Recent Dutch-language Publications

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‘I considered krontjong as a musical world in which production, distribution, and reception were indissolubly connected, the dividing-line between professionals and amateurs was sometimes difficult to draw, and all of it was in constant movement within the larger whole that was also on the move.’ Thus Lutgard Mutsaers (1953) describes her approach to the subject, about which sources were scant, let alone monographs that in more than a cursory and partial way discuss the subject—fascinating but also complicated, as ethnic issues and socio-political developments played an important role in the evolution and appreciation of krontjong music. As to the sources, Mutsaers profited immensely from the online accessibility of Dutch and Dutch-language Indies newspapers, as offered by the website of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague. Hidden information now becomes visible at the push of a button. Mutsaers’ *Roep der verten* could not have been written without this access. Hundreds of references to the most obscure publications, often only a few lines, announcing a performance, and advertisements on appearances and available records, are documented and often included in facsimile. Also included in full are a few of the seminal publications on the subject.

Mutsaers has a long past in popular music studies, and has published on rock and roll, as embraced and adapted by Indo European musicians, and the Hawaiian music that was popular in the Indies as well as the Netherlands from the thirties to the sixties. Both competed with krontjong, and even threatened to push krontjong into oblivion. Now, she has fulfilled the promise to write the history of krontjong, and has done so with six hundred pages of dense print, an ambitious project for which she was extremely well suited. The roots of krontjong are Portuguese and the earliest mention dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The village of Toegoe was the...
centre from which krontjong spread, and has maintained a reputation until today. It was the until now completely unknown journalist Arnold F. Snackey (1845–1896) who put krontjong on the map, its music as well as the text based on pantuns (pantoums, a verse form with an abab rhyme scheme that has been adapted to both French and English). It gained more popularity than respectability, when it became part of the Komedie Stamboel, as founded by Auguste Mahieu (1865–1903). Komedie Stamboel lasted only for about twenty years, but krontjong survived, but not without controversy. Sheet music was printed, and records were released from 1904 on. A more ‘refined’ krontjong was promoted by the Indo European elite. As a whole, however, krontjong was tainted by its indecent past. And it ranked far below the refined gamelan music.

Mutsaers has scrupulously searched for references to krontjong in fiction and non-fiction. The first by, for instance Victor Ido and Jan Fabricius, reflect the ambiguous position of krontjong as a specific Indo product, with a lot of bias against them. The Indo community as organized in the Indo-Europeesch Verbond (IEV) kept its distance, but slowly acknowledged its legacy, although in a revised and respectable format, as composed by Fred Belloni. Still, Dutch experts looked down on this hybrid mestizo music, and admired gamelan. In these years kroncong in the public sphere was predominantly an Indonesian affair, with Miss Riboet making a world tour, with a troupe of a hundred men and women. Hawaiian music became very popular at the cost of kroncong, which also incorporated elements from jazz, swing, film scores, and ketoprak.

In the Netherlands, Indonesian students were the ones who staged kroncong. They earned a lot of appreciation, along with some pocket money. After 1940 they depended for their livelihood on these performances. The German occupiers left them largely undisturbed; only late in 1944 did they brand krontjong an intolerable hybrid and degenerate form of music. At that point, the Sinar Laoet group had to cease performing. Among its members was Toemjati, as Mutsaers mentions, but it is a pity she does not give more details about him, as he was a clear supporter of the Nazi’s (he even performed in Germany); after the war, when he wanted to stage a come-back, he was taken to task for this.

