Recent Dutch-language Publications

Harry A. Poeze

KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies

Poeze@kitlv.nl

Jan J.B. Kuipers, *De VOC. Een multinational onder zeil, 1602–1799*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2014, 176 pp. ISBN 9789057309854. Price: EUR 24.95 (hardback).

This new monograph on the VOC starts with stunning figures on the trading company which was also a semi state that violently conquered a growing number of territories to protect its trade interests. The figures are familiar: 4,721 ships were equipped in Europe and 3,356 in Batavia, while 962,000 men embarked on the arduous journey. Literature on the VOC is abundant, but there is room for a new title that sums up the present state of knowledge and current analysis for a non-academic audience. Evidently, this view is shared by Walburg Pers, the successful publisher of Femme Gastra's *De geschiedenis van de VOC*, which has been reprinted nine times. The author and publisher have succeeded in their goal. Kuipers presents a solid account of the VOC, from the first attempts to find the route to the spice islands, quickly organized in 1602 within the VOC shareholder company. Kuipers devotes chapters to the three distinct phases of the VOC: expansion (1602–1650), boom (1650–1700), and slow decline (1700–1780), leading to the downfall in 1799. The organization in the Republic, life aboard the ships, and life in the VOC settlements Batavia and Desjima, and the impact of the VOC on culture and science are all described, with the help of maps, tables, and a wealth of illustrations, all in colour in this large format volume. All basic information is furnished, and regularly enlivened by inserts concentrating on anecdotes of people and events.

Michel Keteleers, *Compagniesdochters. Vrouwen en de VOC (1602–1795)*. Amsterdam: Balans, 2014, 284 + 16 pp. ISBN 9789460036903. Price: EUR 19.95.

VOC history has predominantly been a tale with male protagonists and the occasional woman in a minor role. This picture needs retouching, and a number of well-researched recent publications have succeeded in doing this. In

Compagniesdochters Michel Keteleers does not aim to publish the result of new archival research, but rather he brings together the present state of knowledge on the subject. His book also accompanies the 'Geheugenpaleis' exhibition in the Dutch Nationaal Archief, in which these VOC daughters were one of its themes. Although legally without status and reduced to second rank in the church in the Dutch Republic they nonetheless exerted influence beyond these limitations. In VOC dealings, in the mother country as well as overseas, this also holds true. Ketelaars has selected five categories of women, who are each given a chapter. Most spectacular were the women who disguised themselves as men and signed on as sailors—70 such cases have been documented. Most were motivated by the wish to join their husbands, or to flee from them. The great majority was soon unmasked, as the bad conditions on the overcrowded ships did not give them the privacy they needed to maintain their ruse. In the Netherlands the 'zielverkoopsters' ('soul sellers') played a dominant and dubious role in the recruitment of sailors. The wives left behind when their husbands left for the East had to survive on a small part of the VOC pay, that was transferred to them by the VOC, and supplement this by own efforts. Women were also passengers. At first efforts were made to ship marriageable women to the East, but the plans to found a Dutch settlement soon ended in failure. Passengers from then on were women from the colonial elite, who joined their husbands there. They and a rising number of women of mixed blood became a constant and influential factor in Batavian social life, enjoying a life of luxury. Their new, elevated status was made possible by other women: their slaves. Keteleers has succeeded in his objective, and enlivens his story by anecdotal life-histories, without, however, sacrificing scholarly customs by adding a bibliography, 316 references, and an index.

Dick Rozing, *Nederlands-Indië, Door de ogen van het verleden. De eerste aardrijkskundige fotoplaten van Nederlands-Indië*. Amersfoort: Dick Rozing, 2014, 128 pp. ISBN 9789090283906. Price EUR 24.95 (to order from the publisher: www.dickrozing.nl).

