in the Northeastern corner of the Netherlands, Appingedam saw the birth of the oldest Ashkenazi Jewish community in the Netherlands.

In 1795 my great-great-great-great-great grandfather, a 35-year-old Naftali Hirsch could no longer afford the *schutzgeld*, the tax Jews had to pay to be protected by the law. He decided to leave the country, starting a 650 kilometre journey by foot from his home in Bamberg, central Germany to the nearest Dutch city that would accommodate him. Naftali Hirsch became one of the first Ashkenazi Jews to settle in the Netherlands, finding a new home in Appingedam. The Napoleonic era, a time of profound social and legal changes, ushered in compulsory surnames in the

Netherlands. Naftali, now in his adopted homeland, acquired the legal identity of Hartog Mozes Bamberger, a name that carried the echoes of his birthplace. Settling into Appingedam, he embraced the role of a *shochet*, a butcher licensed to uphold the principles of Jewish law in the slaughter of animals and birds. This occupation was among the limited professions permitted for Jews during that period. In 1827, after years of contributing to the cultural and communal life of Appingedam, Hartog Mozes Bamberger passed away. Today, this is the oldest gravestone still standing in the city's Jewish cemetery; a testament to the enduring legacy of one of the first Ashkenazi Jews to make Appingedam his home, a pioneer who left an indelible mark on the town. The Jewish community in Appingedam flourished over the years, with many tracing their roots back to Hartog Mozes Bamberger, the esteemed *shochet* of the town. By the turn of the 20th century, the population had grown to 285, forming a culturally rich and vibrant community.

Since the earliest recollections of my childhood, visits to see my grandparents were not just about sharing food and conversation but about immersing ourselves in the intricate tapestry of our ancestry. It was a ritual, a journey into the temporal and geographical expanses of our familial history. Growing up in London, calling my Grandmother 'Oma' was a constant reminder of the unique aspects of my family. In this text I will refer to her as Oma - as a non-Dutch speaker this word did not function as a title but a name, holding equal nominative value to

'Sara Nieweg-Kirby', the great-great-great-great granddaughter of Hartog Mozes Bamberger.

For decades Oma has assumed the role of a meticulous historian, dissecting the layers of information and memories scattered across archives worldwide. With dedication bordering on obsession, she unstitched fragments of our family's narrative, patiently reweaving a profoundly complex but thorough history that spans centuries. Oma's mission was not merely to recount the past but to breathe life into forgotten names and faces, constructing a vivid tableau of our heritage. Oma's commitment to preserving our family's legacy transcended mere storytelling. For her, it was an obligation, a sacred duty to reconstruct the memory of those who had their entire families taken from them. In the mosaic of ancestral tales, she found life's ultimate purpose—a dedication that fueled her relentless pursuit of every fragment of our history. Every visit to Oma's house promised a new chapter, a fresh story unearthed from the annals of time. These narratives, often involving distant relatives with convoluted connections, featured a plethora of Dutch first names, surnames, and maiden names. In my youth, the barrage of names and dates overwhelmed me, rendering it impossible to construct a coherent narrative. Yet, I nodded in agreement, attempting to keep pace with the generations of Dutch history unfolding before me.

As the years advanced, so did my understanding of my family's saga. Recurring names and surnames began to etch

themselves into my memory, and the once perplexing web of stories and places started to make sense. The discovery of a new family member carried more weight, each addition contributing to the richness of our collective narrative. Oma's approach to documenting our family history was nothing short of hyper-methodical. She left no stone unturned, leveraging online databases, poring over books, and meticulously curating albums to ensure no morsel of memory was overlooked. Her efforts extended beyond the confines of our family, turning her into a prominent figure in the city of Appingedam. Returning several times each year, Oma became the storyteller, sharing our family's saga at schools, public meetings, and religious ceremonies. Through her efforts, Appingedam's Jewish history, once shattered and fragmented, found a weaver—a guardian who diligently threaded the pieces together, breathing life into a tale that might have otherwise been lost to time. Oma's dedication transformed her into a custodian of not only our family's legacy but also the broader historical narrative of Appingedam. Her impact reverberated through the community, where she stood as a living connection to a past that might have faded into oblivion. Her tireless work became a bridge between generations, ensuring that the stories of our ancestors continued to echo through the corridors of time. In the tapestry Oma wove, the intricate details of our family's history were not just preserved; they were elevated to a status of reverence. As I reflect on those visits to my grandparents' house, I realise that Oma's commitment to our ancestry was more than a personal

endeavour—it was a gift to the past, a tribute to resilience, and a testament to the enduring power of storytelling. The threads of our family's history, once fragile and disparate, now stand as a testament to the strength that comes from understanding and cherishing our roots.