On the political use of kroncong more details could have been supplied, to begin with the composer of the Indonesian national anthem, W.R. Soepratman, and in his wake Ismail Marzuki, who wrote and inspired the kroncong revolusi. As presented, the political background of war and revolution contains some flaws. After 1950 krontjong in Indonesia took its own course, at first still with Indo input, but after they were forced out of Indonesia to the Netherlands, it was an all-Indonesian affair, and considered part of Indonesian cultural life. In the Netherlands there were at first still some Indonesian groups, but after 1950,
Indo musicians made kroncong a mixture of all kinds of popular genres. Tjalie Robinson started the call for *kroncong asli* and only slowly gained supporters, let alone public performers. The Pasar Malam Besar was an instrument to promote this original krontjong, and since the eighties the efforts bore fruit, and the revival of krontjong was successfully achieved. This book with about 900 notes, with a very useful register of terms and names in krontjong, with short amplifications, with an index, with a time line, offers another attraction. As a bonus there is a CD with 25 tracks, 19 historical recordings, first released between 1904 and 1957, and 6 ‘modern’ ones, attesting to the excellent quality of these *kroncong asli* recordings, which will ensure the powerful raison d’etre of this Indo music.


The strongest eruption of a volcano in modern times, far surpassing that of the Krakatau in 1883, was caused by the Tambora, on Sumbawa, the then remote island of colonial Indies, in April 1815. The volcano lost its top 1,400 metres, and was reduced from 4,200 to 2,800 metres. The eruption’s strength was equivalent to one and a half times the collected strength of all atomic weapons stored during the Cold War. Its sound was heard 2,500 kilometers away. A suffocating hot gas cloud immediately killed all life, a tsunami went round the earth, and for three years the sky was darkened by particles of sulphur dioxide, influencing global climate patterns and cooling summers for several years. Waves of cold caused crop failures, which lead to illness and famine. The consequences were enormous. Tens of thousands people perished. This natural disaster lead to food riots, emigration, and mass hysteria, but it also triggered social reform. The author of *De schaduw van Tambora*, Philip Dröge, a journalist specialized in science news, tells the story of the eruption, followed by chapters situated in countries in Asia, the Americas, and Europe about the worldwide repercussions. In a last chapter he returns to Sumbawa, and its forgotten eruption, and he climbs the Tambora to see for himself the gigantic crater, now dormant. He bases his story on a plethora of eyewitness accounts, scattered in archives and periodicals all over the world—the bibliography covers twenty pages—which results in a vivid and accessible monograph.

The Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam staged an exhibition (October 2014–March 2015) on the unknown history of the Jews in the Indies. In an accompanying special issue of the journal *Misjpoge*, published by the Vereeniging Nederlandse Kring voor Joodse Genealogie (Society Dutch Circle of Jewish Genealogy), eleven articles bring together the scant data on the subject, supplementing the written sources with personal memories, interviews, and objects. In fact, this reflects the situation as it was in the Indies with for a long time no Jewish religious or cultural organizational activity. There was no synagogue or a rabbi; activities to uphold religious life and traditions were local and individual. Only in the twenties some organizations were founded, with the Vereeniging voor Joodsche Belangen in Nederlandsch Oost-Indië (Society for the protection of Jewish interests in the Netherlands East Indies), which published the monthly *Erets Israel*, as the most important among these. But still, measured against the three till five thousand Jews in the colony in 1940, its reach was rather disproportionally low.

In their opening essay Hetty Berg, Ardjuna Candotti and Valerie Touw supply a historical overview, but little more than a mere mention of these organizations is given. They do touch on the background of the Jews: those from the Netherlands, from the Middle East (the ‘Bagdad Jews’), and the fugitives from Europe, just before the Second World War. During the Japanese occupation, the Jews were interned, partly in separate barracks in the camps, but were not treated differently from other Europeans. After 1945, Jewish conscripts were sent to the Indies to fight the decolonization war, but none of the Jews stayed longer than 1958, when all foreigners were ousted. Now only some very small groups profess their Jewish identity, in near-secrecy, except for the single lasting synagogue in Menado. The other articles often have a genealogical component, and relate family histories. One tells the story of Jewish artists who toured the Indies to stage their plays, another children’s experiences in the Japanese camps. As a whole this issue is a useful inventory of the Jewish presence in the Indies.
Gerret Pieter Rouffaer (1860–1928), born in the provincial town of Kampen, was a man of independent means who studied mining in Delft for a few years and then spent most of his time as a traveler in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, with a deep interest in classical art and architecture. He was an ardent admirer of Multatuli, whom he offered part of his fortune. On an impulse, he decided to go to the Netherlands Indies in order to collect material on Multatuli’s Indies experiences. He arrived in July 1885, and didn’t return until March 1890. Apart from his work on Multatuli, his activities there were manifold, concentrating on archeological remains—he even excavated part of the Borobudur temple—old manuscripts, culture and economy of the Principalities, batik, other arts, and crafts. His quest to know was insatiable. He obsessively recorded and, if possible, collected what he found. He successfully acquainted himself with officials and scholars to facilitate his efforts. As a self taught expert Rouffaer was long seen as a dilettante, and he suffered because of that label.