Connoisseurs and collectors of educational prints appreciate the 170 pictures of the East and West Indies that were published in 1912–1913 by publisher Kleyenberg in Haarlem—the first and only series in large sized format (60 × 73 cm), meant to decorate the walls of schools and to be used for instruction purposes. It all started with the initiative of Henri Wagenaar Reisiger, working with publisher Jan Breda Kleynenberg, who pleaded his plan with perseverance and

enthusiasm. The prominent scholars A.W. Nieuwenhuis en J.F. Niermeyer supported him and promised to help with a selection of themes and subjects to be photographed, as well as to author accompanying information booklets. Thus, in December 2010 Wagenaar Reisiger left for half a year to the Indies, and with KNIL photographer Jean Demeni traveled widely on Java and Sumatra. On his return the Dutch tourist organization ANWB also showed interest in the project. A box *Indië in beeld* was published containing a hundred photos (18×28 cm), fifty from Java and fifty from Sumatra. It was well-received and commercially successful. The educational series was published in three installments in 1912–1913 after a generous subsidy of f18,000 from the Ministry of Education; a fundraising campaign added another f14,400 to this amount. In total, 370 schools received the collection along with the four accompanying booklets. Author and publisher Dick Rozing needed a further fundraising campaign to publish his book (17×24 cm) on this unique collection. In the first 60 pages he supplies an immense amount of details on the origins of the plan and its execution, as well as the actual distribution, based on admirable research in archives, periodicals and private documents from the relatives of the men involved in the project—281 footnotes attest to this. The second part of the book contains a number of the photographs and all are included in the last part, but unfortunately reduced to stamp format. The photographs deserve a generous format. This will partly be fulfilled when the plan to publish the photographs on Rozing's website is carried out. The book is lavishly illustrated in full colour, but the choice of font, now difficult to read, should have been more legible.

Peter Hellema, *Pionieren op Java. De Preanger Rubber Maatschappij onder Amsterdamse regie 1909–1957*. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2014, 190 pp. ISBN 9789057309922. Price EUR 19.95.

Monographs on individual estate companies in the colonial Indies and Indonesia are rare, although they may shed new light on economic, financial, and social circumstances and relations in the colony as well as during the turbulent years since 1942, with Japanese occupation, decolonization, war, and independent Indonesia. How did all these affect different regions? And what was the fate of the different products? A welcome addition to the body of knowledge is *Pionieren op Java*, that closely follows the ups and downs of the Preanger Rubber Maatschappij. The author's choice of just this Maatschappij was for the greater part by chance and he was lucky to find an extensive set of relevant documents in the Nationaal Archief.

The Preanger Rubber Maatschappij was founded in 1909 in Amsterdam by Dutchmen with colonial experience who sensed the great opportunities rubber production opened. They planted two estates with rubber totaling 980 hectares, near Banjar (in West Java, close to the border with Central Java). The first rubber was tapped in 1910, and it was immediately profitable. The subsequent results reflect the whims of the markets, which in turn were sensitive to political developments and measures. Soon there was not a free rubber market anymore, replaced in the thirties by voluntary and imposed restrictions on produce, through the Rubber Regulation Committee. Until 1940 dividends were paid only eight times, although only seven times were the results in the red. The Board in Amsterdam was thrifty and prudent, and repeatedly asked for cuts in expenditure. These were part of a continuous feature of tensions between the far-away Board and the men in Java who were confronted with sudden crises which demanded an immediate, and often costly, response. There was friction, but gradually a balance was struck. As to its Indonesian employees, numbering 1,500 at its peak, it looks as if a benevolent paternalism inspired the estates' leadership. It all changed with the advent of the Japanese, who halted produce in 1943. It took until 1948 before the Maatschappij gained insight in the state of affairs and restarted business. Notwithstanding the revolutionary turmoil and the widespread unrest of the fifties, the Maatschappij prospered, with profits and dividends paid in six consecutive years. But in 1957 it was all to end with nationalization, and the Maatschappij only prolonged its existence to receive the compensation. These two and a half million guilders were eventually paid and the Maatschappij finally closed up in 1989. Hellema did a fine job. The space he allowed himself does not have room for enlivening detail, but his main points are clearly represented.