- Jews in the Westerbork concentration camp -



- Moluccan life in the former Westerbork concentration camp -

SCENE III

The day spent in the archive weighed heavy as I traipsed the cobbles of an Appingedam night. This was my arrival in Appingedam. Although I had visited once before it was with a guided group through the city and I did not get much time to myself and with my thoughts. Tonight I felt I had arrived in the city which I had learnt so much about. The city is anchored to its civic heart; the early-gothic Nicolaikerk which dates back to the early 13th century and the Raadhuis, built in 1630 on the northern wall of the church, sticking out perpendicularly from the church like a charming Baroque appendage. The Raadhuis bisects the main square into two smaller, more intimate places of gathering. All of this goes nowhere without the laconically handsome 37 metre tall bell tower stuck to the eastern facade of the Raadhuis. In daylight this architectural trio sits comfortably in the centre of the city, proudly announcing its importance as the civic centre. The night reveals another side to this composition, a composition of weight and texture. Eerily dark, lit only by a scattering of Dickensian amber sodium lamps the haphazardly lain bricks of the mammoth Nicolaikerk and its pointed arches of the apertures are quietly unsettling. My eyes nervously scanned its deeply textured facade as awe turned to perturbation. I knew where I was going and that was a 10 minute walk northwards through the city's winding streets towards the informally named Jewish quarter.

My step quickened as the dark became darker and the quiet became quieter. Sharp flakes of snow landing on my eyelids and my cheeks forced a lowered gaze. The shadows within the walls of the dancing facades began to get the better of my imagination. Perhaps it was the effect of the swathes of history that were lying dormant in the archive that I had been drinking in earlier that day but history had never felt so present as I arrived at my first destination.

NIEUWSTRAAT

Oma: *It was not until my grandfather moved to the house that it became a butcher's shop. On the corner was another butcher's, the Sleutelbergs as well as a third across the street - a very narrow street. There were three Jewish butchers in a very narrow street. How they made a living I don't know. It was one of the only things they were allowed to do. My father was the first in the family who decided not to become a butcher. He sold houses and land. He was obviously meant to follow in the footsteps of his father. It was the only thing they were allowed to do. The street is not even wide enough for a car to drive through. Although I have no memories of the place I am sure my mother would have taken me back to see it after the war. The people who lived across the street, also Niewegs, died in the camps.*

This house previously occupied by the other Nieweg family opposite to number 19 (now number 8) is much prouder. Curiously ornate borders twist and contort around its wider windows in a typically Dutch Baroque fashion. The house is a palette of pastel yellow accents around cherry-red wooden frames all set on a bleach-white background of blockwork.

Oma: *The people who lived at number 13 died in the camps and the one on the corner as well. Nobody came back.*

19 Nieuwstraat presents a symmetrical facade with a richly glazed black door bookended by a pair of velvety green sash windows on either side that would not elicit a second-glance to the average passer-by. The terracotta brickwork, elegant though it is, comes ten-a-penny in this part of the world. In truth it presents a banal elevation but in context this banal quickly becomes beauty with a keener eye. The rusting copper number '19' to the right hand side of the door is bizarrely gothic. The white wooden panelling of the box-dormer also would not look out of place in Grant Woods' 1930 painting *American Gothic*. All together the house presents itself as a distinguished guest on the narrow, curved street of Nieuwstraat. If it was any larger it could have been austere had it not been for the bench and flower arrangement on the right hand side, the only point of asymmetry in its composition.

Oma: *The people who lived next door told me that my father would often come to play cards with them. The night before their deportation my grandmother gave the cutlery away to the neighbours for safekeeping until their return. When I came back from hiding we went back to the house and they returned two teaspoons. The rest had all gone. They wouldn't even wait for the people to come back. But what could you say? Could you ask them where the rest is? You would just be glad to get two teaspoons. They remembered my grandparents being deported from the house. They remembered it was very traumatic. Apparently they cried. They probably didn't expect anyone to come back. Maybe they were glad, it meant they could hold onto the cutlery. The same went with the baker; my mother gave all of her belongings to the baker on the corner. When my mother came back from hiding after the war we went to retrieve the belongings. They simply said 'we didn't think you would come back'. That's the way it was. That's the way people can be. We spoke to one of the sons of the baker. He told us that he remembered us obviously leaving in a hurry since the door was left open. He and his friends went in, saw a lot of nice things but didn't take anything. To me it felt like an intrusion; these people going into the house as soon as you've left. I think he's a vicar now. Probably dead. I think he had a very bad childhood, the baker himself was a very cruel man.*

No one was home, it was clear. All lights were off and the house radiated a cold quiet.

Oma: *I first went inside the house much later in life. I was asked to give a talk at the shul and then people came up to me and said that they were friends of the lady who lived at number 19. I have been back several times, thanks to her. I was told that very little had been changed about the house. Although my grandfather had the second floor added. I think it is exactly how it was. The butcher's shop was where the front room is now. My grandmother ran the shop and the slaughterhouse was in the shed in the garden. When they wanted to extend the house they had to ask for council permission and for official blueprints to be made, because the blood might contaminate the soil. There was a law which ensured the butchering rules were followed. The cows would squeeze through the little passage between the two houses, which was too small. The corridor still bulges as a result. My grandparents and my father moved from another place to Appingedam, first residing in the Broerstraat where the synagogue is. Where exactly in the Broerstraat I don't know, but they rented. My great-grandmother lived at number 19 who moved with her daughter to number 13. That house was bought by my great-grandfather in the early 1900s. He died quite old, maybe 87, and my great-grandmother was over 90. They died before the war broke out. She was a widow by then and moved to number 13. The Stolpersteine in front of number 13 belonged to my grandmother's sister - half-sister, actually. They all lived together at number 19 until my grandparents bought it off them, after which they moved to number 13. That is where the sister lived with her brother, who died before the war. The sister, Rika - a midwife - died in Auschwitz. That whole family, if they hadn't died prior to the war, were all murdered.*

Once a week my grandfather would go on his bike to the countryside to buy cattle. He had a lot of communication with farmers in the area. On Tuesdays he would go by bus to Groningen to the cattle market. He spent a lot of time travelling and slaughtering, especially communicating with the other three butchers in the same streets and on the Dijkstraat. God knows how they made a living. There must have been a lot of rivalry.