Rouffaer returned to the Netherlands because of bad health, possibly because he contracted syphilis, which would plague him for the rest of his life. It took him four years of recovery in southern Europe before he resumed his normal life. He was appointed deputy secretary of the kitlv in 1898, and organized and expanded its library to become the best of the country, compiling a voluminous catalogue that meticulously listed the kitlv holdings. He was a compulsive collector, and when the budget did not allow the purchase of an acquisition, Rouffaer bought it himself and donated it to the kitlv. In his central position Rouffaer now had ample time to promote publication and collection in other organizations as well. He enthusiastically undertook new initiatives, but sometimes overestimated his potential, resulting in delay or cancellation. Nonetheless his output is impressive and of a stunning breadth. In April 1909 he embarked on a second trip to the Indies, which brought him to the Straits Settlements, Java, Lesser Sunda Islands, and the Philippines, always on the hunt for new material and information. His poor health forced him to return to the Netherlands in September 1911, and because of that he had to decline the offer to become a professor in Utrecht. Progressively hampered by his illness, he nevertheless worked on, even when he was not able to leave his house after 1920. The kitlv commissioned Frank Okker to write Rouffaer’s biography, as an homage to its honorary member. Okker did so competently. It is a pity that for lack of sources the personality of Rouffaer remains in the shadows. Okker thus has to restrict himself to his endless hunt for publications and artefacts.

For a number of years already, Gerda Jansen Hendriks works as director with the television series ‘Andere tijden’, which visualizes episodes from Dutch history. Quite a number of times the focus has been on the Indies/Indonesia, including the turbulent events from the Second World War and Japanese occupation, and the ensuing decolonization war. Interest and knowledge in historical films motivated the author to start research on films that more or less publicly were commissioned and issued—or banned from circulation—by the Dutch or Indies government. After almost ten years this resulted in a dissertation *Een voorbeeldige kolonie*. It is a pioneering effort, as until now a general survey of official film policy was absent. This gap is now admirably filled by Jansen Hendriks’ major work, accompanied by a 100-page filmography.

Jansen Hendriks’ approach is descriptive and chronological: who made the films, their contents, and how they served their purpose. The first steps to involve the government were made already in 1912, by enthusiastic individuals, who tried to convince the reluctant government to subsidize their plans. But the officials in charge were wary of the potential effects of the new medium. They wanted to control the results, and thus did not want a mass audience to see the films in public theatres. The Koloniaal Insituut commissioned J.C. Lamster to film in the Indies (on Lamster see Van Dijk, De Jonge and De Klerk 2000). The films then produced, for educational purposes, showed a colony which under the benevolent leadership of the Dutch educated its inhabitants to a higher level of civilization, in an unselfish way and without discrimination. Western enterprise was praised. Indonesians were respectfully shown in their social and cultural activities, but with an unmistakable Orientalist flavour. The image was one of unshaken peace and tranquility, however much Indonesian society started to question the colonial relationship. The striking conclusion from all the films made under governmental auspices, from 1912 till 1962, is that basically the views brought forward did not change—all along the unselfish ruler, knowing what is best for his coloured subjects, worked hard to educate and uplift them. The Dutch officials thus presented their views to their citizens in the Netherlands, as well as an international audience, especially in the United States.

