Recent Dutch-language Publications¹

Harry A. Poeze

KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies

Poeze@kitlv.nl

Marijke Barend-van Haften and Hetty Plekenpol, *Wouter Schouten, dichter en VOC-chirurgijn: 36 Gedichten bij de Oost-Indische Voyagie*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2012, 191 pp. ISBN 905730709x. Price: EUR 29.50.

Wouter Schouten (1638-1704) is the well-known writer of *Oost-Indische voyagie*, published in 1676, where he relates in vivid detail his experiences as a *chirurgijn* (medical assistant) in VOC service from 1658 till 1665, during which years his inquisitive nature brought him to the Moluccas and Celebes, and the Indian subcontinent, including Arakan (Burma) and Ceylon. A number of times he miraculously survived—shipwrecks and war with European competitors or indigenous rulers made life a hazardous enterprise. However, his rock-solid Calvinist faith never left him, and God's blessing was, according to Schouten, responsible for his survival and the VOC successes. Schouten must have intended to add a poem to each chapter of the printed text of his itinerary. This plan came to nought, but two versions of the 36 poems are preserved in Schouten's handwriting in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague.

In a fine edition these are now published for the first time. In his often extensive poems Schouten summarizes the events related in the prose version, adding comments and professing his devoutness. He certainly harboured literary pretensions, was well aware of the literary conventions of the time and the greater value ascribed to poetry in comparison to prose. After a brief general introduction the poems are included, with a summary

¹ As from this issue, BKI's former section 'Korte signaleringen' will appear in English under the new title Recent Dutch-language Publications.

of the events described in the chapter, and some information on the poetical format. The original seventeenth-century text is followed, with explanations regarding particular words and expressions given in footnotes. Thus, this text edition is not for the specialists only.

*

Roelof van Gelder, *Naar het aards paradijs: Het rusteloze leven van Jacob Roggeveen, ontdekker van Paaseiland, 1659-1729*. Amsterdam: Balans, 2012, 335 + 16 pp. ISBN 9789460035739. Price: EUR 29.95.

The claim to fame of Jacob Roggeveen (1659-1729) was not as he had intended it to be. He embarked on an expedition to discover the mysterious Zuidland, the continent in the South Pacific that was described in travel journals, real and fictional in a number of mixtures, as a paradisiacal place with an abundance of products and precious metals for the taking. His search was in vain, but before his real search started he was the first westerner to set foot in April 1722 on the island he baptized as Easter Island, the remotest island on earth. It was an interlude of one day only for Roggeveen's fleet of three, but he made the first observations on the island and its inhabitants as well as the numerous statues erected there. But what ever motivated this 63-year old man?

Journalist and historian Roelof van Gelder in *Naar het aards paradijs* (To the earthly paradise) probes for an answer. Roggeveen was the son of a cartographer who did a lot of work for the Zealand Chamber of the VOC. He grew up in Middelburg, a town dominated by VOC activities. He made his first trip to Batavia in 1681 where he was a bookkeeper but for unknown reasons he returned the next year. Back in Middelburg, he studied to become a notary, and next became a lawyer, taking a doctor's degree at Harderwijk University. He soon became involved in political and religious debates, between liberal and Orangist groups, and between the orthodox Calvinist state church and libertine followers of Spinoza, Descartes, and Dutch kindred. Among them was Pontiaan van Hattem, whose followers were called 'Hattemists'. Bitter polemics were exchanged, and civil and religious authorities persecuted these heretics. Roggeveen was considered the most vocal supporter of Van Hattem—he even edited Van Hattem's collected works, after Van Hattem's death (1706). His involvement in these conflicts