My mother's family were all textile workers, which was not deemed as lower-class as butchers since they did not have dirty hands. They felt a bit superior. My aunt definitely felt superior to my father's family; she made that very clear to me. My father's family were cattle sellers and my mother's weavers.

Walking through the quiet cobbled street of Nieuwstraat one gets the overwhelming sensation of silent density. Density of history, density of memory and density of people. The street stretches a mere 90 metres but the eclectic mix of facades tells a deeply rich story. The ornate mullions, cornices and frames of the Dutch Renaissance painted in emerald greens, pale yellows and baby blues are balanced carefully with the increasingly iconic black glazed roof tile that I have come to understand is so synonymous with this region and in particular with Appingedam. An entire story of Appingedam can be seen through such glazed roof tiles; the glaze is not a light glaze, it is a profoundly tactile lacquered surface with such depth you can almost taste it. They don't have the typical meekly mild reflectivity of a standard faience but hold a powerful glistening

shine made even more beautiful by the imperfect nature of the firing process. Nieuwstraat is a prime example of such undulating and textured roofs. The roofs of Appingedam form a patchwork of steeply angled tiled mountain ranges which, in the day appear romantic, tranquil and quaint but at night take on a quietly intimidating, Hans Christian Anderson-esque villainous fairy-tale quality. The bricks of the facade share a similar variety in tactility - the facades create a patchwork of windows and doors, all as quirky as the last. The identity of the Damster is there for all to see in the formation of their facades and roofs.

Oma: The man living in the butcher's shop actually went to university to study medicine in Groningen before the war. They escaped in 1940 without telling anybody they were going. Then he had to give up medicine - they arrived in the States, in Michigan. His father decided he didn't want to have blood on his hands any more and they started a textiles shop, so the son being the only one who spoke English had to give up medicine to work in the shop. They didn't speak any English when they arrived. The son was the interpreter so he never managed to finish his studies. I was very fond of him, a very nice man. The only English his father understood was "I'll take it" - that meant a customer was going to pay. They really were immigrant families.

ADAMISTRAAT

Adamistraat is the first street in which Moluccans lived in Appingedam. Just under 100 metres in length it has clearly changed a lot since the early 1960s when it was first purpose-built to house the Moluccans. Where once stood a series of typically '60s functional modernist apartment blocks now stands a handsome but sober row of cookie-cutter Dutch suburban dwellings, all practically identical apart from the cars in front. As with much of Dutch suburbia it is a clean and quiet street, the type of street that makes you straighten your posture as you walk. But as I walked through with Rudy and Domingoes the sun was shining and the banality of suburbia faded into the background of a thoroughly pleasant afternoon.

Rudy: Decades ago this street would have been lively and full of people. The front gardens are very generous. In these small streets we have more space for front gardens unlike the bigger Dutch cities. There were very few cars passing through Adamistraat because the road would always be occupied by footballers.

Adamistraat used to be filled with trees. There were always chairs out in the front yards. Here are the 36 houses that were built. A couple of blocks further was a street with two houses for Moluccan people. Administrators of the camp also lived around here. In total there were about 50 families who were moved to Appingedam. All of these streets were built specifically

for the Moluccan community. Some of the houses look different as they were originally meant for people with disabilities - some have a garage and some have extra rooms downstairs with bathrooms inside. The original flats were knocked down due to the state of the construction and these new single houses were built for us. My grandmother lived across the street while she was waiting for the new house. Some people were happy with the new houses - the previous apartments had very poor quality gas heaters and the building was also very cheap. Nowadays the built quality is much better. The houses have a special status as they were only meant for Moluccan people. If somebody moves out, if a Dutch family wanted to move in they would first consider the Moluccan people who would want to move in. I still think that I preferred the previous flats, mainly because of the community feeling. The parties, weddings and birthdays were always there. There were always children playing in the streets - when there was good weather everyone would sit outside, playing guitar and volleyball, that kind of thing. The older family members now don't play outside - most people stay inside. The government tried to lure our parents to move to the woonwijk - they wanted to stay in Carel Coenradpolder but they were lured with new furniture, new curtains and beds. In the beginning there were the same three types of curtains. Every house had the same tables and chairs. Whenever there would be a wedding and they were held in the house we borrowed everybody's tables and chairs from the neighbours. Everybody would be walking with their chairs and tables from one house to the other.