Ben Schoenmaker (ed.), *200 jaar Koninklijke Landmacht 1814–2014*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2014, 295 pp. ISBN 9789089531278. Price EUR 29,90 (hardback).

The Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (NIMH) is a research institute within the Nederlandse Defensie Academie, subsidized by the Ministry of Defense. Two hundred years of Dutch armed forces were appropriately commemorated with a large format book, lavishly illustrated. Moreover, with an iPhone or Android an app may be activated that accesses almost a hundred films and photographs relevant to the subject. And the publisher, Boom, offers access to an e-book edition.

The greatest ever expeditionary force (120,000 men) of the Dutch army was deployed in Indonesia between 1945 and 1949, in what the introduction calls a

decolonization war. A separate chapter written by NIMH researcher Thijs Brocades Zaalberg (pp. 138–159) supplies a summary and analysis of the conflict. He chooses the experiences of individual soldiers, as related in letters, diaries, and memoirs, to illustrate the general features of the struggle, with the Dutch inevitably, notwithstanding temporary successes, on the losing side in a bitter and cruel guerrilla war. The author makes short shrift with ideas, long current in veteran circles, that uninformed politicians were responsible for the loss of the Indies. More noteworthy still when seen in the wider picture of the NIMH's close ties with the Ministry of Defense, he devotes a lot of attention to the role of Dutch violence, transgressing the rules of the international conventions on the subject, still euphemistically called excesses. Many examples are given: 'excessive violence on a grand scale', in South Celebes and Rawagedeh, but also the common occurrence of torture, summary executions of prisoners, reprisals against non-combatants, probably caused by feelings of frustration. In general, these illegal acts were covered up by the superiors of the perpetrators, up to and including Commander in Chief Spoor. This focus is remarkable, and will be noted in the recently reopened debate on Dutch violence in the Decolonization War.

Cees Meijer, *Jan de Quay (1901–1985), een biografie*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2014, 512 + 16 pp. ISBN 9789461055552. Price: EUR 34.90 (hardback).

In the last few years a number of solid biographies have been published on Dutch politicians and officials who were involved in the laborious two-stage-process of decolonization of the Dutch East Indies. The main struggle was, of course, the 1945–1950 decolonization war between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republic. But in the years thereafter, the conflict on the western part of New Guinea, an irrational colonial remnant to assuage Dutch feelings of empire and distaste of the independent Indonesian state under Sukarno, threatened to erupt in a full-fledged war, with serious geopolitical consequences in the global Cold War. The Dutch cabinet that had to deal with the conflict was headed by Prime Minister Jan de Quay (1901–1985). He had fulfilled this office since 1959, as the successor of social-democrat Willem Drees, who was closely involved in the decolonization of the forties.

De Quay's background was completely different from Drees'. He was raised in a rich aristocratic Catholic Brabant family and attended a Jesuit boarding school. This stamped him as a pious Catholic, who on important issues would always ask for and obey the advice of the Catholic church hierarchy. He studied psychology and became a Professor in Tilburg. He was also prominent in

the exclusive Catholic pillar, which earned him a name as a progressive technocrat, who looked for new solutions to overcome the effects of Depression and Crisis, and was willing to step beyond Catholic confines. His sense of duty was partially responsible for his controversial initiative, after the Netherlands was occupied by Germany in May 1940, as a co-founder of the *Nederlandsche Unie*, which was willing to look for an accommodation with the occupiers. He wanted to prevent the Dutch national-socialist party from rising to a prominent position. The *Unie*'s success was at first overwhelming; in the longer run, however, it collided with the Germans and was disbanded at the end of 1941.