showed a number of character traits—stubbornness, capriciousness, restlessness, unruliness—that made life difficult for himself and his surroundings. It all was no obstacle for Roggeveen to become Raad van Justitie, a Justice in Batavia. He was thus part of the VOC elite from 1707 until 1715, and was soon embroiled in year-long feuds with his fellow-Justices. Back in Zeeland he was again involved in religious disputes. It even resulted in a banishment from Middelburg. Roggeveen's father had planned a journey to Zuidland, but failed to implement it. His son, forty years later, had never given up this idea, and was able at last, in 1721, to convince the West-Indische Compagnie to finance an expedition. Roggeveen was not looking for financial gain, but probably was motivated by pride, honour, and the lure of fame. He set out in August 1721, with three ships and a crew of 244. In the last hundred pages of his book, Van Gelder relates the heroic and tragic journey based on the journals kept. Soon Roggeveen realized there was no Zuidland, and under ever worsening conditions a ship was lost and more than half of the crew perished. The choice was made to try to reach the Indies, notwithstanding the prohibition for ships other than VOC-ships to enter the territory on penalty of confiscation and imprisonment. The reception in Batavia in October 1722 was cool and suspicious. Roggeveen was sent home in December 1722, and arrived back in Zeeland in July 1723 to start a quest for rehabilitation and compensation. In all, this is a fascinating life-story, expertly told.

*

Ruud Paesie (ed), *Voor zilver en Zeeuws belang: De rampzalige Zuidzee-expeditie van de Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, 1724-1727*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2012, 239 pp. [Werken van de Linschoten-Vereeniging 111.] ISBN 9789057308451. Price: EUR 29.50.

This text edition has points of contact with Van Gelder's Roggeveen biography. Ruud Paesie has edited, in the prestigious series of the Linschoten-Vereeniging the journal of steersman Hubregt Kempe on board of the *Don Louis*. This ship and two others were fitted out by the Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC) to sail to America's west coast. MCC, established in 1720, to amend for the slackness in Zeeland trade, looked for new trade opportunities. The vested interests of VOC and WIC did not leave much

space. A proposal by Roggeveen to explore the Pacific and find the Zuidland was rejected, after which Roggeveen had more success with WIC. The MCC embarked upon another scheme: trade or smuggle on America's west coast, in Chile and Peru, where the Spanish silver fleets collected their precious wares. The MCC invested more than a million in the enterprise. The journey started in August 1724. Only the *Don Louis* was able to round Cape Hoorn; the two other ships returned and were seized in a Portuguese settlement when looking for a place to recover. The crews were arrested and sent to Europe. The *Don Louis* needed six months in a South Chile fjord to recover from the arduous trip, which caused a great number of casualties. In November 1725 it sailed northwards, only to be captured by a Spanish ship the next month. The crew was jailed, and only in May 1727 were a handful of the crew back in Middelburg, among them Hubregt Kempe. It had been a disastrous enterprise that nearly caused MCC's bankruptcy. The company survived and turned to the profitable slave trade. A similar expedition by an Amsterdam consortium in the same years also ended in failure. Paesie has edited Kempe's narration, that was never printed before, and relates the whole story of his ordeal until his return home. His eighteenth-century Dutch is not too difficult for a contemporary reader. Appendices add useful documents, and Paesie's introduction (60 pages) supplies the necessary background.

*

Q.M.R. Ver Huell, *Christina Martha: Oosters romantisch historisch tafereel*. Bezorgd en toegelicht door Hans Straver. Hilversum: Verloren, 2013, 140 pp. ISBN 9789087043421. Price: EUR: 19.00.

The transfer of sovereignty from the British back to the Dutch, after the Netherlands itself became an independent country again, in the Indies in 1817 did not go smoothly in the Moluccas. A lot of Moluccans were unhappy with Dutch conduct and policies, and rose in revolt. The uprising lasted six months and cost hundreds of Dutch casualties, and more Moluccan lives, with many villages devastated. Leader Thomas Matulessey or Pattimura was apprehended and executed along with forty others. A few hundred were banished. Among them was 18-year old Christina Martha Tiahahu, whose father was also executed. Not much more is known about her that she