The old photos that I constantly see of the original Admistraat

give way to thoughts of a wonderfully vibrant street with music in the gardens and children taking over the tarmac with their ball sports. To an extent this could be mistaken for a certain nostalgia but the fondness with which I have heard the original Adamistraat referred to is unmistakable.

Rudy: *The rooms used to be smaller than they are now. You can see some examples of the old houses on the other street. There were four types of houses. Here on Adamistraat is the sign that says 'welcome: don't forget the history of the Moluccan people'. This went up in 2012. The typical Moluccan home used to have special divisions throughout the house. Moluccan people eat a lot of fish - there is always a small room in the kitchen where the fish can be prepared so the smell won't go through the house. The architect spoke with the Moluccan community and one of the primary wishes was this separate room for making fish. This can be found in every house now - in communication with the architect this room would have been made. Before we used to have a storage room behind the houses which had a special furnace to cook the fish, but now we have the specific rooms! Fish is very important for the Moluccans considering the islands we came from. The room is very small, like a small box without windows. It really works, the smell just stays in the room. The thing about the houses is that they have to be rented, you can't buy it. The house is owned by a special department of the government. It was meant to be rented by Moluccan people but they couldn't buy it because it was property of the government. By law I can't buy it because then I could sell it to another person who is not Moluccan.*

There are about 6 residential blocks like this. Different types of homes, homes intended for large families... and houses intended for somewhat smaller families. In other words, the Moluccan neighbourhood of that time, 1959 built, because that was finished and those first residents. That's still the Moluccan Quarter now, still the name Adamistraat, only the housing looks a bit different of course. There you can see a very familiar flagpole. 25 April, of course, our flag four goes up. Recognisable as a Moluccan neighbourhood, it is a little less than it was back then, of course.

They are newly built houses. The average traveller cycling, driving, you name it, through Adamistraat will not immediately recognise it.



- The Synagogue of Appingedam, built in 1801 -



- The Moluccan church of Appingedam, built in 1960-



- Interior of the Synagogue of Appingedam -



- Interior of the Moluccan church -

THE SYNAGOGUE

The Synagogue of Appingedam is the oldest in Groningen and one of the oldest Ashkenazi synagogues in the Netherlands. Nobody can deny its elegant grandeur - with a large courtyard in the front the building takes a large step back from the street so that the beautifully elemental geometries of its facade - the arched windows, the steeply pitched roof and the ornate door - are clearly visible in all of their careful proportions. Once again, burnt ochres and autumnal yellows merge with the iconic red brick of the region to create a stoic silhouette. It is a masterclass in how to make a small building seem big. Because it is, in fact, a very small building consisting of one single room for congregation and the toilets, cloakrooms and cupboards tucked into every available niche in the wall.

Oma: *They all lived very close to the shul, their place of gathering. Appingedam is not a big place anyway. None of them were well off. Those Jews in Appingedam; none of them. This was a very poor community. How they managed to get the Shul built is a mystery. It is very nicely done. They had house synagogues prior to this. It obviously took a while to get their own shul. My father was in the committee; there is a picture of him standing, celebrating something.*

As with many Synagogues the centrepiece is the ceiling - painting

in a rich cerulean blue pockmarked with golden stars and a rising (or setting) sun appearing from the cornice, the modestly complex timber panelled vaulting is the only ornamentation to be found inside. The bimah and the ark have been restored and stand at one end of the small room. They stand quietly, knowing that their use ended decades ago and it is highly unlikely they will be required again. But there they stand, proudly, knowing the importance they once held.

THE CHURCH

Rudy: *This is the church. The Ebenhaezer church, meaning stone of help. The spire is getting repaired. Before the church was built the church service was held in people's houses, always the same one - 28 Adamistraat. They were all three bedroom apartments so it was difficult to fit everybody in. There would often be four or five people sleeping in one bed. Everyone would come carrying all their chairs. The group of hardcore Moluccans who wanted to go back to the islands as soon as possible and reject this new land always kept their services in their house, never in the church.*

The church is a kind of homey place. You can't really find Moluccans who can't play the guitar or sing. Our parents used to sing those melancholy songs about where they came from. My father changed church because of his music. He was constantly away from the services because of his

performances and they got angry at him. He argued that they constantly preached about forgiveness but he was not being forgiven so then he went to the Dutch church, the Nicolaikerk. I used to go out at night a lot and come home very late so I chose to go to the afternoon services even though the afternoon services were a different church community. The board of the church used to question me about why I would go to the other church - for them it was political. I was confused and asked them 'since we serve the same God what is the difference?' They ended the discussion and I kept going to both services. The photograph that hangs now in the church hall of the first reverend was from Schattenberg (originally Westerbork).

The Ebenhaezer is the first Moluccan church built in the Netherlands.

Modelled on the concentration camp barrack, the typology of architecture associated with the Moluccans at the time of its construction, it sits in a field a stone's throw from the Moluksewijk slightly askew from the natural orientation of the neighbouring streets. There is a very bizarre poetry to its existence in Appingedam. Looking as it does, its form of the barrack carries some particularly sensitive connotations - this was the typology in which the Jewish community of Appingedam ended and the one in which the Moluccans started. And here it sits as a symbol of hope and assimilation, a symbol of diasporic determination and changing times. The basic nature of its architecture is beautifully laconic when taking into consideration its contentious history. Now it has been painted fully white with

some pale yellow articulated lintels, window frames and doors. It is a pretty building but it exerts a unique aura amongst the typical new-built, brick panel-clad Dutch developer apartments sprouting around the rapidly growing suburbia of Appingedam.