With the advent of World War II the awareness of the need to present such a picture, and engage in information, or even propaganda—although this last word was seldom used—became more urgent. Enlightened officials...
like H.J. van Mook en Ch.O. van der Plas gave, after 1940, the impetus to set up film enterprises in Batavia, London, New York, and Australia. Competent filmmakers like John Fernhout and Mannus Franken were hired. Even the communist director Joris Ivens, already well-known, signed a contract with the fickle Van der Plas, which ended, predictably, with Ivens siding with the Indonesian Republic. This rupture, and his film *Indonesia calling* concern the only well-researched part of Indies film history.

After 1945 a Dutch film service was reinstated in Jakarta, and fell victim to a lot of internal strife, with contradictory policies emanating from the officials and politicians in Batavia, The Hague, and New York. It resulted in drawn-out disputes about content, even leading to complete bans on circulation. Manipulation of sequences was common practice, and public showing was subject to a Censor Commission. The main production of the film service in Jakarta came from the weekly cinema journals, of which about 170 were produced. In these, the home front was reassured: actual coverage of violence, fighting, and victims were all carefully omitted. This manipulation on a grand scale tallies with that of photographs, as recently described by Louis Zweers (2013). Prime Minister Willem Drees himself was, for instance, able to block the release of two longer films, as Van Mook had done earlier. Censorship thus was an inherent feature of Dutch democracy, in the motherland as well as the colony. It did not change, as Jansen Hendriks shows in her epilogue on film policies in New Guinea (1950–1962)—it was less of the same, now with the Dutch educating Papuans to find their place in modern society. Jansen Hendriks has written an easy to read reference book that integrates film history of the Indies solidly with the general colonial policies. Such a book deserves an index, which it sadly lacks. How can an author agree to such an amputation? Or is the free availability of the book on Internet (via dare@uva.nl) considered a suitable alternative? Thanks to Jansen Hendriks’ research, a lot of the films she discusses can now be seen via in.beeldengeluid.nl.

**References**


To mark the seventieth commemoration of the end of World War II the Sociale Verzekeringsbank, the government agency responsible for the payment of pensions to resistance fighters and war victims, published a solid book bringing together a wide selection of interviews made by Ellen Lock, and published before in the agency’s magazine *Aanspraak* between 1997 and 2014. Nineteen eyewitnesses discuss experiences from the Netherlands Indies during the Japanese occupation (1942–1945) (pp. 162–302). Reminiscences cover a wide range, from the life in internment camps for women and children, to forced labour to construct railways in Burma and Sumatra or in factories in Japan, to forced prostitution, shipping disasters, and *bersiap* atrocities. Among those interviewed are well-known writers as Mischa de Vreede, Leo Vroman, and Adriaan van Dis, as well as scholars and politicians such as Cees Fasseur and Ben Bot. The interviewer retreats into the background, and let the stories speak for themselves, and these are impressive.


From February 2015 until January 2016 Museum Bronbeek stages a special exhibition about decolonization in which it aims to give a balanced account of the fateful years 1945 to 1949, in which the Dutch were forced to relinquish its priceless treasure the Dutch East Indies. It succeeded quite well—considering the Museum’s colonial and military background—in this tightrope act in an attractive presentation. An interesting extra is offered by a collection of 20 well-illustrated articles by 14 authors, collected in newspaper format, who cover a great number of aspects of the conflict. General overviews are accompanied by articles on the main protagonists, the military, the strategy on both sides, and personal experiences from published accounts by Lin Scholte and Alex Kawilarang. This slim volume also covers the aftermath and post-colonial traumas. Dutch experts on the subject guarantee the reliability of this publication, with a print run of 10,000, that is available for free for the Bronbeek visitors or on application.