accompanied her prominent, aged father in battle. She died on board of the ship to Batavia in January 1818. The few facts about her are related by Q.M.R. Ver Huell (1787-1860), acting commander of the ship, in his memoirs of his travels in the Indies. However, it was enough to stir the imagination about her to the extent that in Indonesia she was, next to Pattimura, promoted to the high rank of Pahlawan Nasional, national hero. Unbeknown to the Indonesian authorities, about 140 years earlier, Ver Huell delivered a lecture in a Rotterdam literary society, titled *Christina Martha*. She played a central role in this product of Ver Huell's imagination, written on the basis of a few facts. It shows her as an able and fierce warrior, whose favour in love was sought by prominent insurgents, among them Pattimura. Ver Huell's lecture was a great success in Rotterdam, but never appeared in print. Only now, thanks to long-time specialist on the Moluccas Hans Straver, is this remarkable story published, with its focus on the Moluccan side of the conflict. At fifty pages it's a brisk read. In separate chapters, the 1817 uprising, the Rotterdam event, Ver Huell's biography and the place of *Christina Martha* in the literature of the period are discussed to make this book a fine edition of colonial fiction. And probably the story will also be translated in Indonesian to honour Christina Martha, and in that case fiction might be considered fact.

*

Ton de Graaf, *Voor handel en maatschappij: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij, 1824-1964*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2012, 607 + 16 pp., with CD-ROM. ISBN 9789085069461. Price: EUR 29.00.

Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM) was founded in 1824 as a trading and lending enterprise, with a lot of its activities directed at or conducted in the Netherlands Indies. The driving force in its first years was King Willem I, who after investing no less than four million guilders (total capital was almost 28 million) was the single most influential shareholder of NHM, and actively engaged in NHM management. Royal patronage made NHM a privileged semi-public enterprise that in the Indies gained a near monopoly in trade and transport. In *Voor handel en maatschappij* (In service of trade and society) the first sixty years of NHM are only allotted fifty pages as W.M.F. Mansvelt, who published his well-known memorial

volumes in 1924, according to Ton de Graaf, had covered the field satisfactory. He, working as a historian with ABN AMRO, in which NHM is incorporated, begins his ambitious study around 1880 when NHM, not content with the proceeds of its activities, entered a new field: banking activities, especially in the Indies. It all interrelated there in a conglomerate of banks, estate banks, estates, trade, shipping lines and a great number of other very varied interests promising profits. NHM now avoided direct ownership of estates, and was thus not as hard hit as the estates themselves by the whimsical ups and downs of colonial produce.

De Graaf's approach is strictly chronological and ruthlessly systematic. In five chapters he relates the NHM story, and for each period he details what happened in subchapters on the economic development of the Netherlands and the Indies, banking activities in the Netherlands and the Indies, and the involvement with the estates. Specific sections, for instance, are included on the impact of World War II, decolonization and at last nationalization at the end of the fifties. NHM and the Indies were seemingly indissolubly connected as this study shows, although the bank survived Indonesian decolonization, and adapted in 1964 to the new circumstances by merging with Twentsche Bank to become Algemene Bank Nederland. The book contains a wealth of new information and abundant data (in almost 50 tables). Moreover, a CD-ROM is included with another 340 pages of data, including a list of commissariats held by the directors and syndicates the NHM took part in. Together, filling more than 200 pages, these convincingly illustrate the pivotal role of NHM in the Indies', and also Dutch, financial and economic world. De Graaf's narration is probably too brief to do justice to the manifold activities of NHM, and sometimes does not go beyond an enumeration or summary. The role of the individuals who led NHM is mentioned, but did it not deserve more space and analysis? And did these 'tycoons', like C.J.K. van Aalst or Ernst Heldring, influence the sociopolitical course in the Netherlands and Indies? The endless list of commissariats and syndicates inevitably gives rise to such questions, that De Graaf understandably does not address at length, as his study already is an impressive work of reference, the fruit of many years of labour.

*

Laurens van Aggelen, *150 jaar Koninklijk Bronbeek*. Arnhem: White Elephant Publishing, 2013, 111 pp. ISBN 9789079763054. Price: EUR 12.50.

In 1859 King Willem III donated the rural estate Bronbeek in Arnhem to the Dutch state to become a Koninklijk Koloniaal Militair Invalidenhuis (Royal Colonial Military Home for the Disabled). It was opened in 1863, with 220 veterans from the Indies. Now, 150 years, 15 commandants and 6150 inmates later, Bronbeek is still there, now as Tehuis voor Oud-Militairen en Museum Bronbeek (Home for Military Veterans and Museum Bronbeek). As Indisch Herinneringscentrum (Indies Memorial Centre) it has started a new life. A fine memorial volume, profusely illustrated, also in colour, deals especially with the close relation between Bronbeek and the Royal House: monuments and paintings of the Orange House sovereigns decorate Bronbeek, and in celebrations and traditions the close ties are underlined. Highlights in Bronbeek history were the 26 royal visits since 1863, immersed in abundant ceremony, which are all sketched. The volume is inevitably rather enumerative, but in this case—a book to look at and leaf through—this is not a problem.