Inside the building are two primary rooms, the main church hall and a smaller more intimate back room.

Rudy: *Every church community had its own preacher. You had the central organisation who took care of the reverends here, in Assen amongst other places. We are just a small community here in Appingedam. I used to come here every Sunday. Services still run every Sunday. There are two services every Sunday because of the two different churches. One is in the morning and one is in the afternoon and every week they swap. They are churches for the two political groups. Both are still protestant - the liturgy is all the same but the politics are different. For instance if there is a wedding in the first church, the people of the other church would also be present. When we help each other we don't look at which church we go to. It doesn't define us. When something big had to be done most of the community used to help out. It felt quite self-run. The refurbishment of the church had nothing to do with us. It was a random painting company that chose the colours of the exterior and interior. It used to all be white. I think the colours are nice - it is more lively. There would always be Sunday school. In the upper part there was a dividing wall - we used to play volleyball in this back room! The parents were not aware. This room was the only place where we used to host large parties. There would be a live band and a dance floor. Even the Dutch would sometimes join. It was a*

very intimate building. The owner of the church is the Groningen Stichting Kerk. Anything you want to change you have to ask them because it is a monument. The chairs were remade to fit the original style. There would never be parties in the main church hall, only in the back room. Some cultural events might take place but never parties. I guess Christianity became the main religion of the islands in the 1700s when the Portuguese arrived. I know that the people of Timor were catholic and the rest of the Molukkers were protestant, also because of the people from the VOC. I can't remember the opening of this church. I was 5. This church was, of course, a huge point of pride.

Within the church there is a truly peaceful atmosphere. The peculiar colour choices for the painted breezeblock walls and the dominant structural arches that staccato the length of the building come together well in an eclectic but pleasant manner. I walk through and consider its history. Since its refurbishment in 2015 there is a considerable level of patina and wear-and-tear that I assume has been lost but the few original chairs and pieces of furniture scattered throughout the hall do reveal particular stories. It would be easy to imagine where the reverend would give their sermon, easy to imagine the seats filled and easy to imagine the parties in the back room with the children playing volleyball.

Rudy: *One time there was a class of students that came to visit the*

church with a Dutch teacher, forty-something years old. Before we started talking to the kids about our history a young boy asked the teacher if she knew why the Moluccans ended up in Appingedam. The teacher replied 'yes I know why - to look for jobs!'. She clearly didn't know our history - at the time I was pretty angry but I came to understand the situation; it was clear that nobody had explained the situation and the history to her, not even in the school textbooks. She learned all about why Turkish and Moroccan people are here, even why Indonesian people are here but not why the Moluccan people are here. Some of us Moluccans in Appingedam were asked to look over the history books recently to give comments on the accuracy of the story. There was nothing more than maybe 10 sentences about our history so the school has made a project to tell their pupils more than the 10 sentences. This year we will expect another invitation to participate with the local schools. We agreed with them that we will do this every year. They often make their own exhibitions about the subject. We tell them our story, our political backgrounds, our life in the wijk and after that they wanted us to take them to the graveyards because the graves of the previous generations have gained a special status.

In the back room stands a large wooden cupboard in the shape of a trunk, the iconic Moluccan symbol of their existence as a diaspora. Rudy tells me that the trunk is the symbol for their permanent impermanence - in the barracks of the camps in which the Moluccans were originally housed Moluccans would make sure that their trunks and suitcases would not be unpacked; if their luggage remained packed then there was still every chance