Frans Hazekamp (1925), himself a veteran of the decolonization war in Indonesia, has published a few books on this conflict that go beyond mere ego documents. In *192 zware klappen in Indië* he continues this approach and delves even deeper. Many years of painstaking research have resulted in this book that documents 192 incidents in which three or more members of the Dutch forces were killed or went missing. One would assume that after so many years details on these incidents would be amply available, but tens of these instances, are only now given background and substance by Hazekamp’s search in combat reports, official records, log books, and later published accounts of units and veterans. But still quite a number of facts remain controversial or are simply not there.

The data are organized by region—West Java, with a separate chapter on the 7 December Division, Central Java, East Java, and Sumatra. The Mariniersbrigade and the Navy have their own chapter, as well as the Air Force, which suffered heavy losses in New Guinea after 1950. Finally, the KNIL losses are listed. Hazekamp concludes that Central Java units and the KNIL probably were the hardest hit. Ambushes and *trekboommen* (bombs exploded from a distance) caused the most casualties. Hazekamp also joins the debate about the number of Dutch casualties. Numbers show striking differences, as given by the Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Geschiedenis, in Jack Kooistra’s monumental memorial volume *Laatste bericht* (2007) and the register kept at the Nationaal Indië Monument in Roermond. He points at the different criteria applied to include someone in the list. This holds true especially for the military of Indonesian background, who fought in the KNIL, but even more still for semi military and auxiliary forces, as well as militarized police, which were close to the KNIL. In his own enumeration, Hazekamp excludes these last units. Hazekamp also points at the many victims of illness and traffic accidents, as well as those killed by friendly fire, in accidents with explosives and guns, in drowning accidents, and by suicide—rather stunning numbers. Hazekamp pleads for new authoritative research to bring an end to this confusing and prejudicial numbers game—and he is very right to do so.


Born in 1936, Hylke Speerstra is a well-known and prolific author and journalist who publishes in Frisian as well as Dutch. Already as a teenager he was fascinated by the experiences of the Frisian boys who went to Indonesia, as volunteers or conscripts, and he witnessed for himself the departure and return of these young men, who fought for a lost cause. Many decades later, he renewed his latent interest. He interviewed 19 Frisian veterans, now all aged more than 85, frail gentlemen now, but still stamped by their experiences in the bloody and cruel guerilla war of seventy years ago. His accounts of these meetings were published in 2014 in Frisian: *Op klompen troch de dessa*, which sold 6,000 copies in a few months—a remarkable feat for such a small audience. This year the book was published in a Dutch translation, *Op klompen door de dessa*, and has already gone into a second printing. Curiously, the Dutch edition does not mention its Frisian predecessor, and I cannot think of a convincing explanation for this.

It is not only the eventful years in Indonesia on which Speerstra focuses, but in great detail he discusses the background of the soldiers, who, from isolated villages and closed communities of strict religious denomination, reinforced through five years of German occupation, were catapulted into the tropical world of the Indies. Upon their return they had outgrown their countryside, and had great trouble in adjusting to ‘normal life’ again. Not a few of them would now be diagnosed as suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Their accounts are revealing and sometimes heart-breaking. Speerstra does not restrict himself to youngsters who were in active service in the Indies, but offers also the views of a conscientious objector and a conscript who went into hiding before his ship embarked. Speerstra also interviewed a New Guinea mariner, who fought in the epilogue of the decolonization conflict in 1961–1962. He gives special attention to the mutual atrocities committed, the often failing and sometimes corrupt intendance, and the taboo subject of sexual relations between soldiers and Indonesian women, which had serious consequences, including the spread of STIs (sexually transmitted infections) to thousands of soldiers. Well-written and involved, this is a late and worthy addition to veteran autobiographies.