De Quay's involvement with the *Unie*, partly caused by his naiveté, was to haunt him, especially in his later years till his death. Shortly after the war he was absolved from the critique and he served a few months as Minister of War. After the liberation he was prominently involved in the immediate efforts to set up a progressive party. In this so-called *Doorbraak* (Breakthrough) the old prewar parties would have to give way to a new political landscape. At last the Catholics dropped out, with De Quay's choice to join the re-named Catholic Party as the decisive factor. De Quay retreated to become Governor of the province of Noord-Brabant, an office in which he was happy and in which his skills stood out best. His diary, kept for many years, and a valuable source for De Quay's biographer, relates his fear in 1959, after the Socialist-Catholic cabinet coalition broke down, that he would be asked to succeed Drees. And thus it happened. The pressure of Catholic leaders C.P.M. Romme and L.J.M. Beel, added to his sense of duty and feelings of loyalty, made him Prime Minister of a Catholic-Liberal cabinet, with a rightist emphasis.

De Quay lacked experience and know-how on many cabinet issues, and only slowly he made up for his shortcomings. He survived a cabinet crisis, and was confronted with his most severe ordeal, the New Guinea crisis. Until then policy was determined by fellow party member J.M.A.H. Luns, who had been the popular Minister of Foreign Affairs for a decade. His stance was immovable: the Papua inhabitants of the island should be educated to exercise their right of self-determination, with no interference at all of Indonesia. De Quay had at first no option but to follow the Luns position, but gradually doubts grew as to the viability of Luns' policies. In the crisis of 1962, when an all-out attack from Indonesia came closer and closer, De Quay showed himself a real statesman, and acted, even to the extent of effectively ruling out Luns from the decision-making process. On the brink of war there was no option but to bow under Indonesian and US pressure. De Quay's role has been discussed at length in the recent biography of J.H. van Roijen. In the thirty pages Cees Meijer devotes to New Guinea under the appropriate heading of 'Crisis manager in the

New Guinea question' he does not add a lot to the general view—except that De Quay's resolute action could have been emphasized more strongly. Curiously, Meijer does so in his Epilogue, where De Quay is praised for the pragmatic and competent way he prevented the outbreak of a catastrophic war on New Guinea. Meijer's fine biography certainly has contributed to a more balanced view of De Quay, about whom the abounding clichés need qualification.

Cees Fasseur, *Eigen meester, niemands knecht. Het leven van Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy; Minister-president van Nederland in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. Amsterdam: Balans, 2014, 606 pp. ISBN 9789460038259. Price: EUR 24.95 (paperback); 9789460033360, 39.95 (hardback).

During the darkest years of Dutch history, when the country was occupied by Nazi Germany from 1940–1945, the Dutch prime minister in exile was the unlikely person of Pieter Sjoerds Gerbrandy (1885–1961). His credentials did not make him an obvious choice for the office, but the train of events destined him to become the indefatigable and unswerving symbol of Dutch resistance. Until now, no one had written his biography, although he plays a major part in Lou de Jong's multi-volume history of the Kingdom of the Netherlands during the Second World War. In Cees Fasseur's biography of Queen Wilhelmina (volume 2, published in 2001) her role during the years of exile in London is praised, with an emphasis on her resoluteness in confronting the Nazis and inspiring the spirits of her people. In this respect the two had a lot in common, and initially they were close allies.

Gerbrandy, born a farmer's son in the Frisian countryside, in a conservative orthodox Protestant family, studied law at the Gereformeerde Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, and next combined work as a lawyer with a career in politics at local and regional levels. He was a member of the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP), the conservative union of orthodox Protestants, of which God and the House of Orange were the unshakeable foundations. Always headstrong, Gerbrandy was looked at with some suspicion, as he favoured measures to improve the lot of working class. He was a Professor at the Vrije Universiteit since 1930. Controversy there he escaped in 1939 by accepting the offer to become Minister of Justice in the broadly based Cabinet De Geer, without consulting his party, which censured him for this move. In May 1940 the cabinet fled to London. At first chaos reigned, while as well a number of ministers, including De Geer, were willing to look for a settlement with Germany. It resulted in De Geer's discharge, and from among the ministers Gerbrandy was the sole available candidate to succeed him. Moreover, he was supported by the Queen. The rela-

tionship between Sovereign and Prime Minister, however, soon deteriorated when the Queen stepped beyond her constitutional authority and actively tried to impose her will as to the future organization of the Netherlands, acting arbitrarily, openly showing her contempt for ministers and cabinet, and not hiding her rancor. Gerbrandy was to bear the brunt as well. He remained loyal and upheld the royal prerogative, even as it discredited him.