*

Gerrit Roelof de Graaf, *De wereld wordt omgekeerd: Culturele interactie tussen de vrijgemaakt-gereformeerde zendelingen en zendingswerkers en de Papoea's van Boven Digoel (1956-1995)*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, 589 pp. ISBN 9789055604708. Price: EUR 29.95.

De Zending Gereformeerde Kerken (ZGK) coordinated the mission work of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [Liberated]), an orthodox split off in 1944 from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, adding to the considerable number of Protestant denominations—rising in number with the degree of orthodoxy and decreasing number of its faithful. The ZGK embarked on mission work in the then still Dutch-ruled New Guinea (now Papua), with permission of the Dutch colonial administration which assigned the rather inhospitable Boven Digoel area in the southern part of the island to the ZGK, an area where the original Papuan peoples had not been subject of efforts to bring western civilization to them. As usual, mission work among the

Papuans was a laborious and time-consuming enterprise, probably more so for an orthodox organization like the ZGK, which had to take into account the strict observation of Biblical rules of the *Vrijgemaakte gereformeerden*. Moreover, it had to cope with the diffuse structure of six local *Vrijgemaakte* parishes, who were the missionary organizations, all commensurate with the extreme stress on local autonomy, and aversion to umbrella organizations. The *Vrijgemaakten* in their mission insisted on the strict separation of conversion and practical activities in the educational and medical fields. And added to this all was an antithetical stance towards all that smelled of ecumenical activities. Nonetheless, the ZGK went ahead, and had to adapt itself, but remained remarkably close to its Dutch-based principles.

After the first years and until 1995 a rising number (up to twenty) ZGK staff were in the region. In 1995 Indonesian territory in the mission became an all Papuan affair with the establishment of the *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia—Papua* (GGRI-P), now with about five thousand members among the smallest Protestant churches in Papua. Relations between Dutch and Indonesians became strained after 1995, but the readers of *De wereld wordt omgekeerd* (The world turned upside down) are not informed about these developments as Gerrit Roelof de Graaf, himself a member of the *Vrijgemaakt Gereformeerde Kerken*, spends almost six hundred pages on the forty years of ZGK activities in Papua. Based on an impressive array of written sources, as well as interviews with Dutch and Papuans, combining missiology and social anthropology, his solid work earned him a PhD.

De Graaf sketches with what he called ‘involved aloofness’ the ZGK, which in practice soon adapted to the peculiar New Guinea environment and did not differ too much from the other Protestant, evangelical and even catholic missions, and the particular world view of the Papuans, that was indeed turned upside down when embracing the Christian faith. Essential in this process were the practical fact of Papuan settlement in villages and the process by which the ZGK slowly acknowledged that not all adat was antithetical vis-à-vis religion. In the interaction process hot subjects were local ceremonies, sexual behaviour, and polygamous marriage. ZGK also was active in the medical, socioeconomic, and educational fields. In these fields the influence of the Indonesian government was, to ZGK’s chagrin, gradually growing, to the extent that the primary role of the church was taken over by government officials, who did not always set an example of unselfish service to the people. It was the cause of the establishment of

the Papua armed resistance organization OPM that for a number of years jeopardized the work of the ZGK. The history of the Boven Digoel Papuans thus was characterized by the interaction between *gereja* (church and mission), *adat-agama* (unwritten customary law and religion of the Papuans), and *pemerintah* (government).

Comparisons of the ZGK work with orthodox missions in other parts of Indonesia, as well as with the other missionary organization on Papua led to the conclusion that notwithstanding all the differences in basic premises, in practice a lot of similar policies were applied. De Graaf has put an immense effort into this study, which, luckily, with its constant comparisons with similar developments on Papua is more than a minute case study of an orthodox mission.