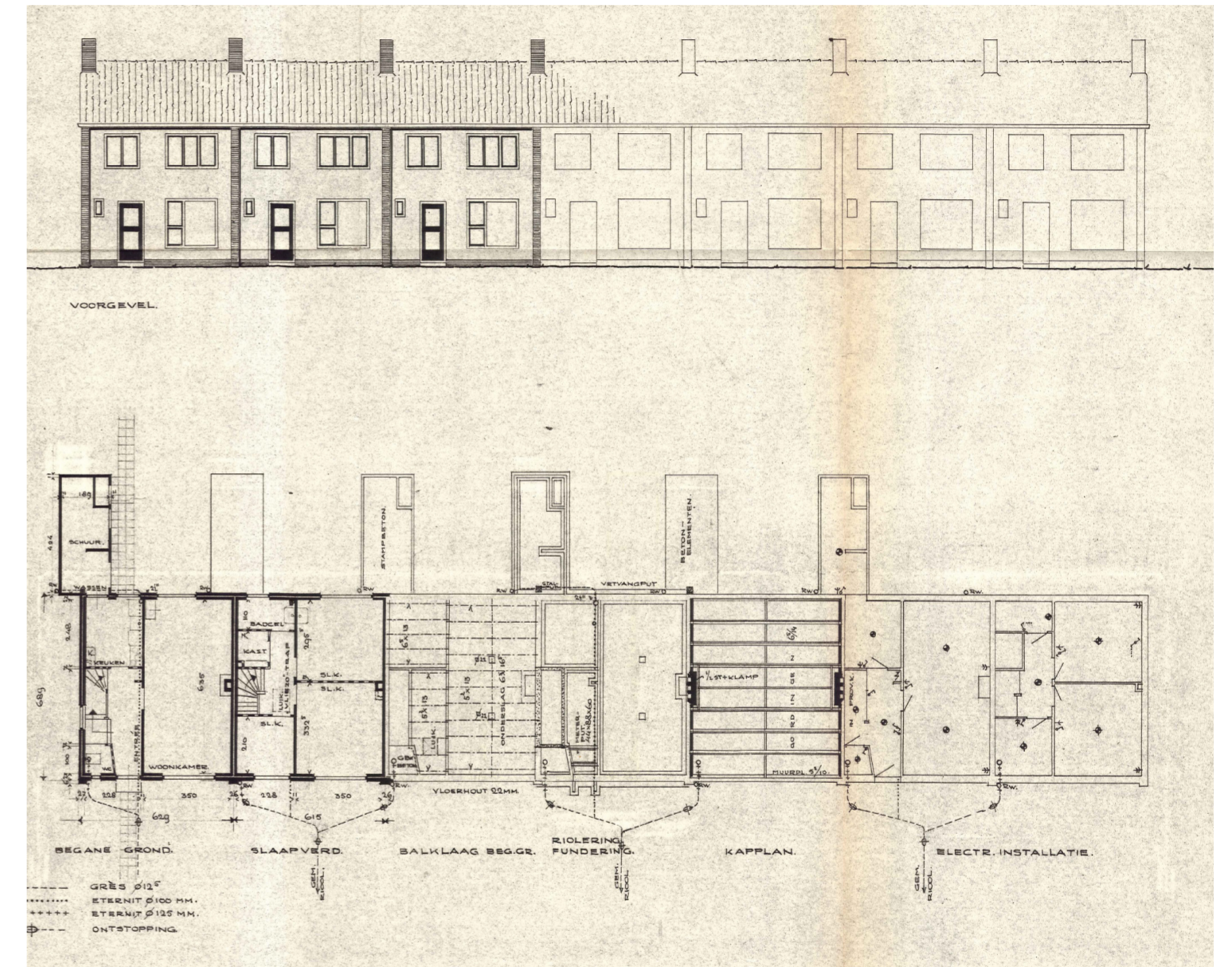
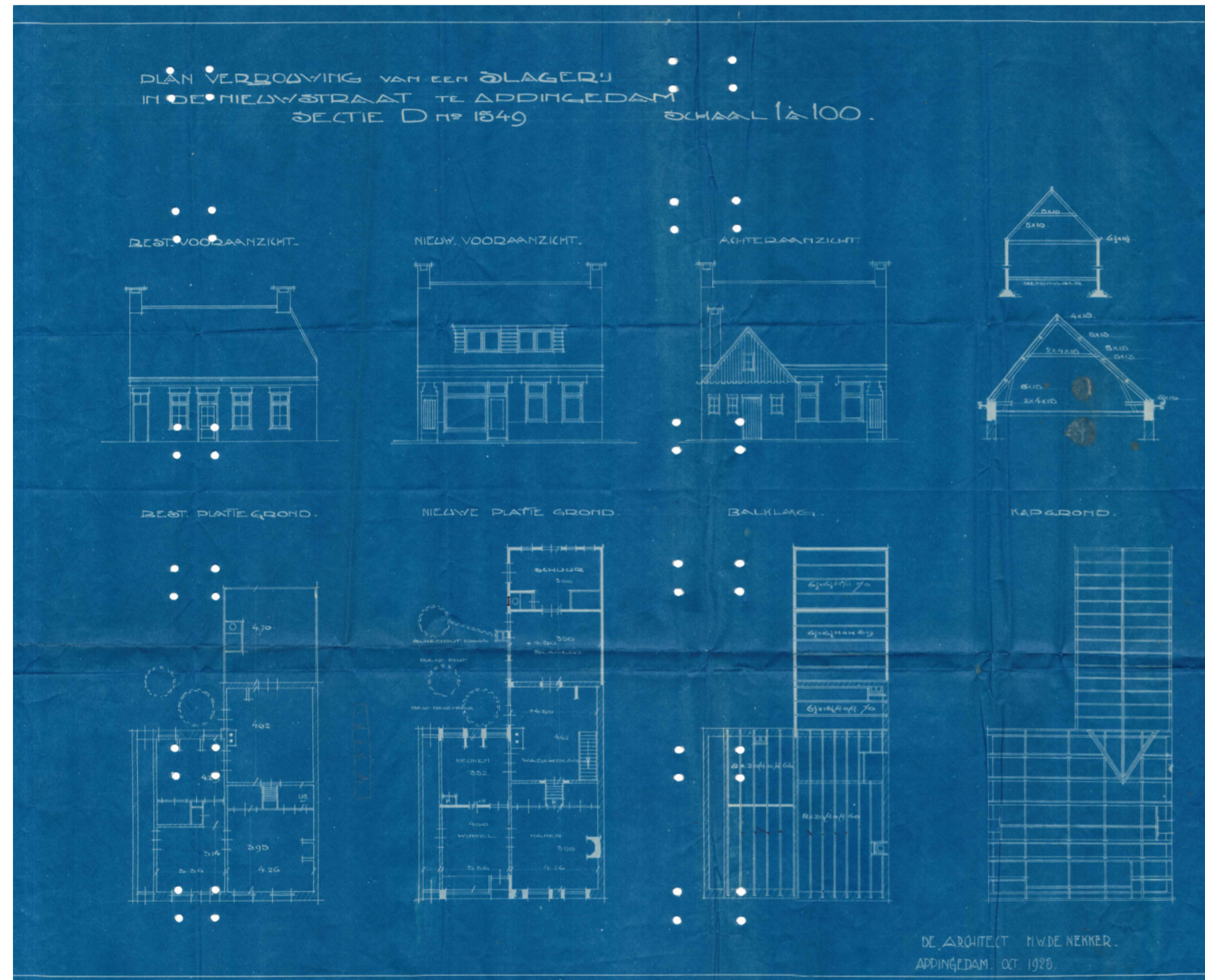
that they would be returning home. As we open this trunk it becomes a display case of any wonders; small silver objects, historic photographs and day to day objects of early Moluccan life in Appingedam.