Since the 1990s Herman Bussemaker (1935) played a pivotal role in the developments within the Indies community in the Netherlands, rarely homogeneous and frequently torn by controversy. He became the authoritative spokesman of the group, first as chairman of the Vereniging Kinderen van de Japanse Bezetting en Bersiap (Society Children of the Japanese Occupation, KJBB) and then the Indisch Platform (2008–2012). This Platform was the unofficial forum of Indies organizational activity, and the partner of the Dutch government. Bussemaker has now published *Indisch verdriet*, an account of seventy years of painful relationship between the Dutch government and the Indies community, which after the ordeals of the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian Decolonization War had to leave Indonesia, and settle in the Netherlands. Most of them were destitute, and their arrival was not greeted with hospitality. The Dutch government had done its very best to discourage—even prevent—them, in particular the Indo-Europeans, from coming to the Netherlands. When they arrived in the mother country it was made clear to them that they were unwelcome, with racist undertones accompanying this. Moreover, the Dutch government refused to pay those in Indies civil and military service the salaries they should rightfully have received as backpay for the 41 months of Japanese occupation. Also a regulation to reimburse lost property was not enforced, although these measures were applied to the Dutch victims of the German occupation. In other Allied nations those in similar circumstances were fully refunded. The Dutch government did not even try to find a solution that could be accommodated with its precarious financial position, but used subterfuge to shift responsibility to Indonesia and/or Japan, fully aware of the senselessness of any effort to obtain compensation there. All efforts thus ended in unwillingness and indifference, based also on a striking lack of knowledge on the fate of the Indies community during the forties. For instance, the majority of them were not interned by the Japanese, but had to survive outside the internment camps, as *buitenkampers*, in dire circumstances, and were victims of the *bersiap* fury after Japan surrendered. Bussemaker rightfully points at the latent and even manifest discrimination of the *buitenkampers*, for the overwhelming part Indo-Europeans. After the first rounds of deliberation and its disappointing outcome it took a number of years, until the eighties, before action was resumed by a new generation. It resulted in memorial places, commemorations, and action against the visit of emperor Hirohito to the Netherlands. It all fit into the general rise of interest in the aftermath of the World War. Specific laws to support the European vic-

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tims were promulgated, with a meagre complement for the internees in the Indies.

Bussemaker does not deviate far from the monographs of Hans Meijer (2005) and Peter Keppy (2004, and the revised English edition of 2010). His somewhat dutiful account changes when he himself becomes a protagonist and, based on his personal collection of documents and his own experiences, adds flavour and even poignancy to the endless list of meetings, written statements, and lobbying activities. Of course, there are thus many pitfalls to be avoided, especially in a community that is atomized, sensitive, and frustrated. Bussemaker, himself a historian, looks to have successfully navigated through these challenges. His account of the dealings with the government is frank. He shows the government to be a cavalcade of successive junior ministers, with a general lack of expertise and interest, and of public servants, embodying continuity. But according to Bussemaker, these public servants were not the objective and faithful counselors of their minister, but were biased and contemptuous, often purposefully distorting facts. Bussemaker does not shun from naming and characterizing them.

Still, there are also positive developments to be noted. The Indisch Platform, constituted in 1991, was consulted and listened to. The greatest success was Het Gebaar (The Gesture), with a lump sum paid to all Indies citizens during the war, as a compensation for the unwelcome reception in the Netherlands, a publication program and 148 project subsidies. But the flames of strife were not extinguished. For government and parliament it was a final remission, for the Indies community there was no connection with backpay and reimbursement of damages. The publication program, under the auspices of NIOD, the Dutch War Documentation Centre, became a bone of contention, and its course of events is described in minute detail. It resulted in the monographs of Meijer and Keppy, in general confirming the views of the Indisch Platform on the subject. But for the government the file was shelved and closed. The Indisch Platform next centred its lobbying activities on the Parliament, and met with some success. However, a motion of June 2011, to install a committee of three ‘wise men’, to give advice based on the conclusions of the Meijer and Keppy studies, was narrowly defeated. It was a bitter disappointment for the Indies community. A new start was made with Junior Minister Van Rijn, but after a promising overture, progress got stuck in an intransigent bureaucracy with a promised letter on the subject that had already been delayed by two years—with the shadow of a claim of hundreds of millions still looming. Bussemaker has written a book that will be an indispensable source on the subject, but that also begs for an answer from other protagonists involved.
References