In the eyes of the Allies the importance of the Dutch government in exile was enhanced by the Dutch East Indies, a major strategic asset. This ended with the rather inglorious defeat of the Dutch by the Japanese in March 1942. Until 1942 the London government was not closely involved with the state of affairs in the Indies; it looked as though the officials there considered the London government somewhat inferior—as was shown when two ministers visited the colony in spring 1941. It would have been interesting if such a change in the relationship London-Batavia would have been discussed at more length by Fasseur in the chapter on the downfall of the Indies. Now he has something to say on the Indies-Japanese relations, as well as on the famous Declaration of 7 December 1942, in which the Atlantic Charter was given concrete content for the Indies, with new ministers H.J. van Mook and Soejono in a vocal role. Fasseur published an authoritative article on this Declaration in 1979.

Two more chapters specifically address Indonesia. Gerbrandy quit his office in June 1945, and from 1948 until 1959 was a recalcitrant member of parliament for ARP. Although he lacked any background or emotional bond with Indonesia, he soon ranked among the fiercest opponents of the Indonesia policy of the Cabinet, a coalition of Catholic and social-democratic parties. It was all unconstitutional, the Republic of Indonesia was a Japanese ploy, strong military action would be effective to wipe out resistance against the Netherlands, as Gerbrandy did not acknowledge the strength of nationalism. In December 1946 he became chairman of the Comité Rijkseenheid, of which he became the spokesman in word and writing. Emotions ran high and it earned him a prohibition to give radio speeches. It all went so far that rumors about a coup d'état began to circulate. Fasseur's conclusion is that such plans never came to anything concrete, and the persons deepest involved were officers of the Indies army. Soon the momentum was lost and the Comité and its successors were banned to the reactionary fringes of Dutch society. Gerbrandy remained involved and found a new focus in the plight of the Ambonese in independent Indonesia. Fasseur is probably the best person to write Gerbrandy's biography and high expectations are redeemed. His judgment looks to be a fair one, and his laconic style, interspersed with a dose of irony, makes pleasant reading.

B.O. van Zanten, *De Sterrengebergte expeditie naar Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea in 1959. Persoonlijke belevenissen en indrukken*. Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2014, 302 pp. ISBN 9789461533791. Price: EUR 22.95.

In 1959 one of the last white spots in the world was 'discovered' and mapped in a 'classical' expedition. Destination was the Sterrengebergte in Central New Guinea, with unconquered peaks reaching up to 4,000 meters. Among the driving forces behind the expedition was the Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap, once the sponsor of many explorations in colonial Indonesia. The participants constituted a multidisciplinary team with botany, geology, zoology, anthropology, cartography and linguistics represented, in all by 14 scholars. Among them were J.C. Anceaux and J. Pouwer, later on well-known authors in KITLV publications. The expedition was led by L.D. Brongersma and G.F. Venema, and supported by police and marines, as well as two helicopters, one of which crashed. And moreover, hundreds of Papuans were employed as porters and guides. In 1960 Brongersma and Venema published a popular and comprehensive account of the expedition, *Het witte hart van Nieuw-Guinea*. One of the scientists, the botanist B.O. van Zanten, a specialist in mosses and mushrooms, surprisingly, after 55 years, published his account of the expedition only now. It is not the diary he did not keep during his exploits from April till September 1959, but a compilation of information, scattered in notes, letters, photographs and Brongersma's book and diary, to become a semi-diary of his personal experiences. Such is a risky enterprise, and easily misrepresentations are among the outcomes. Van Zanten seems to have avoided these pitfalls. He has produced a readable account, sometimes too much of a summing-up, and not adding much to the Brongersma-Venema volume. Almost a hundred pages contain his photographs, four per page, with the sad outcome that they are reduced to a barely visible 5×5 centimeters.