Rudy: *This is called a Rantan, a stack of boxes in which we would have our packed lunches. Our mothers would put in one box potatoes, in one vegetables, eggs or meat. These are flutes but more like recorders. They were made by our fathers, this one was made by Opa Herman out of bamboo. In Holland you couldn't get bamboo so when they moved here they used metal and PVC pipes. They were very easy to craft, PVC flutes. They were used in all the church ceremonies. This is also very important, the vijzel (pestle and mortar). We call it a jobeh - in every Moluccan household you can find one of these. This one has been used very well, as it is supposed to be. We often use nutmeg and cloves. This is actually the main reason they started the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) in the Moluccan islands. Do you know the story of Jan Pieterszoon Coen? He was one of the governors of the VOC and went to the Banda islands where they grew nutmeg and cloves. He told them they could only trade their spices with the VOC and forbade them from trading with the neighbouring islands and countries. But the people from Banda thought 'hey, big shot, why should we listen to you? If you come here, you can trade with us, if the Portuguese come here they can trade with us, if the English come here they can trade with us - even the Turkish!' Piet Hein came to hear of this and brought a group of Samurai from Japan to the island of Banda and murdered almost the total population of the islands. Some people*

managed to flee to the mountains, others across the sea to other islands. Of 12,000 people, 10,000 were killed. In Hoorn you have the statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen - I went there recently and spat on it. We're not too happy with Jan Pieterszoon Coen.

Rudy eyes the contents of the trunk fondly.

Rudy: *This is an old photo of how we used to hang our clothes. In the wijk we imitated the typical Dutch way of washing lines in our front yards. Back home in Ambon and on the islands we used to lay it all flat on the ground. When we were small we used to run all over the white clothes and sheets. When we were boys we used to make catapults from the washing lines - in the evenings we would go with clippers and cut the wires of the lines so the next day all the clothes would be on the floor! We shot everything with our catapults! A story we have never told until now.*



- Blueprints for the extension of one of the butcher's shops and dwellings on Nieuwstraat -

- Plans for the housing blocks for the Moluccans on Adamstraat -



- Life in the Jewish quarter of Appingedam, 1920s -



- Life in the Moluccan quarter of Appingedam, 1970s -

DE WIJK

The Molukse wijk - or Moluccan quarter - does indeed extend further than Adamistraat. It doesn't have an official boundary but where there is Moluccan history there is the Molukse wijk. More suburban streets characterise the southern region of Appingedam. From the centre of the old town of Appingedam, across the river it is a short walk - no more than 20 minutes - to the Molukse wijk but relative to the rest of the city this seems rather a long time. The suburbia begins quickly and the centuries-old crooked roofs, hanging kitchen, postcard views of a typical mediaeval Dutch city feel distant as I walk through these wide streets. Although there is more room to breathe it somehow feels more constricting. It could be the perfectly mown patches of lawn surrounded by the picture-perfect picket fences, it could be the penetrating quiet or it could be the copy-paste nature of the houses but the Wijk was truly felt and not seen. As Rudy, Dominoes and I wandered the quiet streets in good spirits I couldn't help but ask about the initial relationship between the Wijk and the old town of Appingedam.

Rudy: *There were no houses surrounding the street when we moved in. Just grass and meadows. We used to play over there. The farmer's son would chase us with his rifle.*

We used to go to the old town nearly every day. Whether the school or

the station, we used to sit for hours in the cafes, bars and restaurants. We always met in the centre - there was always one bar in the Dijkstraat. We would go over there and do what the government expected us to do, which was just to integrate with the Dutch people. This was our home but the rest of our life was in the city of Appingedam. You would meet each other in school, or the bars or whatever. The sporting activities were very important too, football, volleyball - we had an all Moluccan volleyball team and we played against many Dutch teams. Of course, the Dutch guys were taller - two of us ended up playing professionally for the Dutch national volleyball team. They started playing volleyball here in the streets.

The integration in Appingedam was initially a bit hostile. There were often fights in the centre with the Dutch guys. Blanken tegen Ambonezen; white guys against the Amboneese. Football was also always blanken tegen Ambonezen. Eventually we came to respect one another, we even became friends. One time we were having a game of football just over there [points across the field] and a row, a fight started. People in the flats nearby called the police. Two police buses drove through and took everybody with them. I was just a little boy but I was taken straight to the police station. [Rudy starts mimicking an angry police officer]. They registered all the names and we were sent back. We had to immediately report to the wijkraat, the wijk council. Soon all was forgotten and we rebuilt our friendships. Later on I was 27 and I wanted to gain Dutch nationality so that I could travel around without the worry of getting a visa or anything annoying like that. I went to one of the meetings that had been arranged in a formal office and in came a guy, looking very serious and sat down at the table and started asking questions; 'do you live there, do you do this, do you do that' and so on. I was calmly responding 'yeah, yeah, yeah' to everything. 'Have

you ever been in trouble with the police' - I thought there was no way they would count in a couple of traffic violations so I said no. 'Here - violence' he said with a piece of paper in his hand. I've never been picked up for violence by the police, never! Violence? It isn't possible. I then looked at the date and saw how young I must have been and instantly remembered. I was just a boy. Normally a petty crime like this would have been expired, but all the bad things Moluccan people did always stayed on the register. My neighbour who had once participated in some protests against the government - he wanted to be Dutch too - had a very long talk with the police officer. His crime had not expired, not for us. For the white guys it was all clear - not for us. I wasn't even playing football at the time, I was just watching. Integration wasn't so straightforward. Some of us realised that we had to get accustomed quickly but others refused. Until the last days for the people who stayed in Carel Coenradpolder, until the end, such as Apolo - the leader of the local band - never assimilated. He also never worked because the government had told him that they would supply him with food, clothing and housing and he kept them to it. 'I don't want to work. Just bring me back to Maluku'. These were the hardcore guys. But our parents did choose to adjust. They wanted their children to do well in life. Get an education, good jobs. They soon let go of the idea of going back in the truck to Maluku because they were focused on the future of their kids. There was a group of people who left Appingedam in 1968 - they took many Dutch with them, but most people never went back to the islands. There was always the idea that going back to Maluku would be beautiful and perfect but the reality was different. That reality did make its way back to our parents so they decided to focus on making a better future for the kids here in Appingedam. They accepted it - with

pain in their heart, of course. You never heard my father talking about his periods in the Japanese camp but when he sees some of the government people on the television talking about this issue he will all but spit on the floor. It doesn't matter which party or minister, it doesn't matter who - he will get angry. That's my father but my mother never thinks anything about politics or returning home. I think my mother also had a lot of experience with violence in this particular time of the transfer period of Maluku to Indonesia but I think while my father was kept by the Japanese my mother decided that she did not want to go back. He had to change his perspective; at first all of our fathers wanted free independence of south Maluku - everyone. But then he realised that it would never happen, especially when he was thinking about returning to the islands after his time in the Netherlands, he realised that he would have to accept his Indonesian nationality. So we started to pack our things when we thought we would go back to 1968. My sister, who is 9 years older, was not allowed to marry the wrong guy - not even a Moluccan guy. She started dating a boy called Hank and when my father asked her if he was going to pack his things she was confused and told him that he had decided that he wasn't going back, he was staying in the Netherlands. Of course, they had to stop dating which made her devastated. Not long afterwards she fell in love with another guy, a Dutch guy! Not even a Moluccan! I'm not sure but I think my mother had a big hand in it because she was permitted to marry this Dutch man. We were supposed to go back in June '68 and she married in April '68. My mother then said to my father 'listen, we can't go back now, I have to make sure that everything is okay with Augustine. We have to postpone one more year.' A year later Robert was born, their first grandchild. 'Dad you can't go back now, Robert has just been born!

We can't leave like this! - postponed again. In the meantime while I was struggling in school, a second grandchild was born. My mother said to my father 'look, if you really want to go back I can stay here with the kids and grandkids'. My father decided to stay. Everybody had to make their own choices, even as reluctant hardcore Moluccans not wanting to move to a woonwijk, not wanting to work, or change nationality to Indonesian, or even become Dutch. Just on paper of course, because here you will always stay Moluccan. Those were the choices people had to make. Some were not so hardcore with their ideals as many were from different islands. A lot of them were soldiers fighting for the Dutch government in different communities. A lot of people were just forced to adjust. Of course, many people missed their families but they just had to accept the situation. I think the passion is returning to younger communities. Often the first and second generations aren't really so concerned with that part of their identities but the third generation grabs hold of their history. I think this happened with a lot of diasporic communities. They like to search for their identity. Lots of people go through their phases. One story about one of the families that returned to the islands is about how one of the grandmothers told their family that it was a really good choice that you didn't go back because our lives when we first returned were really horrible - they were always the outsiders, even in Maluku. In the islands you're Dutch and in the Netherlands you're Moluccan.

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